

THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN INDIA

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The British: Burden or Benefit?

The Age of Imperialism met a swift decline as two climactic world wars deprived European empires of their ability to manage overseas possessions. This sudden change in the international dynamic caused a rather rapid transition into a new geopolitical order and a radically different understanding of imperialist doctrines. The rising, Wilsonian notions of international justice replaced the preceding world order and led to the sudden rejection of the principles that formed the Victorian Age. Since the dawn of this new world order, free discussion of the virtues and vices of modern imperialism has been absent in intellectual circles. Many, no doubt, are afraid of the racial undertones that besmirched the attitudes behind colonial rule shortly after the advent of Darwinism in European thought or are too captivated by their democratic sensibilities to consider the virtues of benevolent despotism. Others in academic circles are too absorbed in the prevailing relativistic mentality to seriously and impartially consider benevolent imperialism as a constructive force for many underdeveloped nations. Further clouding a clear understanding of this period in history is the failure to differentiate between the legacies of the empires on the international stage.

There can be no justifying the

actions of numerous empires that were devoid of principle and unrestrained by morality. The legacy of these European powers was one of the brutal conquest and systematic exploitation of native peoples. For decades, they either assumed the tyranny of the native regime they replaced or worsened the political and moral condition of their colonies through their harsh methods. The British Empire, on the other hand, was committed to a specific set of principles and institutions that caused her to have a markedly different character from these other nations. Unlike these conscienceless empires, the British maintained an empire that was motivated by a genuine concern for the governed and worked to spread their political principles and free institutions across the globe. It cannot be denied that British imperial governance was imperfect and oftentimes struggled with the difficult issues arising from colonial rule, but, in spite of these shortcomings, a proper examination of history reveals that the British Empire was one of the greatest forces for good the world has ever hosted.

For over two centuries, Britain was the master of the seas and leader in industry. These formidable advantages allowed this tiny, island nation to have a disproportionate amount of strength at their command. Throughout the Age of Absolutism, England struggled to survive against the oppressive designs of continental monarchs and emerged from these conflicts with global hegemony. Britain did not use her supremacy to enslave the world. Instead, she used her economic and political strength to project principles of freedom around the globe. Furthering capitalism, introducing represent-

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ative institutions, enforcing the rule of law, and investing in infrastructure, Britain lifted many regions of world out of the mire of tyranny and gave native populations the opportunity to advance their civilizations. The colonial administrations established by the British were by necessity benevolent despotisms that had the arduous task of phasing out their autocratic rule as they gradually imparted free institutions to their dependencies. The early British Empire was composed of self-governing colonies settled by Englishmen, and colonial policy was one of “salutary neglect.”¹ This changed dramatically with the acquisition of India. Here began the experiment of governing a people unprepared for self-rule while maintaining accord with British political principles. The sheer size of India and the extended period of time London managed the subcontinent make the history of this colony the best showcase of the principles that governed the British Empire and, therefore, the greatest defense of British imperialism.

British involvement on the Indian subcontinent began in the early seventeenth century through the commercial dealings of the British East India Company. Reluctant to engage in acts of conquest, this trading company had the responsibilities of empire thrust upon it in the eighteenth century. Great Britain had sought colonies based on emigration in the New World, but they did not desire to commandeer control of existing civilizations. It was not by intention that the Empire obtained this society, but through the intensity of the trade wars fought between the emerging nation-states of Europe. The rise of East India Company led to a troublesome transition from commercial enterprise to political administration. This new era of British involvement in India

brought the struggle of balancing the principles of liberty with imperialism to the forefront of Parliamentary politics. Determined not to conform to the ways of the East, the leaders of Britain began a process debate over the proper role of imperial rule and the necessary reforms of the Company apparatus. The self-critique of the Empire by these leaders reveals the intentions of the British to preside over a just rule in the subcontinent and their refusal to ruthlessly abuse their authority. Throughout the duration of British rule in India, Parliament was constantly searching for the most liberal and civilized way to govern this nation.

As British rule in the subcontinent evolved, the focus of the British people turned from disinterestedly presiding over a just regime to westernizing India through economic and political reforms. This earnest desire to improve the condition of India was rooted in the English belief that their system was the best reason had to offer and that it was their duty to advance the Indian civilization. The duty to advance civilization was not directed only to India. Properly understood, this duty involved increasing the civilization of Britain by fulfilling their imperial responsibilities and using the profits from Indian trade to advance their own material progress. With this objective in mind, the British undertook ambitious economic improvement projects and invested in an infrastructure system. These ventures were aimed at increasing the efficiency of British administration and alleviating the condition of Indian life and commerce. The civilizing mission of the Empire, however, was not limited to economic programs. The British similarly worked to improve the moral condition of India through education and legal reform. The Indian despots of the Mogul dynasty had used the ignorance of the masses to remain in power and instituted barbaric mores in the subcontinent. The English refused to tolerate these methods

¹ Edmund Burke, “Speech for Conciliation with the Colonies, 22 March 1775,” in *Works 1:464-71*. University of Chicago, <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch1s2.html>

and protected the natural rights of the masses under the rule of law. They worked to enlighten people as the basis of their rule and permitted any religious rites or mores that did not contradict the moral law. Toleration was exercised towards Eastern customs, but they would not endure barbaric practices under their regime and protected previously abused minority factions. An economically developed and prosperous civilization is dependent on a certain level of political stability and liberty, which the English worked to bring to India.

The process of tranquilizing the active, anarchic forces in India required pragmatic decisions and the consolidation of rule under the British. The unification of this decentralized and hostile land was a product of the British effort to secure the peace of India and establish a centralized administration in South Asia. The role of the British in Indian history outlasted the British East India Company, which was ended by a mutinous uprising in the nineteenth century. It fell to the British Crown to continue this process by imparting free institutions at a faster pace and enlarging the educated class in Indian society. Practice was necessary before wielding the potentially destructive powers of civil liberty and the prudential course set British Raj towards self-government was constantly outpaced by the desires of Indian nationalists. The handling of Indian nationalism in the later phases of the Raj reveals a great deal about the character of the British Empire. The British determination to stand by their cherished political principles prevented permanent control of India and put a time limit on their dominion in this country. By organizing an education system and creating limited, representative institutions, the British were actively preparing the Indian people to be the basis of the regime they would leave behind. This gradual process, however, was interrupted by the seismic aftereffects of two World

Wars and the nationalist movement headed by Mohandas Gandhi. Unfortunately, after two centuries of committed leadership, the British began to compromise on their political principles and lost their will to maintain a prudent course to Indian self-government. The British consistently issued concessions to the forces of Mr. Gandhi as they grew weary of the difficulties of imperial rule.

The fact that the British were intentionally a force for the progress of the people of India does not mean they did not stand to gain a great deal through their possessions in South Asia. Their motives were not in the least altruistic. It is not hard to discern that British investment in India was spurred on by self-interest, but this self-interest was ultimately an instrument to better India. The British were, however, driven by a belief that both of these nations could benefit greatly from their economic and political interaction. Exploitation is the word of choice of modern elites to describe the methods of British imperialism in India, but the British were intent of finding ways to mutually benefit these societies through their economic interaction. Investing in infrastructure and improving Indian productivity were the chief means to obtain these objectives. It is true that the profits from these projects returned to those who earned them by funding these improvements to Indian infrastructure, but the means to create more wealth were left in native hands. Thus, both the mother country and the colony experienced tremendous benefit. The foundation for the explosive growth the Republic of India in modern times was laid by the reforms instituted under the British Raj and this economically symbiotic relationship.

The attempt to equip their subjects to more adequately rule themselves is not something that characterized any empire prior to the one supervised from London.

Furthermore, rather than attempt to force the Indian people into false conversions or wipe away the vestiges of their traditional ways of life, the Raj sought to tolerate anything that would not obstruct Indian political progress, compromise the natural rights of the citizenry, or incite rebellion against British rule. There were times in which a show of force was necessary, but most of the people in the Empire were opponents of gratuitous brutality and sought to employ methods that characterized the behavior of a civilized people. The Raj had many shortcomings, especially in the early days of Company rule; however, attempts to remedy these situations and prevent their future occurrence accompanied nearly every instance of British imprudence. While it now depends on the Indian people to continue advancing their own civilization, the legacy of the Raj put India on the fast track to becoming an international superpower and laid the groundwork for their sudden rise in the twenty-first century.

Contrasting the condition of India before and after the Raj is all that is necessary to understand the positive impact the British Empire had in South Asia. No one can deny that there was a drastic improvement of the economic and political conditions left behind by centuries of despotic regimes. Unlike other empires, the British sought to replace the rule of oriental despots with an administration that worked in the interests of the governed. A proper examination of the British Raj will show a great improvement in the condition of India over native despotisms and show the transformative process unleashed by British political principles and economic practices. The British Raj was far from perfect, but the intentions of Britain were to better these native peoples and use this colony as a means to spread and safeguard the principles of freedom around the world.

The Mogul Empire: The Errors of Eastern Imperialism

The shelter of the seemingly impenetrable Himalaya Mountains and the abundance of the fertile Indus River Valley invited early migrations of mankind to the resource-rich Indian subcontinent. Behind these geographical barriers, the early inhabitants of this fertile plain began to develop the characteristics and principles that formed the foundation of the Hindu civilization, which would come to dominate every aspect of Indian life for millennia to come. Though the intimidating geographical features of the subcontinent had a tremendous influence on life in this region, they were not sufficient to deter countless invading armies enticed by the agricultural bounty and material wealth of India. Each successive, conquering army entered India with the ambition of transforming the civilization they found by imposing their own way of life on the resident population; however, each of these foreign powers quickly discovered that the cultural distinctions, religious beliefs, and political practices of India formed barriers which were not as easy to conquer as the territory they seized. Ultimately, all of these ancient and medieval invaders failed to completely reform Indian society to the degree that they desired and instead became partially reconciled to the unalterable particulars of the Hindu civilization.

Though the fabric of this culture remained distinct, each successive ruling class added another dimension to this already complex society and affected varying degrees of change in the political and religious institutions of India. At the very least, every foreign intrusion that penetrated the Indus River Valley embedded a distinctive minority group in the midst of an unmanageable mixture of races, religions, cultures, castes, languages, and political divisions. The continual erosion of the

political landscape caused national, political unity under native and foreign rulers to be an extremely rare phenomenon. This political disarray reinforced the sectionalism of India by yoking different regions of this civilization to radically different regimes that promoted unique mores and established different ideals for character formation. For centuries, instability reigned as Arabs, Turks, Afghans, Mongols, and other peoples poured into the subcontinent and took turns oppressing the defeated minority groups under their dominion before they themselves suffered from the same treatment at the hands of later masters. At times national empires would form under the capable rule of an exceptional tyrant before disintegrating into factional chaos and domestic disunity. The vacuum left by the rapid disappearance of these countrywide, political forces unshackled local ruling families from national allegiances and invited more hostile action from outside aggressors.

Furthermore, the nebulous teachings of Hinduism left a great deal of latitude for regional variation and doctrinal evolution. This reality encouraged a pronounced provincialism that violently resurfaced after the rapid collapse of every, subsequent alien regime. Though ethnic and racial differences proved divisive in these territories, the greatest examples of mass disenfranchisement were incited by religious tensions. The clash of warring faiths was especially intense in India since it was the seedbed of several Eastern religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. These main Dharmic religions, which are the faiths originating in Hinduism, could coexist only because they were drawn from the same, initial worldview. These factions were not altogether successful at avoiding conflict, but, for many years, a limited toleration did exist under the Buddhist Mauryan Empire for subservient Hindus and a similar condition prevailed later for Buddhists

living under the Hindu Gupta Empire. The inclusiveness of these respective faiths and their general doctrinal shapelessness allowed them to flourish simultaneously without an extreme amount of interference from each other. The rise of Islam roughly one hundred years after the death of the prophet Mohammed, however, added an extremely ferocious element to the religious atmosphere of India due to the inherently belligerent nature of this rapidly spreading faith. The early phases of Islamic action in India consisted of numerous bands of raiders sweeping across the northern remnants of the Gupta Empire and few then could have predicted the enormous role Islam was to play in their future.

It was the collapse of the Gupta Empire and the “Golden Age of Indian history” that renewed the seemingly endless cycle of tumultuous invasions and dynastic antagonisms for the next one thousand years.² During this turbulent period, countless tyrants exerted control over limited territories and continually waged war against both domestic and foreign threats to their power. Although portions of India experienced a relatively stable existence for various periods of time, the larger nation was engulfed in sectarian feuds and administered by ruthless regimes. The Hunnic attacks that brought down the Gupta Empire helped to pave the way for Muslim invaders to gain a larger territorial share of the Indus River Valley and establish themselves slowly as a political force under several Turkish dynasties. The Islamic ruling houses of this era essentially created an Indo-Islamic nation in modern day Pakistan and prepared the remainder of India for further Islamic domination. By this time, a substantial part of India had settled into local comfort under

² Anil Lal and Vinay Lal, *World Book Advanced*, World Book 2009, Web, s.v. “History of India,” (Accessed 10 October 2009).

regional authorities and the remainder of the nation had grown accustomed to the process of continued invasion and interstate conflict.

In April of 1526, however, King Babur of Kabul launched a military campaign into India with the intention of strengthening his hold on his ancestral throne while expanding the kingdom into the more prosperous regions that lay to the South.³ The initial victories of this ambitious king were largely inconsequential and he spent the large majority of his reign consolidating the territories that were under his control. Nevertheless, Babur was eventually able to gain a substantial foothold for the Mogul dynasty in the northern portion of India, though there was little to suggest that this ruling family would distinguish itself from the innumerable aggressors preceding them. Although the kingdom Babur left to his heir upon his death in 1530 was large, it was insecure and plagued with internal political problems.⁴ A disputed succession combined with a general maladministration of this kingdom greatly compromised the territorial legacy of Babur and caused the fortunes of the house of Mogul to reverse dramatically. The reign of Humayan, the son of Babur, saw continual political strife with the Rajputs, who were local political officials from the royal Hindu caste, and intense military conflicts with Afghan rebels, who were successful at commandeering control of the state for a brief period of time. Although the ineptitude of this tyrant almost erased the achievements of his father, the early conquests of the Moguls in India served as an important foundation for the later successes of this dynasty.

³ William Harrison Moreland, and Atul Chandra Chatterjee. *A Short History of India*. (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1967), 205.

⁴ J. Talboys Wheeler. *A Short History of India: India and the Frontier States of Afghanistan, Nipal, and Burma*, vol. I. (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1899), 155.

The death of Humayan marked the end of the tragic decadence that accompanied his imperial mismanagement and signaled the beginning of a resurgence of the political and military relevance of the Moguls under the qualified guidance of Akbar. The details of this early period of Mogul history provide a picture of the background of this ambitious clan of invaders, but the era launched by the ascension of Akbar in 1556 much more clearly demonstrated the typical features of the Indian regime and the essential characteristics of the Mogul Empire.⁵ “A large empire supposes a despotic authority in the person who governs” and the next one hundred and fifty years of Mogul hegemony came under the extended reigns of four such tyrants.⁶ These emperors exhibited all of the characteristics that typify an Eastern autocrat, but their individual qualities caused each of their reigns to be marked by a different theme of Eastern despotism. Considered together, their reigns fully convey the unsavory character of this form of rule. Understanding despotic rule and the exercise of such unbounded power is necessary to appreciate fully the world Europeans first encountered in the sixteenth century.

Akbar the Great came into power and immediately designed to reverse the dangerous decline of the monarchy and the Mogul state. The dynamic drive of Akbar and the momentous events of his reign were marked by a desire for power and glory. In many ways, the grandiose pursuits of this

⁵ Kavalam Madhava Panikkar. *A Survey of Indian History*. (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 169.

⁶ Baron de Montesquieu, “Distinctive Principles of a Despotic Government,” in *The Spirit of Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent, vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire Volume 1: From the East India Company to the Suez Canal*, ed. Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 92.

tyrant were inspired by the fear of losing his status, and he worked tirelessly to reconstruct the administrative apparatus of the Indian government so that it was more effective at preserving his position. As with all of the despotisms that had governed Hindustan and the other regions of the East, the various levels of government were engineered to ensure the emperor was the fountain of all legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The proper consolidation of these powers under his office was guaranteed through the careful concentration of the military, the courts, and the larger, imperial governing structure on both the national and local levels. Essential to remaining in authority was the proper maintenance of a massive standing army to intimidate the populace into submission and overrun neighboring enemies. Strategic deployments of soldiery and fortifications, such as the massive military installations at Agra, were a part of the process of securing the vast lands under Mogul dominion and suppressing the potential for popular movements aimed at achieving autonomy. Using the military might of the empire, Akbar brutally wrested control from the Afghan rebels that had broken up the territories conquered by Babur and sought swift vengeance on those who opposed his rule. As commander-in-chief, this Mogul swept across Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat, and Bengal to strengthen his political power and keep the military occupied. By the sheer force of his fierce military reputation, he was able to retain unquestioned control over much of the Deccan plateau, North India, and Afghanistan.

Standing at the head of the judicial hierarchy, Akbar ensured that no single magistrate made a criminal or civil verdict independently. Rather he forced the judiciary to depend on his executive appointees by making all legal judgments the

products of collaboration.⁷ To effectively manage provincial business, Akbar appointed viceroys to act as miniature autocrats in his stead and they took direct orders from the emperor as they oversaw the political affairs of their state. All powers involving force on the provincial level, however, were vested in another office as further protection against rebellion. Each of these vassals, also referred to as *Nawabs*, was accompanied by a commandant “charged with the duties of suppressing, or rather forestalling, rebellion” and the duties of policing the local populations.⁸ The office of *Dewan* was established to oversee taxation and the management of revenue collection. There was a landed nobility in Mogul society that, in theory, was not hereditarily perpetuated for the possessions and rights that came with these positions belonged exclusively to the Emperor and he could resume control of these properties, which functioned as grants, at any moment for any reason. Even though these nobles were nothing more than prominent tenets and served at the vacillating pleasure of their lord, most of the titles that existed settled into a loose routine of primogeniture. These efforts were generally successful at forcing the nobility and those political officials under them into a pragmatic subservience relative to the personal vigor of the ruler. The system that Akbar engineered was consistent with the nature of despotism and left “nothing to check provincial rulers but fear of the [Emperor and] ...nothing to check the [Emperor] but fear of rebellion.”⁹

It was only the perpetual fear of being overthrown that moderated the gov-

⁷ Moreland, *A Short History of India*, 224.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 223-224.

⁹ Talboys Wheeler, “Akbar Establishes the Mogul Empire in India” *The Great Events by Famous Historians, Vol 9* (Harrogate, TN: The National Alunmi, 1926) *World Book Advanced Web*. (accessed April 6, 2010).

ernment of the Moguls and led the spiritually apathetic Emperor Akbar to be surprisingly tolerant of minority religious groups in his dominion. To quell the internal dissent that plagued both of his predecessors, Akbar, nominally a Muslim, set aside the Shari'ah law and the Qur'an as practical guides for government and freed his rule from the limitations that the comprehensive, divine law imposed, while broadening the support he received from otherwise defiant factions. The stringent regulations commanded by the faith of the Moguls were abandoned in favor of conciliatory policies aimed at appeasing the large numbers of Hindus under his jurisdiction. Actions such as eliminating the *jizya*, which is a tax on infidels, marrying an influential Rajput princess, and allowing Hindus the ability to hold government offices, alienated the orthodox Muslim population, but secured his throne against vicious internal opposition.¹⁰ These policies emanated from his desire for the "religious ideal of *sulh-i-hull*," which means "at peace with all," but they applied exclusively to domestic affairs and ultimately served as a motivation to extend the boundaries of the empire because conquest was, in his mind, the surest way of honoring God.¹¹ Akbar was the most reticent of the Mogul dynasty to claim the Islamic faith for himself; the religious regulations he adopted to consolidate his authority remained largely unmolested for most of the following century and established a model that his more judicious descendents would follow.

Towards the end of his life, Akbar found himself troubled by the turmoil and tragedy that naturally accompanies the personal life of an oriental despot. As the head of an enormous family, which resulted from a myriad of polygamous unions, the

Emperor was a victim of the loneliness that came from being unable to trust even his own offspring for fear of their unrestrained ambitions. Akbar was plagued for years by the legitimate fear of being poisoned by his children and went so far as to practically hold two of his sons hostage in court for his own security. Akbar died in the year 1605 after successfully surviving in office for forty-nine years and presiding over the greatest period of expansion and revitalization that the Mogul Empire would witness.¹² It was the efficient administrative genius of this Emperor that allowed his successors the ability to reign over a stable empire without having to possess any real talent for ruling. The empire of Akbar continued for another century and was able to survive as long as his descendents maintained the reforms instituted during his reign—this is a testimony to the durability of the system he devised and not the quality of future Mogul leadership. The zenith of the Mogul Empire was yet to come.

Six years after he attempted to wrest control of the empire while Akbar was on the battlefield, Jahangir assumed the throne with the blessing of his dying father.¹³ Jahangir forsook the vigorous governing style of his father and his reign was marked by an overwhelming desire for comfort and pleasure. Although he is said to have had a genuine appreciation for the arts and a keen sense of justice, years of intense alcoholism and opium abuse contributed to an occasionally cruel governing style that could be most accurately described as the rule of the whim. "Indolent and uninterested in financial or political matters," Jahangir pursued a life of luxury and dedication to the pastimes he fancied at the expense of the health of the

¹⁰ Annemarie Schimmel. *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art, and Culture*. (London: Reaktion Books Limited, 2004), 36.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹² Schimmel, *The History of the Great Mughals*, 40.

¹³ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2009, Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s.v. "Jahangir," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/29939/5/Jahangir> (accessed 13 October 2009).

Mogul government.¹⁴ Governed by a poor administrator, the empire experienced a period of structural deterioration and, after defeating the last Rajput bastion at Rajasthan, the temporary conclusion of military conquest due to his indifference. Following the traditional manner of despots, insignificant violations of protocol, such as touching the monarch or improperly approaching the throne, were severely punished, all rebels were brutally executed, and those who simply had the potential to seize power had their eyes gouged out to remove the possibility of usurpation. With Jahangir, however, there was a peculiar lack of predictability that characterized the verdicts he issued. Though he repealed various forms of mutilation as punishments for misconduct, his character was disposed towards sudden eruptions of ruthlessness that rendered him “capable of shooting a man on the spot, or having him flayed” for basic crimes.¹⁵

As his apathy towards politics led him to a more isolated pursuit of whimsical interests, his wife, Nur Jahan, and a small clique of family members assumed a greater share of control over the affairs of state. With this group of relatives in control, civil strife and economic instability emerged in the absence of competent, singular rule and even incited a three year long rebellion led by his oldest son. This aloof monarch spent his last days ill with a fever that was likely caused by his alcoholism; his anticipated death spawned numerous plots to grab power and led to the slaughter of many of his family members. Eventually his son, Shah Jahan, became emperor after ending the brief period of confusion following the death of his father. Though this reign produced no accomplishment of consequence, Jahangir serves as an invaluable demon-

stration of unbridled caprice and the vain pursuit of fancy that is typical of Eastern despots.

The thirty year reign of Shah Jahan would witness the apex of Mogul supremacy in spite of his leadership. Burning with a desire to distinguish himself above his predecessors, the policies that Shah Jahan implemented during his reign were marked by a grotesque opulence almost unparalleled in history. He was a decisive administrator and was originally given to fiscal discipline, but the extensive powers at his command rapidly weakened his character. At the time of his ascension, there were between 100,000,000 and 125,000,000 souls within the borders of the Mogul Empire from which the dewans drew massive revenues through heavy taxation.¹⁶ With the ability to obtain large sums of money by stripping the wealth off of this enormous population, the Mogul Emperor was easily the richest man in the entire world. With virtually the entire imperial treasury at his disposal, Shah Jahan devoted his financial reserves to ostentatious building projects. Unsatisfied with the condition of his capital, he remade the entire city of Agra by renovating large portions of the imperial palace and, most famously, commissioning the Taj Mahal as a tomb for his favorite wife. A prime example of the outrageous expenditures of Shah Jahan is the Peacock Throne, which took seven years to assemble and cost over £1,000,000.¹⁷ After completing the lavish refurbishment of Agra, he abruptly moved the seat of government to the city of Delhi and squandered the resources of the nation building an extravagant district within the new capital named Shahjahanabad, after himself. As the reckless schemes of Shah Jahan became exceedingly extravagant, the annual deficits of India grew at an alarming

¹⁴ Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁶ Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, 96.

¹⁷ Moreland, *A Short History of India*, 242.

pace and the treasury neared total depletion. Unrelenting taxation exacted an enormous toll on the economy to the point that the projects of the emperor were hollowing out the economic structure of the Indian economy.

As a predominantly agrarian society, the lives of the Indian people were necessarily tied to subsistence farming, though they were technically not serfs. Farmers who were financially unable to maintain possession of their land oftentimes worked for *jagirdars*, who were government officials granted territories to administer.¹⁸ Burdened by excessive taxation, those who worked these farms were forced into poverty and several rebellions were initiated as a result. The extortionist policies of the Mogul court encouraged the formation of bands of robbers who would hide in the dense jungles and prey on vulnerable subjects in the countryside. The presence of these bandits and the confiscatory policies of the government discouraged farm production among the peasantry. To make life more difficult, several severe famines ravaged India and caused the starvation of countless people; meanwhile, the emperor entertained dignitaries in the most lavish court on earth. Despite the overbearing regulations imposed by the Mogul government that opposed production and closed the market, the Indian economy was surprisingly advanced. The vast resources of the subcontinent combined with a seemingly limitless supply of labor allowed for a substantial level of productivity. Contemplating the potential economic output this empire could have enjoyed under liberal rule, given the abundance of this region, is staggering, especially when considering the many challenges economic production had to brave in this repressive environment. In 1657, after being weakened by illness, Shah Jahan fell victim to the time-honored, family tradition of usurpation

¹⁸ Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, 99.

when he was captured and imprisoned by his son, Aurungzeb.¹⁹ He spent the remainder of his days in the fortress of Agra and was buried in the Taj Mahal after his death in 1666.²⁰ Shah Jahan spent extravagant amounts to exhibit the supposed magnificence of his reign and the financial burden of honoring himself brought havoc to the lives of his people.

Aurungzeb was the last of the four great Mogul Emperors as the direct result of the policies he enacted during his time in office. He was the first devout Muslim in this dynasty to rule over a Hindu majority and his reign was marked by fanatical oppression. Unfazed by violent actions and combative measures, this emperor killed three brothers, imprisoned his father, and put down a rebellion spearheaded by five of his sons to remain in power. This confrontational style set the tone for his reign and furthered the decline of the Moguls. Having inherited a financially exhausted empire faced with growing external threats, Aurungzeb followed his religious zeal where his predecessors applied prudence. This Emperor was completely preoccupied with the belief that political power was a means to further Islam and he reinstated the tax on infidels, restricted the consumption of alcohol, appointed censors to guard the morals of society, and suppressed various pleasures such as music. Aurungzeb openly defied the majority of the population he ruled by removing all Hindus from government, desecrating Hindu places of worship, and discouraging the practices of other faiths. These radical reforms were not conducive to the internal state of the empire and an outraged Hindu population began to unite against Muslim rule underneath the rising Maratha confederation. During the closing days of his reign, this group of Hindu leaders was involved in open conflict with

¹⁹ Moreland, *A Short History of India*, 210.

²⁰ Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, 50.

the Mogul government as the empire disintegrated rapidly into increasing turmoil.

The religious fervor of Aurungzeb spilled into his foreign policy as he sought to extend the domain of his Islamist empire. The costs incurred by these military operations forced ruinous economic consequences on the people. Foolishly, the emperor left the capital to conduct several profitless military campaigns and, in his absence, the entire apparatus of government that was built around his person began to collapse. The consistently high rates of taxation had a devastating impact on commerce and promoted corruption among government officials. As local dewans fell under the control of influential nawab families, the Mogul government rapidly decentralized as regional authorities gained more financial autonomy and political independence. While this process was unfolding, it became increasingly difficult for the empire to maintain order and a general lawlessness began to prevail deep in the jungles and along the sea coasts. As factional conflict raged, only the Muslim population of India clung to the Mogul Empire. When Aurungzeb died in 1707, he left an empire beset with insurmountable problems led by an exhausted government.²¹ Nevertheless, the next twelve years witnessed five reigns and three wars over the throne, but no suitable heir was found that could salvage the wreckage of the rapidly contracting Mogul Empire. Though there was turmoil surrounding the confluence of these fateful events, the devolution of authority was relatively bloodless as most local powers simply removed themselves from the previously inescapable grip of the empire and assumed the rights of autonomy. Although this decaying empire lingered as a political

²¹ Charles S. S. Higham, *History of the British Empire* (London: Longmans Green and Company, 1934), 76.

force through the middle of the eighteenth century, Mogul leadership, by this time, was content to passively watch their dominions disintegrate and quickly found their status to be largely indistinct from the other states that emerged from the breakup of their empire.

The most enduring legacy of Mogul despotism is the character it fostered in the unfortunate people of the subcontinent. One of the most revealing truths concerning the nature of despotism is contained within the word itself; “[t]he term despotism is derived from the Greek despotes, meaning... ‘master of slaves.’”²² This is possibly the most accurate description of the status of those living under this form of autocratic rule, for the connotation is that they have emerged from the darkness of savagery by learning the practice of obedience, but have only been habituated to follow the express orders of a superior that carry the threat of force behind them. John Stuart Mill, who was a notable British philosopher and reform advocate, noted that this compliance, which exists only when in sight of tight supervision, quickly dissipates once unmonitored and is primarily motivated by an “appeal not to their interests, but to their instincts; immediate hope or immediate terror.”²³ Rather than instructing the people to abide by a written legal code that serves as a general prescription for civilized conduct, “despotism, which may tame the savage, will... only confirm the slaves in their incapacities.”²⁴ The rule according to the will of a despot necessarily precludes the possibility of a free citizenry guided by the rule of law because it demands conformity and deprives the people

²² Harlow and Carter, “Introduction: Oriental Despotisms and Political Economies” in vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire*, 89.

²³ John Stuart Mill, Excerpts from “Considerations on Representative Government,” vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire*, ed. Harlow and Carter, 114.

²⁴ Ibid.

of the opportunities of civic responsibility. Since the vast majority of this civilization was paralyzed in poverty, the peasants were completely indifferent as to the variety of despot they had exploiting them and watched idly as invaders continually supplanted one oppressive regime for the sake of substituting it with their own brand of civil torment. Regardless of who ruled, these peasants would receive no aid in the continual struggle against the ills of starvation and scarcity. There is a benevolent despotism that would ideally direct those who are not yet fully capable of ruling themselves with the ambition of equipping them to become self-reliant. The political system deeply rooted in the Far East, however, is aimed only at stasis. It desires to force the people into dependence and is designed to impede anything that would advance the condition of the populace in favor of maintaining the advantages possessed by those who rule. The burden of this despotic regime stifled the spirit of innovation by discouraging the use of reason and melted the will of the people into mindless conformity with the will of the despot.

Unenlightened opponents of civilization often laud the unaided existence of even the most barbarous cultures and willfully confuse the hostage condition of these oppressed peoples with an imagined serenity. These senseless delusions are blasted apart by historical realities and decent minds cannot sponsor such ideals if for no other reason than to simply refrain from spitefully mocking the memory of the countless, tormented souls who lived and died in the negligent custody of oriental despotism. For centuries, relentless invasions sustained a turbulent rotation of foreign regimes that each lingered until the overuse of their harshest tactics exhausted the fear of their fiercest opponents. Far from being natives attached to the success of the Hindu civilization, the infamous Moguls were an

alien regime bred in the bloodshed of the Persian habit of government and were so easily acclimated to the harsh realities of India that they almost cast the illusion of domestic origin. Not content to concentrate the miseries of their rule in the far reaches of India, these barbarian chiefs imposed their savage government on all surrounding territories that invited their carnage through the slightest show of weakness. Unfortunate multitudes fell before their conquering armies as the riches of India were devoured to feed the ravenous cravings of these cruel intruders. Perpetuating poverty, suffocating progress, slaughtering dissidents, and suppressing civic virtue, these vile monsters reduced their subjects to political invertebrates who were incapable of opposing despotic rule and wielding liberty. Unconcerned with mitigating the intolerable sufferings of the people, these emperors tirelessly pursued impish amusements, and for a century and a half the welfare of a hundred million souls lay helplessly prostrate before their brutish whims. Rather than whetting the appetites of the masses for emancipation, the abominations of the Moguls further entrenched India in the agonies of despotism. Injured and abused by the scourge of Mogul dominance, India anticipated the imminent rise of an even graver threat to human freedom as it witnessed the climactic descent of this imperial government into turmoil.

An Unwanted Inheritance: The Company Rise and the Mogul Demise

Such was the seemingly inescapable plight of India when European eyes first beheld this mighty civilization in the shackles of despotism from the deck of the *São Gabriel* in 1498.²⁵ This voyage, under the careful watch of Vasco da Gama, was the first of several that this capable navigator would command on behalf of the Portuguese Crown and represented one of the most significant achievements of the dawning Age of Exploration. Although this accomplishment is overshadowed by the discovery of the New World six years earlier, it was this quest for convenient economic exposure to the vast resources of the Indian subcontinent that originally launched a period of European expansion that rekindled the natural vigor of the Western spirit. While England remained locked in a defensive position during the sixteenth century, other ambitious European nations spent the decades immediately following the discovery of the New World spanning the globe searching for new lands, establishing colonies, converting native peoples, and conquering ancient civilizations. After nearly one thousand years of simply attempting to secure themselves within the borders of Europe against Muslim aggression, Western civilization was unleashed and it was not long before every corner of the globe recognized the extent of her potential.

Few at this time could have realized that these scattered adventures of European explorers would lay the foundation for what would be nearly five centuries of Western imperial dominance of the globe. The origins of the West had been closely linked

to the legacies of the great, ancient empires of Greece and Rome, but the collapse of the classical world ushered in an age of inactivity in the West. Out of the chaos following the fall of the Roman Empire, a series of feudal kingdoms emerged as the Roman Catholic Church rose to the forefront of European politics. These decentralized realms were headed by a host of weak kings who depended on the allegiance of vassals and knights to remain in power. In times of war, these lords would summon the political hierarchy they guided to defend their mutual interests while seeking the approbation of the Roman Church. This status quo lasted for centuries in medieval Europe until the effects of the gunpowder revolution and other intellectual movements in the fifteenth century transformed the political landscape. As the use of gunpowder spread, monarchs began hiring soldiers to form standing armies rather than depending on the fealty of a few knights to secure their kingdoms. Individual vassals could not afford the costs of a standing army and only consolidated states could finance a modern war. Princes depended less on the loyalty of their vassals and were able to centralize the power of the state with their uncontested control of force.

As the old feudal order disintegrated, Europe watched as powerful nation-states developed under the rule of absolute monarchs. Unchecked by other institutions of government, these great kings possessed previously unattained authority over their territories and worked to remove the other forces that restrained the free exercise of their power. Already the master of the state, these monarchs assumed headship of the church within their respective sovereignties and not only removed the Catholic Church as a contender for temporal power, but also liberated the sphere of international relations from the considerations of religion. They no longer sought the dream of a universal Christian empire, but pursued the best

²⁵ Harold Victor Livermore, *A New History of Portugal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 138.

interests of their state as an individual unit by conducting formal diplomacy, forging alliances, and waging wars. These monarchs desired to use every segment of society to retain and expand their territories and, in their desperate search for security, used many strategies successfully employed by their forebears, but the defining factor of these developing imperial struggles was commerce.

The existence of trade as “an affair of state” was a unique development of the modern era not seen in the classical empires of old.²⁶ The advancements of this age similarly uprooted the manorial economic system that pervaded Europe throughout the Middle Ages, but it was the rise of absolutism that was responsible for the corresponding emergence of the mercantilist system. The increasing expenses incurred by the frequent contests of nations created a need for monarchs to increase the wealth of the nation for the benefit of the state. In contrast with the feudal system, mercantilist thinkers no longer saw land as the basis of wealth, but rather saw the role commerce, trade, and population growth could have in prospering the condition of the state. With this in mind, the prevailing economic thinkers of this time contended that the most effective way to accumulate a large store of hard currency in the treasury was by maintaining a favorable balance of trade. In particular, the collection and retention of large reserves of precious metals was seen as an especially important component of fiscal welfare. Rather than seeing gold and silver as commodities, many early mercantilists saw international trade as a means to draw stores of bullion out of their trading partners.

²⁶ David Hume, “Of Liberty and Despotism” (1741), in Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1985), 88-89, quoted in David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967), 147.

These goals demanded the vigorous protection of domestic industries and the strict regulation of international trade to maximize the net inflow of capital. Ideally, through the use of external taxes, protective tariffs, shipping restrictions, and trade monopolies, a nation would rely on a limited amount of inputs from other nations and export final products for a profit, but this situation was difficult to sustain since all European nations were striving for this same type of self-sufficiency. With all of these nations working to make trade a stalemate in the West, the necessity of finding new outlets in which to sell goods became all the more crucial as they sought to augment their trade surpluses. This rush to find new markets rapidly changed into a contest for colonies as European struggles for economic supremacy grew more heated. Political economists of this period saw great benefit in possessing overseas colonies, but they contended that the only way to benefit the mother country at the head of this imperial metropolis was to strictly regulate the flow of trade within the empire through taxation and other protectionist measures. Any form of colonial independence, therefore, was potentially a threat to the empire.

It was the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula who first attempted to find a passage to the Far East when they stumbled upon the New World. Preoccupied with the task of subduing the Americas, Spain relinquished the quest for Eastern trade in favor of pursuing goals more in line with their national passion for crusades. Through the course of several successive voyages the Portuguese were eventually able to force their way into the Indian marketplace and began to transport commodities back to Europe. Since there were few nations in the sixteenth century that had both the political stability and financial means to facilitate these intercontinental excursions, European trade with India was exclusively a Portu-

guese affair. For nearly an entire century, all other European nations were unhappily dependent on this single supplier for all goods coming from the east of the Cape of Good Hope. At this point in time, the Portuguese and the Spanish had achieved a global ascendancy that threatened the independence of Protestant England and it appeared as though this tiny island nation would not be able to compete with these emboldened Catholic powers for long. Still reeling from the aftereffects of the English Reformation, the energies of Elizabethan England were entirely consumed by an enduring contest with Spain and the compliance of their Scottish neighbors with continental enemies. While the British Navy had made significant strides under the Tudors, English overseas operations were confined to privateering since the fleet was needed for defense. Surrounded by enemies, all of the resources of England were invested in protecting the homeland at the expense of global enterprise.

All this changed, however, with the stunning defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588; the most immediate threat to English security was removed and the nation gradually enjoyed the reduction of international tensions as they approached the seventeenth century.²⁷ As England relaxed its defensive posture, both noblemen and merchants alike began to increasingly seek the approval of the Crown to engage in raids on Spanish shipping, voyages of exploration, and commercial ventures. While many of these brief expeditions have escaped the memory of history, the final act of the Crown in the sixteenth century birthed one of the most consequential enterprises. On December 31, 1600, Queen Elizabeth I granted an exclu-

sive trade monopoly to a group of investors who formed the British East India Company.²⁸ Three years after the British East India Company was created, the Virgin Queen died without an heir, and the English throne passed to the Scottish House of Stuart. With the Union of the Crowns in 1603, a new era opened that would see the birth of what would later become known as the First British Empire.²⁹ Facing a much more favorable geopolitical situation, the British were finally able to do more than merely harass the foreign possessions of European rivals and refocused their efforts on constructing their own colonial network. Unlike the ancient, contiguous empires of Greece and Rome, the basis of the relationship between this modern, maritime empire and their distant possessions was commercial in nature. This was an empire based on trade.

While the royal houses of Europe were reorienting their regimes to better accommodate absolute rule, the existence of an influential aristocracy and Parliament prevented the British monarch from achieving this high degree of centralization. Consequently, the wealth of this nation was also more evenly distributed across the country and it was beyond the financial reach of this constitutional monarchy to fund grandiose colonial projects. In order to compete with other nations for a share of international trade and increase government revenues, the Crown had to depend on the resources of private enterprise to be the engine behind the cultivation of Eastern trade and the settlement of colonies. To induce financiers to invest in these business ventures, the government would issue a monopoly giving exclusive trading rights in a specific territory

²⁷ Churchill, Winston, *Churchill's History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, ed. Henry Steele Commager (New York: Greenwich House, 1983), 152.

²⁸ Robert A. Huttenback, *The British Imperial Experience* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), 1.

²⁹ Churchill, *Churchill's History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, 158.

to a select group of merchants. The removal of all competition was a major incentive for businessmen as it minimized the risk of failure by guaranteeing they would return a massive profit for their efforts. The government in return could rely on these privately funded operations to safeguard British interests abroad while bringing steady revenue into the treasury.

Following the established Portuguese and Dutch trading operations in the Orient, the British East India Company began to organize an expedition intended to gain England a share in the spice trade. At this time, British merchants were primarily concerned with establishing trade in the Spice Islands and bypassed the restricted markets of India. The first voyage of the Company in 1601 took their agents to the islands of Sumatra and Java, where they encountered stiff resistance from Dutch and Portuguese traders.³⁰ After another voyage to the Spice Islands, an expedition was organized that was intended to extend the trading arm of the British East India Company to the Indian mainland. The Dutch and Portuguese were defensive about their holdings in the subcontinent, but it appeared to Company officials that India would provide a more favorable climate for business in the long run. Braving the twelve thousand mile journey to the East Indies, Captain William Hawkins and the crew of the *HMS Hector* safely arrived in the port city of Surat in August of 1608.³¹ When this tiny band of sailors stepped onto the edge of this mighty empire, their imaginations never entertained the idea of the British one day ruling India. The nation that lay before these Englishmen had a population twenty times the size of the United Kingdom and generated approxi-

mately twenty-four percent of global output compared to a mere three percent produced by Great Britain.³²

Far from an attempt to conquer or subdue this economic powerhouse, Captain Hawkins had been charged with the task of delivering a letter to the Mogul Court in which King James I petitioned Emperor Jahangir to allow the British to establish a trading post in Surat. The first request of the British government to construct trading facilities on Indian soil was rejected due to Portuguese intrigues. Nevertheless, the Company was still permitted to enter the port of Surat and exchange goods. The voyages of the Company to this northwestern city represented an attempt to gain a permanent share of the spice trade and some of these early voyages earned as much as a two hundred percent profit.³³ The success of these merchants sparked open hostilities and the British fleet successfully repelled a Portuguese attack in 1612.³⁴ Prior to this encounter, the Portuguese maintained their share of the Indian market through intimidation. Consequently, the triumph of the British was welcomed by Gujarat officials with a license to establish a factory, which is essentially a compound of warehouses and barracks, in Surat. The Company now possessed a foothold on the mainland and could conveniently access the trading centers of Surat.

In spite of the turmoil inspired by despotism, Company officials found that the Indian economy rested on a fairly advanced economic infrastructure and already produced many of the goods the Europeans had to offer. Rather than trade goods, the English purchased Indian luxury items, textiles, spices, and other commodities with

³⁰ Sir Charles Lucas, *The British Empire* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1924), 63.

³¹ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 3rd ed. ed. by Percival Spear and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 366.

³² Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 29.

³³ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁴ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 333.

silver bullion. For the first time in world history, international trade was essentially functioning as a single market in which business was transacted with a rudimentary form of hard currency. These transactions were heavily criticized by mercantilist thinkers, but the nascent industries of Britain increasingly demanded the resources of the East. More importantly, if England refused to compete for Indian trade it was possible that other, less restrained European powers would work to translate their economic dominance in the Indian marketplace into political clout. Unlike the English, the Portuguese traders in the orient were representatives of the state and operated with a boldness that reflected the unconditional endorsement of their government that was both financial and political. More “vigorous crusaders...than cunning traders,” the Portuguese were unafraid to repeatedly resort to piracy and plundering in the midst of diplomatic affairs and commercial business.³⁵ Similarly, Dutch merchants were organized as an arm of the state and were relentlessly audacious in their approach to the Mogul Emperor. The British East India Company, on the other hand, was entirely a private enterprise that could count on little support from the Crown and they prudently adopted policies aimed at winning the favor of the imperial court. From his vantage point in the Mogul Court, Sir Thomas Roe, the British ambassador to India, could easily discern the futility of European attempts to increase their profits by sponsoring costly military campaigns and gave the Company directors the following piece of advice in 1619: “Let this be received as a rule: that if you will profit, seek it at sea, and in quiet trade: for without controversy it is an error to affect Garrisons and Land wars in

³⁵ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 69.

India.”³⁶ Following this advice, the Company left it to the Mogul Court to enforce order in India and did not apply hostile threats to sway his decisions.

The early policy of the Company was successful in achieving a favorable standing with the Mogul Emperor and the British were given licenses to open factories in three other cities across northern India. The Portuguese had once again attacked the English fleet in 1615 and their humiliating defeat removed them permanently as a threat to British interests in India.³⁷ During this time, however, tensions with the Dutch in the Spice Islands were mounting and climaxed with the massacre of eighteen Company merchants on Amboina in 1623.³⁸ As a result of this incident, the English removed themselves from the Spice Islands and concentrated their efforts on increasing their volume of trade with the Indian mainland, where their profit margins began to shrink as competition from the Dutch drove up purchasing prices. Even though the Dutch were able to achieve supremacy in the Spice Islands relatively quickly, it was evident that the competition for the markets of India was going to be a far more prolonged struggle. Although England boasted a larger economy and a greater population, the Dutch had been able to engineer a financial system that equipped them to fund numerous overseas operations and invest their resources more efficiently. The United East India Company of the Netherlands, which had been founded in 1602, was far superior in organization to their English counterparts and they were

³⁶ Sir Thomas Roe quoted in Sir Percival Joseph Griffiths, *The British Impact on India* (London: Macdonald and Company, 1952), 51.

³⁷ Vincent A Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 333.

³⁸ Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 27.

successful in undermining many of their competitors through shrewd enterprise.³⁹

The relations between England and the Netherlands continued to deteriorate as this competition grew more heated and three wars broke out between 1652 and 1674 over trade routes to the East Indies.⁴⁰ Unlike many of the conflicts of this era that were waged to preserve the balance of power or extend the boundaries of empires, these Anglo-Dutch Wars were fought entirely over commercial interests and were rather limited in their scope and duration. The Dutch, however, were able to achieve many astonishing victories over a financially exhausted England. Rising to the challenges of Dutch competition, the British restructured the Company as a joint-stock venture, passed Navigation Acts in 1651 and 1660 to outlaw Dutch imports, and began the rapid construction of new sailing vessels for both commercial and military purposes.⁴¹ Loosely coinciding with the English Civil War, the English Republic, and the Restoration, these Dutch Wars exacerbated already strenuous situations in Britain and would be resolved by the expulsion of the House of Stuart from England. Unwilling to risk a Catholic succession or the development of absolutism, Parliament invited the Dutch Prince, William III of Orange, to expel King James II and reign in his stead. The Glorious Revolution of 1689 not only united these former rivals politically, but also served as “an Anglo-Dutch business merger.”⁴² While the crowns and companies of these nations remained distinct, this partnership allowed the English to reinvigorate their financial system in accordance with the Dutch model and advantageously divide trade in the East Indies.

³⁹ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 332.

⁴⁰ Ferguson, *Empire*, 22.

⁴¹ Lucas, *The British Empire*, 71-72.

⁴² Ferguson, *Empire*, 24.

Even though England had been absorbed by enduring troubles at home and scattered conflicts with the Dutch, the East India Company had remained active. Since the policies of the Moguls were unstable at best and enforcement of the orders of the Emperor depended on the ambition of local officials, the Company had to exert a great deal of energy to safeguard their interests and spent sizable sums of money on bribes in the process. As the assets of the Company increased, the network they possessed in India assumed a more permanent character. In 1639, a Company official purchased their first piece of property in the southeastern city of Madras where they proceeded to build Fort St. George.⁴³ Although many feared the expenses that would come with this property, it was not a major military installation and proved to be convenient center of trade with the natives. Twenty years later, in 1661, King Charles II acquired Bombay from Portugal as the dowry for his wife and he transferred it into Company hands, where it quickly replaced Surat.⁴⁴ The trade network was finally completed in 1690 by the settlement of Fort William in the northeastern city of Calcutta.⁴⁵

These three locations, later referred to as presidency cities, were the administrative headquarters of Company operations in the Eastern world and the small British possessions within their limits were administered by a governor and a council elected by Company investors. The King had given these men jurisdiction over the Englishmen in their employment and the right to govern these small possessions, but all of these tiny properties were still under the control of the Mogul Court and the Company still remained on the outskirts of this extensive Empire. Dutch hostility had subsided, but India was

⁴³ Lucas, *The British Empire*, 65.

⁴⁴ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 72.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

gradually descending into civil strife as the Marathas, who were separatist Hindu princes, began to violently oppose Mogul rule. After heeding the warning of Thomas Roe for nearly seventy-five years, the Company directors began the necessary process of fortifying their coastal holdings. The greatest struggles for the Company during the closing decades of the seventeenth century, however, emanated from their employees and English opponents of their monopoly. Understandably, the Company directors in London had a difficult time managing their workers in Asian factories and were dismayed by reports of excessive drinking and gambling in the labor force. Unsatisfied with meager wages, many of these employees became interlopers, opportunists who did business outside of the Company for personal profit, and threatened British operations by siphoning off valuable business. At home, the process of renewing the charter had always been a battle, but in 1698 proponents of competition broke their monopoly and succeeded in founding a rival enterprise.⁴⁶ The British East India Company entered the eighteenth century fighting for supremacy, once again.

Although the activities of the Company during this century assumed a mundane tone, this time period uniquely showcases British intentions as they entered the competition for Eastern trade and established the foundation of their later, global empire. It is clear, from the mandate issued by Queen Elizabeth I, the East India Company was created solely “for the discovery of the trade for the East Indies.”⁴⁷

The English had no intention of forcefully opposing the native regimes of the East and did not have any ulterior, imperial objectives that went beyond commerce. This mindset is evidenced by the general nature of the First British Empire in contrast with the empires acquired by the early giants of the Age of Exploration. The Portuguese and Spanish were unashamed to ruthlessly overthrow the settled civilizations of the Americas without just cause and shamelessly plundered these subjugated territories. Under the Stuarts, the British sought to raise an empire based on emigration, not conquest, and imperialism proper was limited to the migration of Britons to the unsettled and ungoverned territories of North America.

While the deliberate exploitation of South America brought immediate benefits to the Spanish Crown, these overseas colonies rapidly drained Spain of wealth and population. This fear of impoverishment and depopulation dampened enthusiasm for colonialism in Britain until intellectuals, such as John Locke, Josiah Child, and William Wood, articulated the benefits of being at the center of an imperial metropolis.⁴⁸ These men believed colonies could supply natural resources, provide markets for merchandise, and stimulate economic productivity, but they had to be managed stringently by the home government. Following this impulse, colonies were settled in the wilderness of North America and proved themselves to be extremely valuable possessions, though much of this value was created by the refusal of colonists to obey mercantilist regulations. India, however, was the first civilized society that the British Empire achieved regular contact with and filled a unique place in their trade network. Where the American colonies followed the mercantilist model of supplying

⁴⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁷ “The British East India Company Charter,” in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, East Indies, China and Japan, Volume 2: 1513-1616* (1864), British History Online, [http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=68632&strquery=British East India Company Charter](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=68632&strquery=British+East+India+Company+Charter) (accessed: 19 December 2009)

⁴⁸ Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, 166-167.

raw materials and purchasing manufactures, the Indian market was a source of final products that withdrew precious metals from the English economy. Many mercantilists justified this cycle by claiming that the supposed losses of the English economy to India were offset by the bounty of the thirteen colonies and the augmented the trade surplus Eastern commerce supplied. Aside from some Company opportunists who led two ill conceived attempts to gain dominion over Bengal in 1686 and 1689, the Company stood resolute against participating in military intrigues for decades due to the extreme expense it would incur for a service already provided by the Mogul government.⁴⁹ At this point in history, the Company was “a purely commercial venture ...unfettered by the British government” and unburdened by the responsibility of political rule. This happy condition remained unchanged due to the intentions of the Company in spite of the political climate in India during the late seventeenth century.⁵⁰

The vigor of the British East India Company proved resilient as the bitter contest with their newly chartered competitor neared its end after four short years. The existence of these two commercial entities had proven to be such a divisive issue in English politics that King William III intervened and the two bodies were merged into one United Company in 1702.⁵¹ Enjoying pervasive domestic support and a generous new charter, the Company reentered the Indian marketplace with renewed strength. The state of Indian politics had remained largely unchanged until the death of Emperor Aurungzeb in 1707, which resulted in the dismemberment of the Mogul state.⁵² While the Mogul Empire continued to retain a form of nominal authority for another forty

years, it struggled to function as a centralized government and was riddled by chronic instability. As a precaution against this growing turmoil, the Company began to garrison their fortifications with forces that were primarily composed of Sepoys, who are Indian soldiers hired by the British. In addition to these defensive measures, the Company took the step of seeking legal recognition from emerging local authorities in the interest of preserving their various enterprises without any significant hindrances. These two new features of Company operations forced this group of merchants into engaging in a limited foreign policy as a part of their business dealings. After adjusting to the changing realities of India, the Company settled into almost three decades of undisturbed prosperity.

These defensive provisions were to protect Company interests from the growing anarchy of the Indian state and the advocates of these measures did not realize their use would be prompted by a European threat. Even though the French “Compagnie des Indes Orientales” had been founded in 1664, mismanagement and neglect prevented it from becoming a significant contender for Indian trade. The British East India Company had been strengthened by their earlier rivalry with the Dutch and their formidable network enabled them to export £1,000,000 of Indian and Chinese goods annually.⁵³ Where the British East India Company had always been owned and operated by private investors, the French Compagnie was a government operation dominated by a clique of French nobles who already possessed massive fortunes and were entirely uninterested in commerce.⁵⁴ These aristocrats longed for political power and openly sought the intrigues of imperial

⁴⁹ Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, 57-58.

⁵⁰ Huttenback, *The British Imperial Experience*, 2.

⁵¹ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 76.

⁵² Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 76.

⁵³ Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 16.

⁵⁴ Ferguson, *Empire*, 34.

interference in the subcontinent. Thus the Compagnie entered India with the explicit aim of exerting control over the native population by capitalizing on the political calamities of these unfortunate souls.

As the wars between Britain and France grew in scope, they became less of a national rivalry and assumed the character of a quest for global leadership. As the kingdoms of Europe divided themselves between these two sides, it became obvious that the great advantages of Indian trade would be decisive in determining the victor of this struggle. In 1742, the French government appointed Joseph-Francois Dupleix to be the governor of the Compagnie. He arrived in Pondicherry, India with the personal objective of attaining “*la domination francaise dans l’Inde*.”⁵⁵ Compagnie policy took a decidedly interventionist turn under Dupleix as he manipulated discontent between native rulers and fought proxy wars in an orchestrated effort to replace Britain as the dominant power in South Asia. Following the pattern of history, many nawabs were enthusiastic about enlisting the support of outsiders as a means to remove themselves from the shadow of regional warlords and guard their territorial independence. The French fomented aggression against the British and actively sought alliances with regional authorities to strengthen their position. In response to this change in policy, the Company was compelled to employ a much larger standing army, which was outfitted to launch offensive incursions against the French coalition. This marked “the end of any hope of peaceful trading, or of what would nowadays be called non-intervention in India affairs; and it became evident that the East India Company must either fight or

die.”⁵⁶ The English were unprepared for this rather sudden shift in French strategy; the Compagnie was able to achieve early victories in the struggle for southern India and wrested control of Madras from the British in 1746.⁵⁷

For three years after the occupation of Madras, the French Compagnie, under the ambitious leadership of Joseph Francois Dupleix, appeared to be slowly overturning the status quo in their favor throughout key parts of the subcontinent. The British, however, were able to mount a forceful resistance and eventually halted the aggressive advance of the French. Shortly after these initial successes, Robert Clive, a captain in the Company army, was able to overwhelm the enemy stronghold of Arcot in 1751.⁵⁸ This monumental British victory stemmed the tide of French successes, but this triumph alone would not expel them from India. This web of alliances and complex conspiracies managed by these “private” enterprises occurred many times without the official sanction of their home governments and during periods of international respite from war. Though there was a brief cessation of open hostilities after Dupleix left in 1754, these intrigues signaled the beginning of a transition in the Company from a solely commercial enterprise into an organ of imperialism.⁵⁹

This brief period of tranquility was broken by the eruption of the Seven Years’ War in 1756; the British were convinced their defeat would mean the complete loss of access to India, which would help to lay the groundwork for an era of French suprem-

⁵⁵ Joseph-Francois Dupleix quoted in Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 19.

⁵⁶ Churchill, *Churchill’s History of the English Speaking Peoples*, 285.

⁵⁷ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 78.

⁵⁸ R.C. Majumdar, H.C. Raychaudhuri, and Kalikinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India* (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1963), 652.

⁵⁹ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 80.

acy.⁶⁰ Unlike the previous international conflicts waged between the French and the British, the Seven Years' War saw the direct military involvement of both governments on nearly every inhabited continent. For the first time, naval support, military provisions, and a limited supply of reinforcements was offered to the Company by the British government as this fight neared an intensity that had not been reached in the far East up to this point. This time, the French relied heavily on native allies in their fight against the British, and there were numerous local Indian rulers who were willing to assist the French against what they perceived to be the growing strategic dominance of the English. While there were many allies of the British Company, the opposition of key nawabs, such as Siraj-ud-daula in Bengal, formed much of the primary struggle in this particular theater of the war. Although the French supported the regime of Siraj-ud-daula, this Indian prince was determined not to end up as a political puppet propped up by foreign powers. The French were a means towards preserving as much independence as he possibly could.

After the declaration of war in 1756, Siraj-ud-daula swiftly attacked and seized the British holdings in Calcutta in hopes of depriving them of a foothold in Bengal. In this process, he captured 146 British citizens and put them in what came to be known as the "Black Hole of Calcutta" where 123 of them perished overnight.⁶¹ This cruel action on the part of this Eastern tyrant outraged the British public and "dispelled the last wishful illusion...that it might still be possible for them to remain in India as traders and no more."⁶² Led by Robert Clive, Company forces retaliated swiftly and quickly

regained control of their possessions in Calcutta. When it came to deposing this nawab, however, Clive and his Company associates engaged in covert negotiations with several dissatisfied courtiers serving under Siraj-ud-daula. These clandestine operations were pivotal parts of the strategy to dethrone this despot and take control of Bengal through his British-backed successor, Mir Jafar. These secretive operations went into action in the summer of 1757 when Clive launched a campaign north of Calcutta. On June 23, 1757,⁶³ three thousand Company soldiers, most of them Sepoys, met fifty thousand native troops under Siraj-ud-daula in the groves of Plassey.⁶⁴ In mere hours the Bengali army broke rank under the heavy fire of the Company guns. Days later, Siraj-ud-daula was assassinated by his cohorts. The smashing defeat of this nawab ended the northern campaign in India with a resounding finality. The British then turned themselves to the southern peninsula and the capture of Pondicherry in 1761 extinguished French military operations in India.⁶⁵ Although Britain had to weather many early reverses, the prudent guidance of William Pitt the Elder eventually led the English allies to victory and the French defeat was accompanied by the suspension of numerous French colonial enterprises: the grandiose vision of Dupleix had been shattered and India was unquestionably in British hands.

Britain was able to triumph against all of the odds as the result of enduring a century of conflict with the Netherlands. As the result of this heated competition, Britain was forced to overhaul their financial institutions, naval policy, and colonial administration; all of which played a decisive role

⁶⁰ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 127.

⁶¹ Churchill, *Churchill's History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, 286.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 286.

⁶³ Jeremy Black, *Smithsonian History of Warfare: Warfare in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. John Keegan (New York: Harper Collin's Publisher, 2005), 82.

⁶⁴ James, Lawrence, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 128.

⁶⁵ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 81.

in defeating the French. Specifically, the use of credit according to the Dutch model enabled the English to financially resist worldwide French attack, though the national debt of the United Kingdom was now at a staggering £140,000,000.⁶⁶ The ability of the British to adapt in response to challenges allowed them to prevail in this conflict; the situation in India at the end of the war was to test this capacity to adjust and survive. The victories of the British East India Company demonstrated the brute strength that this commercial institution had assembled in their intense struggle with the French Compagnie, which, now millions in debt, was spiraling towards irrelevance. The Battle of Plassey left a handful of Company executives as masters over the territories of Bengal without any noteworthy contributions from the British government. Imperial expansion was never the original ambition of this group of traders or of those in the British government who had been responsible for granting and renewing their charter. The East India Company never sought an empire in India; however, “the turmoil in the great sub-continent compelled them against their will and their judgment to take more and more territory” in an effort to guarantee their economic security.⁶⁷ These merchants were purely motivated by the financial prospects that India offered them and did not relish the necessity of spending their hard-earned profits on costly wars. If anything, the new political status of the British East India Company put an enormous strain on their ability to function as a successful trading organization. As a private enterprise, they had been able to give the British government funds totaling £324,150, but their

political responsibilities would push them to the brink of financial ruin.⁶⁸

Following the Battle of Plassey, there was also a growing recognition of the reality that the Company would have to work tirelessly against anarchy and animosity in India to secure their new holdings. Inevitably, as a part of the natural process of empire, defensive wars would draw them out of their borders and they would face the prospect of having to govern and guard ever expanding territories. The intimidating expulsion of France caused the principalities of India to either press for conciliatory agreements with the Company or race to arm themselves with European weaponry to battle the English. Further complicating the situation facing Company leaders was the fact that the British had no previous, practical experience in governing colonial possessions that were inhabited by a native population. The question of how to rule India was now before Britain and would, for nearly two centuries, dominate agendas, instigate debates, inspire movements, and even provoke hostilities as this people began the challenging task of reconciling their constitution of liberty with the necessities demanded by empire. Having beaten the evils of French absolutism off of Indian soil, the duties of devising and administering a mutually beneficial yet just rule in India were now placed upon the English.

⁶⁶ Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 56.

⁶⁷ Churchill, *Churchill's History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, 286.

⁶⁸ Ferguson, *Empire*, 24.

From Hastings to Hastings: The Company Ascendant

By the time Robert Clive triumphantly returned to London in 1760, the tales of his great exploits had already captured the attention of the British public and secured him a place as a national hero.⁶⁹ Not merely an icon of the British Empire, he epitomized the romantic ideal of the rogue adventurer in the English imagination and, in spite of his reputation as a scoundrel, inspired ambitious young men to join the Company in search of daring escapades and personal fortunes. While history cannot deny this man his place as one of the giants of his generation, the situation he left in India closely reflected his personal reputation as a cunning brute. Accustomed to the underhanded politics and rampant corruption of India, Robert Clive not only accepted these realities and saw attempts to rectify them as futile, but also profited greatly from them. It is true that the political realities of the subcontinent at this time did require the prudential exercise of Indian political practices to obtain necessary protections, but Clive wielded these methods far too naturally. A capable strategist and military leader, this man knew only how to dominate and was not fit to construct an effective administrative apparatus. As the de facto leader of the British in India, the first decade of Company rule in India was dominated by the personality of Robert Clive and his efforts to erect a sensible government. The early days of Company rule in India mark the saddest chapter of British involvement in the subcontinent.

As the strongest man in India in 1757, Robert Clive inherited the immediate responsibilities of overseeing the military preservation of the province of Bengal and the duties of governing its 40,000,000

inhabitants.⁷⁰ The Company had divided the administration of their territories in India amongst the three presidency cities of Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta, and outfitted each of them with a military and civil service system under the ultimate direction of the Governor of Bengal.⁷¹ Clive, as the first military governor of Bengal, appointed Mir Jafar to be the Nawab of Bengal and, in a gesture that foreshadowed things to come, was rewarded for his choice with annual gifts from his appointee that totaled over £234,000.⁷² Figures like this treacherous Nawab were vested with civil responsibilities for the purpose of appeasing the locals and efficiently utilizing the remnants of the native regime instead of expending resources to create one of their own. While it was beyond their financial means to completely uproot the habits of India, the Company was suspiciously content to tolerate many of the customs inculcated by despotism that proved to be lucrative. After profiting greatly through the lavish rewards and excessive pensions offered to him by the Company, Robert Clive left the Bengali people extremely vulnerable to exploitation when he returned to England.

It was not long before greedy Company agents lost all restraint and began the process of economically plundering Bengal with their schemes. As public officials, they readily assumed the rights of accepting bribes, pocketing tax revenues, and smuggling goods, which had all been the understood prerogatives of their native predecessors, and used these administrative inefficiencies as a means to steer the wealth of India into their hands. Although the Company had engaged in many suspect practices

⁶⁹ Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India*, 670.

⁷⁰ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 30.

⁷¹ Timothy H. Parsons, *The British Imperial Century, 1815-1914* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 36.

⁷² James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 129.

since the fall of the Moguls, management was no longer able to halt many of these activities since a great number of their employees operated outside of the Company. These lawless entrepreneurs, who were now being derisively referred to as “nabobs,” brought back vast fortunes to England and strained the economy of Bengal to the breaking point. The problems of having an economic enterprise, which is naturally partial to their own financial interests, rule were fully manifest in Bengal as every level of the Company was immersed in corruption.

As British concern mounted over continuous reports of these scandalous activities, the Company directors turned to Robert Clive and petitioned him to return to India for a second term as Governor of Bengal. Accepting their commission in 1765, he journeyed to India with the ambition of reforming the government and began to conceptualize what would come to be called the “dual system.”⁷³ In the Treaty of Allahabad, Clive induced the Mogul Emperor to legally give the “Company the Dewanny [right of taxation] of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa” provided that these revenues would furnish the “expenses of the Nizamet,” which refers to the civil jurisdiction of the nawab.⁷⁴ By wresting the diwani from native hands, Clive hoped to consolidate English rule and discourage civil unrest by further weakening local leaders. Under this system, the English were responsible for the military affairs of Bengal in addition to their new duty of revenue

collection while the civil affairs remained largely in the hands of the local government. With the promise of up to £3,000,000 annually, this new responsibility empowered greedy Company officials with the most reliable form of income and, rather than mitigate the corruption plaguing Bengal, only served to enlarge the insatiable appetites of English nabobs.⁷⁵ Once again, the employees of the Company proved themselves more than willing to accept the wealth of empire to the extreme neglect of the corresponding responsibilities.

The failure of the dual system was apparent as Company personnel were now able to amass private fortunes without having to exert all of the energy performing illegal activities required. Upon his return to India, Clive appears to have fundamentally misjudged the situation in Bengal and presumed that the turmoil in the province was due to the weakness of the English position rather than the corrupt practices spoiling Company rule. Accustomed to the ways of India, Clive understood the political realities of the Far East as something that could not be overcome and consequently saw compliance with the habits of the natives as the only means to achieve political success. He, therefore, overlooked much of the corruption in the British administration since it resembled the normal practices of the East. As a product of the practices that needed to be eliminated, Clive was unable to eradicate the corruption that had engulfed the entire structure of the Company. Perhaps the greatest and most inadvertent achievement of the Company government under Clive was the fact that their floundering attempts to purge Company rule of excess and scandal provoked

⁷³ Mark Naidis, *The Second British Empire 1783-1965: A Short History* (Reading MA: Addison Wesley Publishing, 1970), 14.

⁷⁴ “Agreement between the Nabob Nadjum-ul-Dowlah and the Company, 12 August 1765,” in Volume 1 of *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921*, ed. Arthur B. Keith, vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire*, ed. Harlow and Carter, 25.

⁷⁵ P.J. Marshall, Rajat Kanta Ray, and H.V. Bowen. *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P.J. Marshall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 492.

intervention on the part of the British government.

With every passing year, it seemed as though the British Empire in India was becoming progressively less English as the East India Company adopted the practices of the political tradition that permitted the easiest methods to procure wealth. In the eighteenth century, the other colonies in the Empire required very little oversight since they were populated by Englishmen who reliably applied British political principles in the operation of their governments. After Clive returned to England in 1767, the apparent weaknesses of Company rule prompted Parliament to begin a dialogue regarding how to avert the almost certain disaster that loomed ahead if British policy remained unchanged.⁷⁶ The process of intervention began when Parliament was approached by the British East India Company in desperate need of financial aid. Beset by war debts, the costs of an army with 100,000 men,⁷⁷ and the collapse of their stock, the Company requested a loan of £1,400,000 pounds from the government.⁷⁸

Invited into the affairs of the Company, Parliament passed the Regulating Act of 1773 and officially made the actions of the British East India Company subject to their authority. In place of the old system, the Regulating Act called for the creation of the office of Governor-General to oversee the various presidencies under Company control and work with a newly formed advisory council of four men.⁷⁹ Most significant, this bill also moved to “establish a supreme court of judicature at Fort William” with “full power and authority to hear and determine all complaints against any of His

Majesty’s subjects.”⁸⁰ Proving that this was more than a simple attempt to strengthen the grip of the Empire on India, Parliament showed a genuine interest in protecting the rights of the Indian people and granted them all of the protections of English Common Law to be applied by the same judges who heard the cases of Englishmen. Sternly rebuking the Company leaders who tolerated the tyrannical legal codes and torturous punishments of the Mogul despots, Parliament extended the rule of law to India and declared that all of the people under British rule had the right to stand equally before the law. This is not to say that Parliament believed these people were naturally capable of wielding all of the “peculiar rights of Englishmen,” but it does demonstrate that the British were deliberately striving to be a force for the improvement of India. While Parliament was successful in lifting Company rule out of the quagmire of despotic tradition and onto the firmer foundation of English law, the government of India was an experiment in the British attempt to reconcile liberty with the demands of empire and the statesmen of this age fully realized that the future would demand further modification of the Indian constitution.⁸¹

Warren Hastings was the man the Company presented to serve as the first Governor-General and rehabilitate the financial and political condition of India. Possessed of a brilliant mind and astute administrative skills, his rise as a Company leader began with an appointment from Robert Clive, a man he would be remembered with as a great founder of British rule in India. Hastings was a dedicated Orientalist having been educated in the ways of India and was

⁷⁶ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 111.

⁷⁷ Ferguson, *Empire*, 50.

⁷⁸ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 134.

⁷⁹ Naidis, *The Second British Empire*, 15.

⁸⁰ “East India Company Act, 1773,” in vol. 1 of *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921*, ed. Arthur B. Keith, vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire*, ed. Harlow and Carter, 34.

⁸¹ Ferguson, *Empire*, 60.

fully mindful of the reforms that were needed in Bengal. In 1774, he immediately set about dismantling the ineffective dual system and quickly arrested the important political powers that remained in the hands of the remaining nawabs in Company jurisdiction.⁸² Even though he sought to reduce the power of the nawab to a title, he still worked to govern Bengal without offending the customs of India. Reorganizing the judiciary, eliminating corrupt customhouses, and collecting uniform duties, Hastings succeeded in eradicating corruption in the higher levels of the Company and turned his attention to other reforms when the governing council put his administration into a state of gridlock.

Already struggling with massive debts and declining revenues, the return of French mischief upset the delicate balance in India and Hastings found himself in Bengal surrounded by enemies. While he attempted to diffuse these threats diplomatically, Hyder Ali, the prince of Mysore, stole the British city of Arcot, and Hastings was dragged into the Second Mysore War to secure the Carnatic. Each of these defensive conflicts had widespread political repercussions that seemed to further entangle the Company in this complicated diplomatic web. For a majority of his eleven year tenure in office, his generals were in the field of battle performing necessary operations that were rapidly consuming Company assets. Desperate for income, Hastings expanded opium trafficking with China, collected outstanding tributes through the threat of force, and accepted payments for mercenary operations. Though his conscience was clearly unafraid to resort to brutal ploys and devious methods to achieve his own objectives, there is little more that the Company and their superiors in London could have asked from anyone in this situation. Combating fractious

subordinates, foreign invasions, and the threat of insolvency, Warren Hastings was still able to defend Company territories and provide the Bengalis with a far more respectable polity than historical patterns would incline them to expect. Unfortunately, his efforts were “rewarded...with confiscation, disgrace, and a life of impeachment.”⁸³

While Hastings was guarding Bengal, one of his rivals on the council, Phillip Francis, returned to the House of Commons where he stirred up British animosity against Hastings. No longer distracted by the American Revolution, Parliament turned their attention to India and opened charter renegotiations with the Company, now £8,400,000 in debt.⁸⁴ Badly in need of reform, Parliament summoned Hastings while they continued the process of improving Indian administration. After several bills were rejected, William Pitt the Younger introduced the India Act of 1784 to further reign in the actions of the Company with Parliamentary oversight.⁸⁵ The enterprise remained in private hands, but a Board of Control was formed to manage the fiscal and civil policies implemented by the Company Board of Directors. To ensure smooth government and unity of command, the council was reduced to three seats to prevent more deadlock and enhanced authority of the Governor-General, who was now appointed with the influence of the Crown.⁸⁶ Through these reforms, the British government was

⁸³ Warren Hastings, “The Address of Warren Hastings in His Defence, 2 June 1791,” in *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings: Papers from a Bicentenary Commemoration*, ed. Geoffrey Carnall and Colin Nicholson, *Archives of Empire Volume 1*, ed. Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter, 166.

⁸⁴ Ferguson, *Empire*, 53.

⁸⁵ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 116.

⁸⁶ Alfred LeRoy Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth from the American Revolution* (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1956), 124.

⁸² Huttenback, *The British Imperial Experience*, 9.

able to exercise effective imperial rule by delegating the enforcement of their policy to a private mechanism. In addition to these structural changes, this act also declared a strict noninterventionist policy that prohibited officials in India from making alliances with native governments or annexing territories. There was to be no more confusion on this point; British intentions were clear: “schemes of conquest and extension of domain in India, are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour and the policy of this nation.”⁸⁷ This departure from standing policy was a strong rebuke of the foreign policy practices of Warren Hastings and represented the ill will that awaited him.

Under mounting pressure, Hastings resigned his post in 1785 and arrived in England where Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, and Richard Sheridan were initiating impeachment proceedings against him.⁸⁸ In 1788, the trial of the century commenced with the fiery oratory of Edmund Burke condemning the dealings of the Company in India and going so far as to denounce Warren Hastings as “the common enemy and oppressor of all.”⁸⁹ After taking two full days to read the twenty charges standing against the defendant, these prominent Whigs endlessly attacked the techniques of this man and recited countless grievances regarding Company rule in Bengal. These accusations included alleged acts of extortion and bribery, but the debate that followed frequently digressed into philosophical questions regarding the role of Empire in the constitutions of Britain and India. Following this bombastic barrage of piercing rhetoric, Warren Hastings asked in his defense that he “be tried by this rule:— did I act prudently and consistently with the

interest of my superiors and of the people whom I governed?”⁹⁰ Soon after these extraordinary displays, this trial quickly assumed a dull character as the prosecuting forces were divided and Parliament faced growing trouble on the continent. After a grueling seven years at trial, the House of Lords finally voted to drop all of the charges against Warren Hastings. Although his fortune had been wasted on legal fees, his reputation as one of the early architects of the British Raj was cleared and, upon his death, he was interred in Westminster Abbey.

Although this trial was largely the result of the exaggerations and distortions of Phillip Francis, these proceedings signaled an important period of transition in the history of the British Empire. Having been the prize of the Empire for over a century, the thirteen American colonies were at the core of the British imperial metropolis in the eighteenth century and represented the character of English colonial policy in the First British Empire. The loss of these holdings in 1783 was a source of national disillusionment, but this would eventually prove to renew the Empire as they turned their attention to the East.⁹¹ While England heavily depended on their trade with the East Indies, British attitudes had been rather apathetic up to this point about their possessions in Bengal and they disinterestedly relegated the responsibilities of rule to the Company. Uneasy with the idea of imperial conquest, the First British Empire had been based on emigration to ungoverned lands and resulted in self-governing colonies that were miniatures of the English model. The British had never been faced with philosophic questions about imperial rule and became lax in guarding their constitutional

⁸⁷ Edmund Burke quoted in Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 116.

⁸⁸ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 115.

⁸⁹ Edmund Burke quoted in Huttenback, *The British Imperial Experience*, 18.

⁹⁰ Hastings, “From the Address of Warren Hastings,” vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire*, ed. Harlow and Carter, 166.

⁹¹ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 92.

principles by mistakenly applying the same approach to Bengal. Edmund Burke saw this danger and used the Hastings trial, fiasco that it was, to bring the issues of imperial rule in India to the attention of the British people. In many ways, Warren Hastings represented the abuses of Company rule and the trial ultimately became more of a hearing on Company misrule than it was an investigation into his conduct.

With the government pragmatically passive and the attention of the Company entirely invested in maximizing their profits, few in the Company cared to notice the influence the ways of the East were having on their operations and characters. As his concern turned into moral outrage, Edmund Burke used this trial not only to decry the mismanagement of India, but also to warn the people of his gravest concern: the potential threat this arrangement posed to the British constitution. Nominally subservient to the Crown but entirely autonomous in Bengal, the Company was essentially forming their own state within the British Empire that had abandoned Western ideals. This rule was transforming the characters of Company employees into the mold of Eastern despotism before sending many of them back to England with fortunes large enough to influence the English political scene and even buy seats in Parliament. It was imperative that the requirements of empire did not endanger the liberties of England and Burke appears to have been successful in awakening the English to the task of defending the future of their constitution. This task would require more than vigilance; it demanded that they attend to the moral obligation of instituting a respectable government in India.

In contrast to colonies of emigration, the English Common Law was framed on the understanding that in all territories obtained by conquest “the Crown possessed a free despotic power of legislation and

could establish and mould a constitution at its will.”⁹² At this time, however, the British had no imperial theory to guide their actions in India and there was a great deal of uncertainty regarding how to wield the immense powers given to them by the law. It was through the debates over three successive India bills and the trial of Warren Hastings that Burke outlined the first comprehensive, theoretical understanding of British responsibility in India and developed the imperial beliefs of conservatives. Before Burke, conservatism had governed the way the Company did business in India without the necessary constraints of morality that were required to effect good government. An avid advocate for the abolition of the Company, Burke saw India in terms of a legal trust, which is an arrangement where “rights are vested in a trustee who must hold them strictly in trust for...the beneficiary of the trust,”⁹³ saying:

...with regard to every species of political dominion, and every description of commercial privilege, none of which can be original self-derived rights, or grants for the mere private benefit of the holders, then such rights...are all in the strictest sense a *trust*; and it is of the very essence of every trust to be rendered *accountable*; and even totally to *cease*, when it substantially varies from the purposes for which alone it could have a lawful existence.⁹⁴

⁹² Sir Anton Bertram, *The Colonial Service*, 159-160, quoted in Ernest Barker, *Ideas and Ideals of the British Empire*, 2nd ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 53.

⁹³ Barker, *Ideas and Ideals of the British Empire*., 65-66.

⁹⁴ Edmund Burke, *Selected Writings of Edmund Burke*, The Modern Library, ed. W.J. Bate (New York: Random House, 1960), 268.

This idea of a trust based on natural law and moral obligation was the beginning of a new British approach to the Empire that saw a higher purpose in imperialism and understood the implementation of good government as a duty. He reasoned that the chaos left by the Mogul dynasty would abate in time and rule could be returned to the natives once Parliament determined order had been established in the government of Bengal. Applying his conservative understanding of constitutionalism to India, Burke rejected concerted efforts to improve or westernize India as intrusive and dangerous to the standing order that had developed in response to the needs of the people. While later generations discarded this misplaced reverence for the Indian “constitution,” the lofty rhetoric of Burke forever changed British attitudes towards the Empire in India.

This conservative viewpoint was preceded in the seventeenth century by an imperialist understanding of the Empire that was dominant in this era, though it was influenced by the philosophy of Burke. This was the view of many aristocrats, such as William Pitt the Younger, who had varying interests in the Indian market and were motivated in their policy decisions by a fundamental concern for the protection of British dominance. Rather than contemplate abstract theories of empire, these politicians had simply accepted the realities of this situation and recognized the importance of preserving these possessions. While they did not actively seek overseas possessions, they were calculated in foreign policy decisions and saw the institution of good government in Bengal as a security issue. As long as the administration of India did not portend any harm to the British constitution, they were content to maintain a British presence in India and do what was necessary to protect British interests in the region. Influenced by the end of the First British Empire and the admonition of Edmund Burke, many of

these pragmatic strategists found themselves increasingly optimistic about the future of their Empire and felt a growing sense of responsibility towards India. Although Parliament continued to remain largely passive, the Company officials who subscribed to this mindset began to behave more responsibly due to the intervention of William Pitt. It was the influence of conservatism on the imperialists that governed the policy of this era, but it was not long before scattered voices from rising humanitarian movements would supersede these beliefs with cries for liberal reform in India.

Although the humiliation of the American Revolution lingered through the remainder of the century, the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the growing sense of imperial responsibility were quickly changing the face of the Empire. A product of these times and the imperialist sensibilities, the India Act of 1784 marked the beginning of a new phase in the subcontinent. Prior to the implementation of this act, the Governor-Generals of Bengal had been lifelong Company servants who were beholden to corporate interests and had been deeply affected by their time in the East. With the passage of this bill, however, the command of India for the next three decades would fall to appointed aristocrats who were accountable to Parliament and oftentimes military leaders. In 1786, Lord Charles Cornwallis was appointed by act of Parliament to be the first of these aristocrats to serve as Governor-General of India.⁹⁵ Ironically, the man who was there for the end of the First British Empire at Yorktown was appointed by Parliament to help establish rule in what would become the center of the Second British Empire.

⁹⁵ J. Talboys Wheeler. *A Short History of India: India and the Frontier States of Afghanistan, Nipal, and Burma*, vol. 2. (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1899), 450.

Lord Cornwallis began his administration with a several domestic reforms, but events in India soon arose to test the wisdom of their nonintervention policy. The prince of Mysore, now Tipu Sultan, grew anxious for conquest and began to seek treaties that would ensure neutrality from the other native states in southern India while re-opening communication with the French. Incapable of making similar alliances, Lord Cornwallis watched as the balance of power was slipping towards Mysore and resolved to circumvent the British nonintervention policy after watching Travancore, a state friendly to the British, invaded. After diplomatic efforts to save Travancore failed, Cornwallis began the preparations for war, which was not prohibited by the law, and sought alliances with Hyderabad and the Marathas that would lapse upon the cessation of hostilities. While the British intentions behind this policy were honorable, nonintervention failed, according to Cornwallis, because it left the British “constantly exposed to the necessity of commencing a war, without having previously secured the assistance of efficient allies.”⁹⁶

The Third Mysore War commenced in 1790 and campaigns were launched to secure the Carnatic.⁹⁷ Joined by allies in 1792, Cornwallis began the final campaign of the war to capture the capital city of Seringapatam.⁹⁸ Braving the terror of flaming rocket swords and overcoming complex battlements, the British soldiers were rapidly overwhelmed their opponents. With the French Revolution severing his supply of European arms, Tipu Sultan had no choice but to surrender and wait for a more opportune time to renew his aggression. The treaty required he cede half his lands to the victors

and pay reparations of £3,000,000, but the main objective of Lord Cornwallis was to use this settlement to establish a balance of power in India that would create a stable peace for everyone.⁹⁹ The renegade nature of Indian politics, however, made a European style international order impossible at this stage since the leaders of these native states were opportunists concerned only with the enlargement of their territories and there existed no basis of trust between these powers. Furthermore, the expansive Maratha Confederation was a fractious contingent of countless, Hindu princely states that had no organizational structure, no political bonds, and no fiscal union, which made it impossible to negotiate with realistically. Lord Cornwallis soon abandoned his designs. One year later he left Bengal in a state of peace and prosperity; his successes in the East had salvaged his reputation in England and earned him another opportunity to serve as Governor-General, though it would be a short lived venture.

The appointment of John Shore to replace Lord Cornwallis marked a brief return to the practice of selecting civilian employees from the Company. In contrast with the bold, military mind of his predecessor, Shore unconditionally followed orders and applied the nonintervention policy with a reckless diligence. He watched idly as the Marathas rallied the forces to devour the territories of Hyderabad and as the French were invited back to India by these warring factions. As the balance of India continued to teeter, Maratha power grew more volatile as it experienced internal strife while it was expanding and exacerbated the weakening political status of the English in India. As the conflict with France in Europe intensified, the leadership of England was mindful of the need to replace

⁹⁶ Charles Cornwallis quoted in Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 118.

⁹⁷ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 455.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 457.

⁹⁹ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 126.

Shore with someone capable of safeguarding English interests against French mischief in native affairs. Lord Richard Wellesley, the older brother of the future Duke of Wellington, was sent to Calcutta in 1798 to repel the resurgence of French influence and safeguard their lands and allies against the rekindled aggression of Mysore and the Marathas.¹⁰⁰

Under Napoleon, the struggle with France was quickly broadening as they openly sought to wrest the subcontinent away from British influence and use the resources of India to assert global dominion. The French had already begun infiltrating the Maratha Confederation, appeasing Hyderabad, and rearming Mysore, but the strategic invasion of Egypt by French forces added a new level of urgency to the British plight in India. As explained by French Minister Charles Talleyrand to the Executive Directory in Paris, once Napoleon conquered Egypt he intended to “send a force of 15,000 men from Suez to India, to join the forces of Tipu-Sahib and drive away the English.”¹⁰¹ The policy of nonintervention had to be discarded to stamp out French influence; Wellesley now sought the requisite level of ascendancy over India to deter European opposition and entrench British interests. He began this process by encouraging small native states to enter into subsidiary alliances in which they would forfeit their foreign policies to British control and retain jurisdiction over their domestic affairs. In exchange for recognizing their territorial sovereignty, the Company would be able station soldiers in their territory at the expense of the native state. The Governor-General now turned to restore ties with Hyderabad, a traditional ally; this

was the last diplomatic effort the aggressive Wellesley would perform.

Amid news of Egyptian defeat and rumors of imminent invasion, Lord Wellesley began to plan a preemptive attack in 1798 on Mysore to abolish this French foothold in southern India.¹⁰² Although this threat was greatly reduced by the loss of the French Navy in the Battle of the Nile, Wellesley determined to destroy the French presence and launched the Fourth Mysore War in 1799 when Tipu Sultan, who was now styling himself before the French as “Citizen Tipu,” refused to revoke his French alliance.¹⁰³ Invaded on two sides, Mysore was quickly overwhelmed by the British alliance and Tipu Sultan perished as his capital passed into English hands. Throughout the entire forty year existence of the House of Hyder Ali, the actions of Mysore had constantly endangered British interests and confounded their policies. Since he was a despot who oppressed the Hindus under his rule and delighted in aggression, there were few outside of the Muslims in his country who mourned his passing, but the prince known as “the tiger of Mysore” would eventually be remembered as a martyr for Indian independence and come to be a symbol of British resistance in the future.

Following the death of Tipu Sultan, Wellesley divided Mysore amongst the victors and established a treaty with the new rajah of Mysore. This new arrangement was accompanied by the annexation of the Carnatic, a state dependent on the Company that had conspired with Mysore, to secure the Madras presidency and the request for a subsidiary alliance from Nizam Ali, who desired to protect Hyderabad from Maratha aggression. Order had finally been established in southern India by the Company and Wellesley began the process of seeking a

¹⁰⁰ Harlow, *Archives of Empire Volume 1*, 17.

¹⁰¹ Charles Maurice de Talleyrand quoted in Iradj Amini, *Napoleon and Persia: Franco-Persian Relations under the First Empire* (Mage Publishers, 1999), www.jstor.org (accessed January 10, 2010), 13.

¹⁰² James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 68-69.

¹⁰³ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 470.

subsidiary alliance with the Maratha Confederation. Given the nature of the Confederation, negotiations were extremely difficult and the vassals under the name of their Peshwa understandably rejected Company offers for a settlement. Through a series of internal disputes, however, the Peshwa was in danger and escaped to Bombay where he agreed to an alliance in December of 1802.¹⁰⁴ When the Company restored the Peshwa in Poona, the Treaty of Bassein guaranteed British ascendancy in the subcontinent, but it also guaranteed eventual conflict with the renegade vassals of the Peshwa. When a brief respite from the Napoleonic Wars ended, rumors circulated once again of French invasion and several Marathas began military movements that gave Wellesley the pretense for war. Beginning in 1803, the Maratha War would see several Maratha chiefs sue for peace before dragging on until Company Directors demanded the resignation of Lord Wellesley in 1805.¹⁰⁵

Although the actions of Wellesley had been effective, they had oftentimes been at odds with the will of the Company and government policy. He had resisted early attempts of these bodies to reign in his later schemes and his departure from India relieved many in England. The wars fought by Wellesley combined with his lavish projects, such as building the Governor-General a palace in Calcutta, left the Company with £28,600,000 in debt.¹⁰⁶ While he had spoiled French dreams of an Asian empire and presided over the dawn of British India, Wellesley was carried away by the endless task of securing imperial possessions and the glories of power. The Company Directors recognized many of his

actions had been necessary, but they were careful to assuage British apprehension over the Wellesley administration by installing a series of men who would strictly follow a nonintervention policy. For three successive administrations over eight years the British remained within their borders while anarchy grew amongst the Marathas, raiding bands of Afghan Pindaris swept across India, and Gurkhas from Nepal ravaged the north. The British position was weakening as this disorder troubled India and native states that had outsourced their defense through subsidiary alliance lost faith in England.

This period of denial came to a close when Lord Hastings, an avowed opponent of the methods of Lord Wellesley, was chosen to be Governor-General of India in 1813.¹⁰⁷ Intent on maintaining a policy of nonintervention, the situation he found in India completely altered his preconceived notions and he concluded the only way to maintain peace India was by asserting British leadership over the native states. He began the reversal of British detachment and settled to finish the work that Wellesley had begun. Turning to the north, he resolved to fend off the Gurkhas who had been terrorizing India and stripping away British possessions. Following the dispatch of one final remonstrance, an action employed by his predecessors without result, British soldiers embarked in 1814 to defend a six hundred mile long border high in the Himalayas and, after a difficult struggle with these robust tribes, the Nepal War came to an end in 1816.¹⁰⁸ Negotiations produced a lasting peace with the Gurkhas ceding land and forming an alliance with the Company, but the more difficult task of eradicating the Pindari threat lay ahead.

¹⁰⁴Wheeler, *Nations of the World*, vol. 2, 499.

¹⁰⁵Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 123-124.

¹⁰⁶James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 66.

¹⁰⁷Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 543.

¹⁰⁸Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 129.

While the British armies were occupied in the Himalayas, the brutal Pindaris had ravaged nearly three hundred villages in British territories along the eastern coast.¹⁰⁹ Defeating these mounted bands with tens of thousands of thieves was a delicate task since their home base was in scattered locations across Maratha territories and these bandits were often employed by the Peshwa to fight alongside the Confederation. Hastings anticipated trouble with the Marathas, but needed their assistance to annihilate Pindari operations. While he was eventually able to secure the reluctant aid of the Peshwa, Lord Hastings was suspicious of the intentions of his conniving “allies” and cautiously prepared for treachery. Lasting only a few months, the Pindari War ended successfully in 1817, but this campaign had assembled the massive armies of the three leading Marathas under the Peshwa and they now turned their thousands of soldiers against the British.¹¹⁰ The Peshwa, however, was abandoned by his fellow Marathas early in the campaign and the British were able to win a swift victory in 1818 over these longstanding rivals.¹¹¹ This final Maratha War resulted in the annexation of territories under the Peshwa and the renegotiation of subsidiary alliances with his vassals. The Peshwa was stripped of his title and the only unity of the Confederation was thereby erased. After five years in Calcutta and after three extensive military campaigns, Lord Hastings had restored order in India under British rule from the Indus River to the southern reaches of the subcontinent. Having concluded the mission of Lord Wellesley, Governor-General Hastings presided peacefully over India for another five years.

In roughly six decades, the entire subcontinent had come under the dominion

of the British East India Company and what had been a chaotic collection of small predatory states was now united under one rule. It had not been the intention of this group of merchants to commandeer the government of this region; political rule had converted their massive profits into an escalating debt of £40,000,000 and required them to finance their operations using the same credit system employed by the British government.¹¹² Although the authority of government had given many within the Company the power to exploit the land for their own personal benefit, the responsibilities of rule stressed the structure of this venture to the breaking point within ten years of obtaining Bengal. Balancing the responsibilities of rule with commercial success was too much for these profit seeking merchants and resulted in the misgovernment of India until Parliament began the process of mandating improvements for the Company to implement. The early measures passed by the British government did not instantaneously remedy the situation in India, but began a process of ameliorating the condition of Company rule and sparked a national debate over the best way to rule this colonial possession. Unlike the other imperial forces at work in this age, the British Empire was a power that possessed a conscience and was unafraid of self-critique for the sake improvement. The blistering eloquence of Edmund Burke, in particular, had inspired Britain to understand the proper government of India as a moral duty instead of a regrettable task forced onto their shoulders. The effects of this shift in British sentiments are most immediately reflected in the improvements to colonial government in India during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Not coincidentally, the most drastic advancements in Indian rule came through reforms imposed shortly after their stunning

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 130.

¹¹⁰ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 126.

¹¹¹ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 549.

¹¹² James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 134.

loss in the American Revolution. After the Seven Years' War, the Crown had ironically taken an overzealous interest in the internal affairs of their North American possessions while leaving the mismanaged rule of India completely unattended. With the loss of the thirteen colonies, the Empire began to grapple with the constitutional issues of rule in India colonial. Under the direction of several capable aristocrats appointed by the Pitt ministry, the Company government was able to see increased stability and a great reduction of corruption. With the introduction of English Common Law and reorganization of Bengal, domestic affairs were fading in importance as foreign policy threats began to multiply and the British were confronted with another series of conundrums involving difficult prudential considerations. Reluctant to continue the costly process of conquest, the English were content to stay within their borders and enacted a strict policy of nonintervention in the political affairs of the subcontinent. Native squabbles and French designs for an empire in India, however, dragged the British into several periods of extended conflict interrupted by repeated attempts of the Company to disengage themselves from the political intrigues of empire building with absolutely no success. The disorders of this region and the repeated invitation of French mischief into India by native princes prompted defensive measures on the part of the Company to protect national interests and sustained the continual widening of British territories until the entire subcontinent was under their dominion. No longer faced with imminent threats, the British were able to enjoy a brief respite from war during which they could turn inwards and focus more on orchestrating a beneficial domestic policy in India. Motivated by new ideas stirring in Great Britain, this period saw a series of reforms being brought to India not only to stamp out

corruption, but rather to improve the condition of the India population through the implementation of liberal principles. Although there was territorial expansion that occurred in the thirty-five years after the consolidation of rule in India, the dawning period of British involvement in the subcontinent was an experiment in remolding this nation into a more liberal polity.

Bringing the West East: The Climax of Company Rule

The year 1815 was a pivotal year in world history for it saw the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo and the reestablishment of the balance of power under the terms presented in the Congress of Vienna.¹¹³ While many of the monarchies in Europe began the long process of rebuilding their ravaged nations, British fleets were once again free to sail unopposed across the oceans and Europe enjoyed an extended era of peace under British hegemony later known as the Pax Britannica. This period of British international supremacy was made possible through their unrivaled naval superiority and the absence of other nations with significant industrial capabilities or sufficient sea power. The lack of serious rivals essentially guaranteed the English effective monopolies on most foreign markets and allowing them to enjoy the benefits of imperialism without having to extend political rule or exert military energy; the British could simply trade with these overseas markets without the threat of European military intervention or economic competition. This informal empire controlled trade routes spanning the globe and policed international waters with their fleets. With their colonies safe and the growing need of nascent industries to obtain unrestricted

¹¹³ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 101.

access with outlets for their manufactured goods, many in Britain began to insist that Parliament abandon outdated mercantilist policies and pass free trade measures that would be compatible with the demands of the Industrial Revolution.

Ever since Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 to advocate free trade principles, there had been a gradual shift in British opinion away from the protectionist measures endorsed by mercantilist philosophy.¹¹⁴ Calls for free trade continued to grow into the nineteenth century as Company officials faced a tougher battle defending their monopoly every time their charter stood before Parliament. The charter they were issued in 1813 began a process of encouraging the Company away from their original purpose and towards a more purely political function. While they were able to convince Parliament to protect some of their commercial privileges for another twenty years, the voices opposing their monopoly were victorious and other enterprises were permitted to trade in India. The new competition they faced caused the Company to slowly shrink back from the economic ventures that had previously consumed most of their energy and brought them to rely more on their status as a political establishment for survival. Consequently, the political and commercial functions of the Company began to devolve into more distinct realms. The Crown had gained a larger interest in the decisions of the Company, but steady tax revenues allowed them to remain financially independent of the British government and they still remained the primary agent behind the governance of India.

The twenty years following the renewal of the Company charter saw a period of transformation in British attitudes

towards their colonial possessions and the role of the Company in India. Since the late eighteenth century, the rising influence of evangelical Christianity, humanitarian interests, and utilitarianism slowly began to have a profound impact on the social policy of the United Kingdom, but many of their early victories, such as their campaign to abolish the slave trade, came with great difficulty. These movements were the products of new ideas sweeping across England and were primarily focused on using their clout to alter the condition of domestic institutions and policies. It was not until well into the nineteenth century that these groups were established enough in England that they were able to begin impacting the colonial policy of the Empire. Although the difficulties of affecting change in colonial social policy were far more troublesome than accomplishing the economic reforms advocated by powerful commercial interests, the marks of these groups is already evident in the Charter Act of 1813.¹¹⁵ Contained within this bill were provisions mandating the allocation of £10,000 in surplus revenue for Indian education and the admission of Christian missionaries into the subcontinent, which had been previously discouraged by conservatives for fear it would alarm the natives into rebellion.¹¹⁶ Some of the educational provisions would later be scaled back due to the controversy over whether or not to have a Western or Eastern style curriculum, but as these various movements gained momentum the course of British policy became more unashamedly determined to impart the blessings of Western civilization to India as much as possible for the betterment of the native population.

As humanitarian concern gradually began to overflow into colonial policy, the Company began to depart from the cultur-

¹¹⁴ Adam Smith, *The Essential Adam Smith*, ed. Robert L. Heilbroner and Laurence Malone (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), 6.

¹¹⁵ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 331.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

ally defensive approach employed by Warren Hastings and Robert Clive and started to adopt a moderate stance in between the long standing conservative tradition and the rising humanitarian position. Partially the product of the high moral tone imposed by Edmund Burke on British activity in India, these officials within the Company sought to slowly incorporate Western ideals into the traditional framework of Eastern society and gradually improve India over time, but this process of cautious integration ultimately served as a transition into the bolder advances proposed by the burgeoning humanitarian reform movements. The movement to reform the subcontinent was essentially divided into a rationalist or utilitarian wing and a religious wing that shared some similar objectives, but had very different starting points. At the time of this charter renewal, the liberal movement did have some influence in this debate, but had not yet produced a vision for the proper handling of India. Most of the voices for utilitarianism had developed their ideologies and defended their reforms with only England in mind. It was not until James Mill published his *History of India* in 1817 that intellectual liberals possessed a fairly unified conception of India that included a strategy for accomplishing their goals.¹¹⁷ Even though Mill believed political control of the subcontinent was of negligible value to Britain since trade was the primary value India offered, the presence of the Empire in India gave them the responsibility to help erase the historical defects of their civilization and introduce the liberal vision.

Not content with merely installing good government or interested in preserving the civilization of the subcontinent, the liberal policy was aimed at altering the status

quo in India and making significant political and economic improvements in the country so they could return rule to the natives in due time. This classical form of liberalism was based on a commitment to personal freedom that led this group of activists to strongly support limited government, representative institutions, laissez faire economics, and the protection of individual rights. Severe in his criticism of both Indian and English political traditions, James Mill proposed numerous educational, legal, and social reforms that would ensure progress in Indian society towards the liberal ideal. He realized, however, that this population was not habituated to the freedoms of the English and would have to be educated under the authoritarian rule of the British until they were practiced in the ways of free government.¹¹⁸ This was the ultimate objective of nearly all Britons throughout the evolution of English rule in India. The case Mill made against the despotic traditions of India and for the implementation of Western reforms had a tremendous impact on British policy over the next four decades.

Emanating from the original Clapham sect and the leadership of William Wilberforce, the religious branch of this humanitarian movement was focused on moral improvement and evangelism in the subcontinent.¹¹⁹ Like the classical liberals, these advocates rejected the mores of the Hindu civilization, but sought to improve the condition of these people by introducing them to the changing power of the Gospel in addition to educating them in Western thought. Based more on the doctrines of Christianity than abstract philosophy, their advocates were primarily concerned with civilizing natives through moral and religious education. Furthermore, these evangelicals were far less critical of the British

¹¹⁷ George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India 1784-1858* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 69.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹¹⁹ Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India*, 78.

political institutions that had promoted liberty with constitutional development and did not possess the skeptical views of tradition that many liberals had towards religion and society. While the propagation of the Gospel was their primary interest, the efforts of these missionary groups were not limited to evangelism alone and encompassed literacy programs, building schools, operating medical stations, translating books, and other projects aimed at directing the beneficiaries to the hope of the Gospel.¹²⁰ Since many of their initiatives were funded by private organizations, their designs for the improvement of India did not lie entirely within the realm of government policy and had far more practical goals than the liberals did. Less concerned with trade and radical institutional reform, evangelicals were focused on civilizing the natives by abolishing immoral practices with an honest government and by spreading the light of the Gospel everywhere they went.

While these sentiments were rapidly becoming mainstream beliefs in England, it would be fifteen years until liberals would see one of their own as Governor-General of India.¹²¹ The Company spent this fifteen year period of time adjusting to the new commercial atmosphere in India as their political role became the foundation of their activity. The wars of Lord Hastings had proven expensive for the Company and unpopular in England, but the added territories did increase Company tax revenues and the consolidation of their rule across the entire subcontinent ended their struggle to survive as the paramount power in India. The Company began to hope a policy of nonintervention could be feasibly implemented now that they controlled the foreign policies of the native states that had continuously dragged them into military conflicts. Furthermore, the Company also insisted on a

policy of noninterference in regards to the native states that had contracted their foreign policies out to the British and, outside of the moments when disputed succession or cruelty prompted intrusion, this policy was largely successful in protecting the affairs of native principalities.

Though he was not their first choice, Lord Amherst seemed to be a candidate for Governor-General who would follow orders and was inaugurated in 1823.¹²² Shortly after his administration began, however, the Burmese government demanded the return of refugees who had fled the tyranny of their homeland for British asylum following a failed rebellion in the eighteenth century. The British had repeatedly ignored these requests and worked to foster good relations with their government, but Amherst was forced to reluctantly launch a British offensive after the Burmese invaded British territory. This conflict, which lasted from 1824 until 1826, ended with a resounding British victory and is notable because it was the first Company war that resulted in outward expansion rather than national consolidation.¹²³ After this defensive action, the military found a period of rest and, for the first time, India was united in peace. Lord Amherst was the last Governor-General in the mold of traditional conservatism and the end of his term gave way to the rising humanitarian tide.

Lord Bentinck entered India in 1828 with a sanction to reform the fiscal situation of the Company and a charge to concern himself only with domestic affairs.¹²⁴ This ardent liberal was more than content to have the opportunity to reform internal policy and presided peaceably over the longest inward looking administration this far in Company

¹²⁰ Ibid., 88.

¹²¹ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, 599.

¹²² Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 586.

¹²³ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 594-596.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 599.

history. He immediately began the process of reform by raising the wages of sepoys and eliminating much of the favoritism the Company had shown to European employees. The pinnacle reform of his administration, however, occurred one year into his term when he turned his head against the exceedingly evil tradition of *sati*, which is “the burning of the living widow along with the corpse of her husband.”¹²⁵ An ancient, Hindu tradition in place long before Alexander the Great reached the Indus River, the practice of *sati* or “a good woman” had been performed by 839¹²⁶ wives upon the death of their husbands in Bengal alone during the space of a single year and British records indicate 700 wives had burned themselves on one funeral pyre.¹²⁷ Although this horrible custom was not accepted by all Hindus, wives were pressured into this suicide by the shame that came from refusing *sati* and the promise of either joining their husbands in paradise or drawing them out of hell.¹²⁸

The Company had long tolerated this deplorable practice for the purpose of pacifying those under their rule and abiding by their strict policy of noninterference in the religious affairs of the natives, but Bentinck moved swiftly to abolish this abomination for the purpose of guaranteeing “the establishment of a purer morality” that

removed “religious belief and practice from blood and murder.”¹²⁹ Where other recent Governors-General had made threats, Lord Bentinck unhesitatingly attacked this primitive institution as the overt violation of moral law it was and legislation was passed in 1829 that deemed participation in this heinous ritual a crime punishable as homicide.¹³⁰ The backlash that earlier Company officials feared never materialized, although there was a court challenge from prominent Bengalis that was rejected.

On the heels of this victory, Lord Bentinck sought to extend law and order beyond inhabited areas and into remote highways by suppressing the horrifying bands of *thagi* that preyed on travelers. This *thagi* was essentially an ancient secret society including both Muslims and Hindus that engaged in ritual murder and banditry. This sophisticated network comprised of hereditary members would assume a harmless appearance to lure unsuspecting travelers into their midst before leading them to graves they had prepared for their victims. Upon arriving at the place of burial, these fiends would strangle the innocent traveler in a ritual sacrifice to the goddess Kali for the purpose of obtaining her protection and favor. The thags would then strip the corpse of valuables and divide it according to the established hierarchy of their gang. These bandits had long made the theoretical state of nature a reality in the jungles of India and thousands of people disappeared yearly as their operations were encouraged by Mogul decline.

¹²⁵ Col. Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, “Suttee: Colonel Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell,” in *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases* vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire*, ed. Harlow and Carter, 341.

¹²⁶ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 330.

¹²⁷ Yule and Burnell, “Suttee: Colonel Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell,” vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire*, ed. Harlow and Carter, 345.

¹²⁸ “The Duties of a Faithful Widow,” from *Digest of Hindu Law*, trans. H.T. Colebrooke, Esq., *Archives of Empire Volume 1*, ed. Harlow and Carter, 364.

¹²⁹ Lord William Bentinck, “Bentinck’s Minute on Sati, 8 November 1829,” in *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck*, vol. 1, 1828-1831, ed. C.H. Philips, vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire*, ed. Harlow and Carter, 360.

¹³⁰ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 330.

Now that the British had a firm grip over the entire subcontinent, it was impossible for them to find refuge in lawless regions outside of English domain and Bentinck sanctioned Sir William Sleeman with the task of infiltrating their organization in 1830.¹³¹ Although the process was initially slow, several informants eventually aided Colonel Sleeman in the pursuit of this vast network and each successful raid revealed the identities of even more conspirators to apprehend. By the end of the Bentinck administration, the British government had been able to bring over two thousand thags to justice and, though there was still some thagi activity for another decade, many began desert as their operations encountered stiff resistance for the first time. The ritual practices of infanticide and child sacrifice, though they were far more limited, endured similar fates to those of sati and thagi. This new generation of British officials was clearly unafraid to outlaw sacred native practices opposed by the moral law.

The remaining five years of the Bentinck administration saw numerous economic and educational reforms following news from London of serious changes for the Company. Once again, the Company charter came up for review while a reform minded ministry controlled Parliament and the result was the conclusion of the process begun in the 1813 charter. The Charter Act of 1833 suspended all commercial activities of the Company and made them responsible only for the government of India under the Crown.¹³² Furthermore, this act also sanctioned the creation of an Indian legal code and prohibited the racial discrimination policy that had formerly excluded natives from civil service positions. Accompanying these reforms in the subcontinent was the

substitution of the Persian language with English as the *lingua franca* of Indian government and education. In a nation with hundreds of dialects, this was an important step in both the process of Anglicization and unification. Bentinck also began to build on the foundation that had been laid for Indian education by continuing the process of establishing secondary schools and colleges so an elite class could be created with an English style education. The hope was to cultivate an educated Indian middle class that would be supportive of British initiatives to improve the nation and train the minds of these students in the ways of civilization. Under the guidance of Thomas Babington Macaulay, who came to India in 1833 to revise the legal code, this curriculum would be finalized over the next three years.¹³³ The reforms of Lord Bentinck extended into the introduction of new cash crops, the abolition of interstate duties, preparation for improving the Indian infrastructure, and the renovation of Company finances, which he brought from a £1,000,000 deficit to a £1,500,000 surplus.¹³⁴ Although Lord Bentinck had far more ambitious goals than even his very proficient administration had accomplished and encountered more difficulty than he anticipated, he retired in 1835 and left India a far more just and peaceful place.¹³⁵

The timing of the retirement of Lord Bentinck could not have been more ideal for as soon as his replacement, Lord Auckland, reached India foreign and domestic menaces began to loom on all sides. The first crisis to visit his administration was a famine in Bengal that claimed 800,000 lives despite extraordinary relief efforts from the British government.¹³⁶ The primary cause of these

¹³¹ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 588.

¹³² Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 212.

¹³³ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 331-2.

¹³⁴ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 587.

¹³⁵ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 617.

¹³⁶ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 590.

deaths was the slow communication and transportation systems that delayed relief from other parts of India, but, due to the intervention of the Company, this disaster was far less catastrophic than the 1770 famine that is estimated to have claimed the lives of one third of the Bengali population.¹³⁷ Almost simultaneously, a new threat from the north began to arise as Russia became more active in Persian politics and instigated a proxy invasion of Afghanistan. Out the sheer incompetence of Lord Auckland came a scheme to replace the Afghan lord, who was forced to join the Russo-Persian alliance, with a deposed ally. Although this plan was supposed to depend on natives, Auckland dispatched Company soldiers with this mission to Kabul in 1839 just as the home government succeeded in diplomatically breaking the Russian backed advance into this region.¹³⁸ The British unjustly occupied this foreign throne through a puppet until mobs in Kabul forced the British into negotiations; terms were hastily made to secure safe passage of British soldiers back to Calcutta. Unfortunately, the agreement was a trap and of the sixteen thousand soldiers that evacuated Kabul only one survived the massacre at Khyber Pass.¹³⁹ With the utter failure of the Afghan War came the sudden end of the Auckland administration in 1842.¹⁴⁰

Lacking just cause and unwarranted by prudential considerations, this incursion into Afghanistan is without dispute the most blatantly aggressive gesture undertaken by the British during their presence in India and ended two decades of relative peace in the subcontinent. It was the ignorance of Lord Auckland that motivated this campaign and

his foolishness not only cost the British twenty thousand lives, £15,000,000, and their national honor, but also caused the eruption of hostilities with neighboring nations.¹⁴¹ The peace that the British had enjoyed for over two decades was not enforced by brutish violence, but rather maintained by an aura of invincibility that was the product of many resounding British military victories over superior numbers. The occupation of Afghanistan tarnished this indomitable image and the bordering nations that had been pacified by fear of British hegemony were suddenly roused to conquest. Sparked by one act of aggression commanded by Lord Auckland, this wave of belligerence would force the British to reluctantly commit to a policy of expansion to protect their existing holdings for an entire decade. Unfortunately, there were still British forces precariously stationed in Afghanistan that had yet to be extracted and Lord Ellenborough was dispatched to India to salvage what he could of this situation.

Upon arriving in Calcutta, Lord Ellenborough sent a contingent of British forces to assist with the evacuation of Kandahar and Jalalabad. Though this expedition brought these soldiers through relentless combat, they were able to fight their way in and out of Afghanistan. When these beleaguered forces arrived, Lord Ellenborough celebrated their exploits with a ostentatious display of oriental ceremony in an effort to ease the miserable embarrassment of the entire campaign, but his pretentiousness was obvious and he turned his attention to finding another way to regain the national stature of Britain. His solution to this problem was a plan to annex the province of Sind. The Afghan strategy devised by Lord Auckland required a blatant violation of a treaty with the Emirs of Sind

¹³⁷ Churchill, Winston, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, vol. 3, *The Age of Revolution* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), 196.

¹³⁸ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 208.

¹³⁹ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 641.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 335.

that prohibited the transport of military forces across their territories. This breach of trust strained this previously friendly relationship, but the Emirs still did not react violently and their efforts to distance themselves from the Company were not aggressive in nature.

Nevertheless, Ellenborough insisted that the continued independence of Sind was a national security threat to the Empire and commissioned Sir Charles Napier to wait for the opportune moment to overcome this western province. The Emirs were defeated in a brief campaign and their territories annexed in 1843.¹⁴² This was the last military action undertaken in India without provocation, but the British still had yet to deal with many of the consequences stemming from the political fallout of the Auckland administration. The bombastic nature of Lord Ellenborough had interfered with his view of international affairs and he was recalled by the Prime Minister in 1844 as the result of his actions.¹⁴³ While his administration was cut short by his reckless foreign policy, it did at least end with good news from London: the British government had ordered the abolition of slavery in India in 1843.¹⁴⁴ Although slavery assumed a different appearance in the East Indies, this decision was made most difficult by the traditions found in both Muslim law and the Hindu caste system, but the British government refused to deliberate any longer and simply directed Calcutta to eradicate the practice quickly.

With the annexation of Sind, the brief period of unjustified British aggression came to a halt, but trouble still simmered as Burma was in the throes of revolution and Nepal was reeling under a disputed succes-

sion. The strongest native threat, however, was stirring in Punjab as Lord Henry Hardinge came with the intention of spending his term managing internal reforms. Amidst the political chaos of the previous two administrations, the leader of the Sikh army, Ranjit Singh, died and left the most westernized native military on the India border without a leader. The Sikh army, or Khalsa, possessed a decentralized organization that allowed the common ranks to steer their operations and they replaced the despotism of Ranjit Singh with aimless upheaval. The British braced themselves for the inevitable penetration of their borders and in November of 1845 sixty thousand Sikh soldiers crossed into British territory with the ambition of taking Delhi.¹⁴⁵ Hardinge had stationed fifty thousand men to repel such an incursion and in their first engagement over ten thousand Sikhs were killed.¹⁴⁶ Although the fate of this invasion was determined after this battle, the First Sikh war lasted for another fifty-four days.¹⁴⁷ Lenient terms of surrender ended this conflict in 1846, but this conciliatory treaty served more as an invitation for a hostile rematch than it did as a foundation for mutual deterrence. The triumph of the British from the outset of this war was absolutely imperative since a loss would have shattered the cooperation of native states and severely wounded the position of the Company.

Although the Khalsa had been soundly defeated, they returned home determined to revisit the same struggle and overcome their British opponents. Ignoring the terms of the treaty, the Sikhs began to prepare for a second encounter with the British. Three years after the close of the First Sikh

¹⁴² Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 336.

¹⁴³ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 106.

¹⁴⁴ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 592.

¹⁴⁵ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 679.

¹⁴⁶ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 108, 111.

¹⁴⁷ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 337.

War, Sirdar Sher Singh seized power with the support of the Khalsa and began a crusade against British authority. The British, who were in between administrations in Calcutta, were not as prepared to fend off this threat as they had been three years prior, but embarked to quell the rebellion engulfing Punjab. Having little experience in the disputes of the subcontinent, Lord Dalhousie delegated the task of defending the north-west to the commander of the Company forces who assembled the British army on the border in late 1848.¹⁴⁸ The fight against Sher Singh began with an indecisive English victory trailed by a narrow loss. While the outcomes of these battles were disputed, the failure of the English to achieve a swift victory was a tactical loss that harmed the reputation of the Company and muddied the progress of their operations. It was not until February of 1849 that the British were able to pin down the Khalsa under heavy fire and crush their army at the Battle of Gujarat.¹⁴⁹

Shortly after the Sikhs were disarmed, Lord Dalhousie boldly announced the annexation of the Punjab and submitted his plans for the civil administration of this region without seeking the approval of Parliament or his contemporaries in India. Unlike his predecessor, who had attempted only to weaken the Sikhs, Dalhousie showed himself totally unwilling to allow the resurrection of hostilities to occur again and personally oversaw the creation of a modern civil structure in Punjab. The consequences of the Auckland administration had not disrupted the innovations introduced by Bentinck and other liberals, but they had distracted the British from initiating new projects and being as proactive as Dalhousie wanted. Weary of this unrest, Lord Dalhousie was eager to turn the vigor of the government away from these wars and the

annexation of the Punjab was a precedent of the bold and determined measures that would define his term. Reaching India during the high point of the humanitarian impulse in Britain, this Scotsman possessed an ambitious vision for India that involved the consolidation of Indian administration in British hands in addition to a far reaching economic program. As the youngest man to have been Governor-General, Dalhousie was to preside over the most energetic administration India would see and proved himself the most gifted administrator to hold the post.

Coming out of the Second Sikh War with a political mandate, Dalhousie discarded the noninterference policy that had prevented even the most liberal of his predecessors from interrupting the domestic affairs of native states in subsidiary alliances. It was obvious to Dalhousie that the most flagrant abuses of power occurred in states that retained their native ruling houses and that the mischief of these princes often compelled the British to intervene after native misrule resulted in either the oppression of their people or a rebellious plot. The misconduct, which was carried out by natives in the name of the Company, besmirched the reputation of British rule and inhibited their attempts to establish good government. To remedy this situation, Dalhousie instituted a forward policy of legal annexation to systematically further direct rule over native populations. The first step in this process was to invoke the doctrine of lapse, which was a traditional Hindu practice that demanded an overlord had to approve of any royal succession where there was no direct heir to the throne. If the suzerain state rejected the candidate adopted to act as the successor, the responsibility of rule was assumed by the superior authority. Consequently, seven states were annexed as the result of this policy over the next six years before they

¹⁴⁸ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 688.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 689.

were put into fiscal and civil order under the uniform administration of the Company.¹⁵⁰

The doctrine of lapse was soon followed by policies that justified the elimination of royal designations that had expired in practice and the annexation of principalities in cases of consistent misrule. Using these conventions, Dalhousie began to terminate some of the Company pensions offered to descendents of ousted ruling houses and, in doing so, removed their ceremonial influence in native affairs. Nawabs who had been adopted, dynasties that had no heir, and those with personal titles all saw their designations terminated with their pensions. Most of these determinations were made personally by Dalhousie who would even have abolished the imperial Mogul title if the Company directors had not intervened. Though most of these rulings had attracted widespread criticism, the most controversial of all of these actions was the annexation of Oudh in 1856.¹⁵¹ This province had been a consistent ally of the Company for most of the nineteenth century, but after the death of King Saadat Ali, who had entered into an alliance with Lord Wellesley, the government of this territory fell into disarray and began to cause complications for Company rule. After issuing a remonstrance from Calcutta on two occasions, the Company Directors argued the misgovernment of this region was a pretense for the annexation of Oudh and forced Dalhousie against his wishes to assume direct control this province. While this decision in particular would generate severe repercussions, many of these actions, though they were extremely beneficial to the natives and improved the political existence of India, angered deposed rulers, and worried the native populations. The former leaders of the Maratha Confederation had been affected in particular by these advance-

ments in Indian society and began to harbor malignant ambitions against the British.

Although the trouble that had been seething in Burma created a need for Dalhousie to invade and annex the problematic territories, he was largely undisturbed by outside forces during his eight in office; he was able to spend most of his term organizing British possessions or developing the primitive infrastructure of India. After updating the British apparatus of government, Dalhousie inaugurated government projects aimed at giving India the capacity to industrialize by improving the modes of transportation and communication in their expansive territories. He commenced by completing the Grand Trunk road connecting the extreme edges of Northern India in addition to the formation of other thoroughfares in the provinces under Company rule. In an effort to ease the traffic of goods and people, he created designs for building or renovating bridges, ports, and irrigation systems across the country. Feats such as the Ganges Canal and the increase of steamship interchange also helped to harness the potential of waterways and remove these turbulent bodies of water as obstacles to efficient trade. Most significantly for the transportation sector, he obtained permission from the government and £12,000,000 in funding from British investors for the assembly of a railway network that would connect the ports and commercial zones of India with their major population centers.¹⁵² Although laborers had only started working on the nine lines that had been proposed, there were already 200 miles of rail laid by the time he left India.¹⁵³ As these transportation projects were underway, Dalhousie helped initiate the establishment of a reliable communications network across India based on several strategically placed telegraph

¹⁵⁰ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 659.

¹⁵¹ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 214.

¹⁵² Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, 424.

¹⁵³ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 661.

lines and by the end of the decade over a thousand miles of cable had been laid connecting the northern cities.¹⁵⁴

There were numerous other improvements during his tenure in office that extended to prison reform, conservation, primary education plans, engineering programs, universities, and countless other projects. Under his administration there was virtually no division of government that had not been overhauled or reorganized to ensure a more efficient rule. These projects were undertaken with the welfare of the Indian people in mind, but there is no case for the assertion that these reforms were wholly altruistic in nature. Many of the social reforms they enacted were done for the sake of principle and to advance the moral welfare of the Hindu civilization, but the economic package that was unveiled in the early nineteenth century served a joint purpose. While there is no question that most Britons had good intentions with regard to India, many of these projects represented lucrative investments where speculators stood to make large returns. The many infrastructure improvements commissioned by Bentinck and Dalhousie employed record numbers of Europeans in the subcontinent and helped to increase the volume of trade between India and Britain. By the beginning of the Dalhousie administration British exports to India had doubled over the previous decade and totaled an average of £7,000,000 per year.¹⁵⁵

The British had much to gain by the success of these infrastructure projects, but what distinguishes this Empire from the contemporary powers of this age was the way in which they profited from their colonial possessions. As the British transitioned from

the amoral imperialism of Warren Hastings into the Victorian Age, there was a concerted effort to find mutually beneficial endeavors that would lift the condition of India without draining the British economy and compromising their geopolitical safety. Where other empires would shortsightedly exhaust the resources of their domains, the British would profit from their colonies while furnishing them with capital improvements that multiplied their long term earnings and amplified the economic capacities of the natives. The process of achieving convenient trade with India also required the adaptation of Indian economic institutions to the capitalist system of the Empire. Through these developments, Britain introduced the capitalist system into India and rescued their economy from their antiquated feudal structure and forged a preindustrial marketplace where business could be safely and profitably conducted. Enacting free trade policies, which erased the last vestiges of mercantilism, in the middle of the nineteenth century brought incredible benefits to England, but a prime consideration in this political debate had been the benefits free trade would bring to their colonies as they developed commercially. It is easily seen in this process that the responsibility the British had to the peoples of India produced reciprocal benefits to the material condition and immaterial quality of both of these civilizations.

After eight years of promoting his ambitious agenda, Lord Dalhousie was spent and he returned to England with his health broken by his tireless efforts. Upon his arrival to London he was acclaimed for his successes in promoting the westernization of India, but he lived just long enough to receive severe criticism for his role in aggravating the conservative elements of the subcontinent into rebellion under his successor, Lord Canning. While his initiatives were unquestionably beneficial to the people

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 661.

¹⁵⁵ Andrew Porter and others. *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 417.

of India, Dalhousie had abandoned the gradual approach that Bentinck had taken and relentlessly pursued his objections without taking the reaction of the natives into consideration. Where his forebears had prudentially worked to accomplish some of the same objectives in a politic fashion, Lord Dalhousie began a terse program of reform that sought an unrealistically rapid transformation of this society and resentment continued to take root as he boldly stripped old ruling institutions of their titles and imprudently absorbed venerated entities. Uneasiness grew as the industrial innovations visibly altered the face of society and negative sentiments were fed by rumors that the English were plotting to force Hindus to convert to Christianity. Land owners and members of the upper class feared they too would soon lose their positions and unrest seethed within groups of northern Hindus as the Empire moved closer to the one hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Plassey.

The remarkably peaceful atmosphere of British India was suddenly shattered when three regiments of sepoy stationed in Meerut slaughtered their European officers on May 10, 1857 before fleeing west.¹⁵⁶ Their mutiny represented the general discontent of many natives with British reforms, but the particular cause that unleashed this reservoir of animosity came when the Company thoughtlessly issued the sepoy under their command firearm cartridges that were oiled with pig and cow fat, something strictly forbidden by Muslim kosher laws and Hindu dietary restrictions. This action seemed to confirm the rumors of a forced conversion in the minds of many natives and typified what natives saw as the disregard of Indian tradition. The spread of this violent outbreak in the north caught the British off guard and the administration in Calcutta scrambled to put down this escalating upris-

ing. The cause for alarm was rooted in the dependence the British government had on these native troops to enforce order in a land where they were vastly outnumbered. All of British rule hinged on the dependability of these regiments and without their assistance India would quickly fall into disorder. At the time of the outbreak, the Company army was composed of 277,000 men and only 45,000 of them were European;¹⁵⁷ in the areas of major disaffection, however, there were only 5,000 British soldiers.¹⁵⁸

The destination of the Meerut mutineers was the city of Delhi, which had been the old capital of the Mogul Emperors. The sepoy stationed in Delhi joined them, and together pronounced Badahur Shah, a member of the royal line, emperor. After the fall of Delhi, Nana Sahib, an adopted son of the Peshwa whose title had been revoked by Dalhousie, joined the uprising and provoked the sepoy in Cawnpore into the besieging their garrison. Through overt treachery, Nana Sahib captured the fortifications before ruthlessly slaughtering all of the men and taking the women with their children as hostages. By the end of the month, the garrison at Lucknow, which was the capital city of the recently annexed province of Oudh, was besieged by angry native troops and the British soldiers trapped in their ramparts waited helplessly for relief. The revolt entered July with the loss of Agra and the main centers of opposition continued to draw more rebels. It seemed as though the mutiny was gaining strength while the British were entering a defensive position.

Unable to depend on battalions of sepoy, the Governor-General requested the deployment of all available British soldiers to India and immediately mustered the forces he had to contain this rebellion. Lord Canning recognized he could only resist this

¹⁵⁶ Byron Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (New York: W.W. & Norton Company, 1972), 84.

¹⁵⁷ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 227.

¹⁵⁸ Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 85.

anarchy by capturing the heart of the mutiny in Delhi, and a force of British soldiers were already positioned to besiege the city as soon as they encountered an opportune moment. To accomplish this, Company forces would have to isolate the rebels in Lucknow and Cawnpore from the old capital and 2,000 British and Indian soldiers were dispatched to break the siege at Lucknow. On the march to the former capital of Oudh, they were able to defeat the insurgents occupying Cawnpore on July 17,¹⁵⁹ where soldiers discovered the mutilated bodies of the 125 women and children Nana Sahib had taken hostage.¹⁶⁰ This horrifying discovery outraged British soldiers beyond restraint and news of these nefarious murders reinvigorated a zealous campaign against lawlessness that would not be stopped until their passionate struggle for order was crowned by retribution for this vindictive slaughter. These forces fought twelve engagements before reaching Lucknow and successfully entering the besieged residency on September 25.¹⁶¹ By this time, they were too exhausted to break out again and were forced to remain with the British subjects they were sent to rescue.

Although Lucknow was still besieged, the British were able to encircle Delhi in August and operations to penetrate the seat of the rebellion were commenced in early September. At this point, Delhi was defended by 40,000 rebels,¹⁶² and the British, with their native allies, engaged in six days of brutal street fighting before Bahadur Shah surrendered the city on September 21, 1857.¹⁶³ With the capitulation of the sym-

bolic head of this reactionary movement, the fervid support of the mutiny dissipated and this movement, which was devoid of a clear purpose and strong leadership, slowly imploded. In November, Lucknow was finally rescued and the province of Oudh was once again under British control by March of 1858.¹⁶⁴ The British spent the nine months following the capture of Delhi pursuing the scattered remnants of the revolt in central India until the last main conspirators were apprehended and Lord Canning announced peace had been won on July 8, 1858.¹⁶⁵

Though those found guilty of mutiny during the course of the crisis had been put to death swiftly, Canning began the process of restoration by judiciously extended an offer of clemency to mutineers who came forward and were found innocent of murder. Many of leaders of this revolt, such as Nana Sahib, who were not killed in battle or captured and executed, escaped into hiding where they died in obscurity; Bahadur Shah, on the other hand, was sent into exile in Burma where his death several years later ended the Mogul line. Unfortunately, the atrocities of the Nana Sahib had been countered on several occasions with isolated incidents of severe, unsanctioned, and indiscriminate violence against native supporters of the mutiny, but most of British animosity was fortunately directed at the armed participants of this conflict and the cries for vengeance after the mutiny were mollified by the leadership of Lord Canning and his associates in the British government.

Although later nationalist leaders and blind patriots would later attempt to color this directionless abandonment of order as the “*Indian War of Independence of 1857*” or the beginning of a national movement against British rule, this conflict, though it

¹⁵⁹ Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 101.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁶¹ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 670.

¹⁶² James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British Rule in India*, 258.

¹⁶³ Harlow and Carter, “Chronology of Events,” vol. 1 of *Archives of Empire*, 396.

¹⁶⁴ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 670.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 671.

was a great menace to British rule, was nothing more than a clash within the Bengali army.¹⁶⁶ The conflict that sprang on the British in the summer of 1857 was a spontaneous reaction to a particular manifestation of widespread unease that spread to nearby territories without collusion. Possessed of no organization, the rash mutiny in Meerut was quickly harnessed by dispossessed despots with devious intentions and fueled by their diabolical influence. United only by discontent with British reform and panic induced by baseless rumors, this band of deserters could not attract a following because they were not bound by purpose or principle and were, therefore, capable only of devastation. This uprising was an alarming threat to British rule only because it came from the ranks that were established to prevent such rebellion from occurring.

Even if these partisan over exaggerations regarding the scope of the mutiny are put aside, this conflict would still be more accurately described as an Indian civil war since a majority of soldiers on both sides were natives. Those who claim this was the “First Indian War for Independence” overlook the hundreds of sepoy who perished beside their British officers in the initial stages of this mutiny for remaining faithful to their duties. The operations to relieve Lucknow and retake Delhi were accomplished by loyal sepoy who fought under British command and battled the disorders fomented by their fellow natives. This rebellion was also limited to the military and did not represent the Indian population as a whole or include large numbers of civilians. Far from a national front, this rebellion temporarily engulfed no more than one third of British territory, claimed less than one quarter of the sepoy in the Company army, and only involved the Bengali

army in northern India despite shared unease with the rest of India.¹⁶⁷ Of the hundreds of principalities under Company authority, only those disaffected by the Dalhousie administration defied the British while the remainder provided critical aid during this time.

The legends and distortions of subsequent generations should not be allowed to detract from the significance of the Indian Mutiny as a monumental turning point in the history of British imperialism in the subcontinent. This milestone in Anglo-Indian history does not bear any of the nationalist connotations that later revisionist historians would superimpose on the actual events of this uprising and predates the movement for autonomy in the subcontinent by over a quarter of a century. These events cannot be construed as an attempt to gain autonomy for the sake of establishing a modern nation, for if this small segment of the Indian population had succeeded in overthrowing the British government they would have resurrected Mogul despotism under Bahadur Shah, the man they crowned emperor. Rather than being the first attempt of the Indian people to make an advance towards the creation of a modern nation-state, the Indian Mutiny signifies the last major attempt in India to remove the British with the intention of regressing back into the oppressive tyranny of the Mogul Empire. Habituated to the traditions and institutions espoused most recently in history by Mogul rule, the Indian people were collectively alarmed by the process of westernization and the widespread discontent generated over these reforms had a profound impact on the British.

For almost a half century, the British had used their rule to westernize India and to further the cause of Christian civilization

¹⁶⁶ V.D. Savarkar, *Indian War of Independence of 1857* quoted in Huttenback, *The British Imperial Experience*, 72.

¹⁶⁷ Churchill, Winston, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, vol. 4, *The Great Democracies* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), 75.

within the subcontinent. Following the rejection of these improvements, Britons lost sight of the cause that had formerly driven the policy of their government and their ardor for reform turned into a dispassionate concern for the business of managing a passive yet efficient administration in their colony. British opinion had been severely injured by these riotous Indians and they began to assume that these natives were incapable of Western improvement being too steeped in the obsolete traditions of the Eastern world to change. The combination of Indian resentment and British disillusionment created an impenetrable barrier in Indian society between the ruled and their rulers that had not existed prior to 1857. The British, who had thought the Indians were capable of being educated in the ways of constitutionalism and civilization, perceived the mutiny as proof that natives were unwilling or unable to attain the British level of advancement and it was decades before the British would once again attempt to prepare India for self-rule. The confidence in India that had been manifested in British liberal reform projects and a basic trust with the native peoples was replaced by mutual suspicion and insecurity.

For an entire century, the British government had been content to delegate the tremendous responsibility of ruling the subcontinent to a private institution and only peered into their affairs once every two decades to renew or reform the Company charter. The sight of almost losing the “Crown jewel of the Empire,” however, brought the affairs of India to the center of the political forum as Queen Victoria and her government waited weeks at a time to hear news of British progress in fighting the mutiny. Frightened out of their disinterested confidence by the mutiny, the British government resolved to take an active role in Indian affairs to prevent similar turmoil from surprising London in the future and

passed the Government of India Act of 1858.¹⁶⁸ This bill replaced the Board of Control, which had been responsible for exerting government influence on the policy of the Company, with the India office headed by the Secretary of State for India, who was responsible for managing Indian policy from London. The Governors-General of India, now styled as the Viceroy of India, and the subsidiary governors of Bombay and Madras were now all appointed solely by the authority of the Crown. Most importantly, this act declared that “India shall be governed by and in the name of Her Majesty”¹⁶⁹ the Queen and reassigned all of the powers and prerogatives that had been previously vested in the Company to the Crown. Following the abolition of the Company by Parliament, Viceroy Canning was left with the task of ushering in the mighty British Raj.

From the Company to the Crown: The British Raj Begins

On November 1, 1858, Queen Victoria issued a Royal Proclamation, hailed by many as “the Magna Charta of India,” announcing the official end of the sepoy mutiny and heralding the formal opening of the British Raj.¹⁷⁰ Translated in every Indian dialect and dispatched across all of British imperial territories in southern Asia, the message of the Queen was unequivocal: the new administration of India by the British government would continue the benevolent

¹⁶⁸ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 219.

¹⁶⁹ “The Government of India Act, 2 August 1858,” in 21 and 22 Vict., c. 106, vol. 4 of *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858-1947*, Select Documents on the History of India and Pakistan, ed. Cyril H. Philips (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 5.

¹⁷⁰ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 756.

rule of the Company, honor their standing legal obligations to native states, reject all expansionist designs, defend religious liberty, extend clemency to fugitive members of the mutiny and govern with “due regard...to the ancient rights, usages, and customs of India.”¹⁷¹ While this declaration only reiterated the consistent policy of the British in India, it was intended to begin the careful process of reconciliation with the natives while reasserting British dominion. Lord Canning, as head of the Indian government, guided the largely unaltered mechanisms of Company rule into the hands of British government and presided over a rather smooth transfer of authority, but what the government inherited was disaster. For over two years, the revolt had completely disrupted commercial activities in the most productive region of India, forced the Company to run deficits amounting to £42,000,000,¹⁷² and deprived the Bengali army of 120,000 sepoy by desertion or mandatory dispersion.¹⁷³ Although most of India had been untouched by the mutiny, the north central region of the country was in need of repair and it fell to the British government to supplement the necessary manpower to garrison their depleted bases. India was now a semiautonomous arm of the British government, and Parliament would have to actively concern itself with the policy of this remote colony. Having no genuine experience in these affairs, the leadership of the Empire would spend the next several decades grappling with the unique issues presented by India.

It has been common practice throughout history for opposed governments

to violently extinguish both domestic dissident and colonial unrest without hesitation and regain compromised authority through publicized acts of grotesque brutality. In contrast to the natural impulse of oppressive governments, the British Empire restored order in India not by instilling fear in their subjects through barbarous displays, but by reassuring those under their rule through conciliatory policies and the adjustment of failed practices. Lord Canning had survived the mutiny politically intact and now had the difficult responsibility of converting the lofty rhetoric of Queen Victoria’s Proclamation into solid form. His most commendable effort in this process was ignoring the obstinate calls of many Englishmen for reprisal and resolutely insisting on mercy, a stance that won him the derisive label “Clemency Canning.” He attended to the emergency task of restoring British power for an entire year before turning to the systematic review of the most contentious issues that had contributed to the mutiny. Policies such as the doctrine of lapse and the more aggressive Anglicization programs were eliminated. Canning worked to strengthen the ties of the government with every segment of Indian society and eased the appearance of many controversial policies. This administration worked with the perspective of the governed at the forefront of their minds and helped to cement in the British consciousness an invariable image of Indian society in the place the hope of change had been.

Distracted by the chaos of the mutiny, the notable advancements made in Indian education went unnoticed by the British public. The formation of the university system in the presidency cities of Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta occurred in the same year the revolt broke out and progressed steadily through the aftermath of the mutiny. While many programs had been abandoned or abridged, the proposed

¹⁷¹ “Queen Victoria’s Proclamation, 1 November 1858,” in *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. 3, vol. 4 of *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, ed. Philips, 5.

¹⁷² Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 677.

¹⁷³ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 430.

additions to the growing educational system were left undisturbed, and several private colleges began enrolling students as secondary schools supplied them with more graduates. The class of educated Indians continued to multiply and would soon have the ability to influence the events in their nation. Though the engine of British idealism was no longer fueling comprehensive social and political reforms, the unmolested persistence of these programs through this incredibly delicate period shows that improvement and innovation would still continue in India.

With the cumbersome weight of the British regime on top of Calcutta, the management of affairs in India was not as efficient as it had been under Company rule and the Viceroy was now accountable to a Parliament that was still under the faulty impression that they were experts in the internal matters of India. Nevertheless, Crown rule strengthened relations with native princes, advanced the Indian Civil Service, and stabilized the Empire in India and across the globe. Though he left much to be resolved in the new relationship between the Crown and their colony, Canning led the British through the trials of the mutiny, ensured a just response in the aftermath of this revolt, and successfully engineered the restoration of British rule. As the result of his tremendous efforts, British rule was able to continue unchallenged for two full decades after he retired in 1862.¹⁷⁴

In 1863, Prime Minister William Gladstone made the logical choice to appoint Sir William Lawrence, a veteran of the Company ranks, to continue the process of stabilizing India and forging in the new direction the British Raj had taken.¹⁷⁵ Lawrence oversaw five more years with all of the policies Lord Canning had authorized and worked to follow the doctrine of

nonintervention with the surrounding nations, though British concern was heightened as Russia menacingly meddled farther and farther south in the affairs of central Asia. A major proponent of capital investment, he expanded spending by £10,000,000 to fund railway construction and irrigation projects that would enhance the economic value of the land.¹⁷⁶ By the end of his term, the combined efforts of Lawrence and his predecessors to promote these public works programs had already introduced major advantages evident in the population explosion that India had been experiencing for seven decades. Plagued by famine and internal warfare during the waning days of the Mogul empire, the catastrophes of the eighteenth century had held the population of India at 130,000,000 people in 1800.¹⁷⁷ The development of irrigation systems, sanitation standards, famine relief programs, and internal peace under British rule, however, had allowed the population of the subcontinent to reach an astounding 255,000,000^{178*} people shortly after Lawrence left office in 1869.¹⁷⁹ Though infant mortality remained high, British rule did encourage this population explosion by reducing the effects of calamities and extending life expectancies through their various reforms.

The administration of Sir John Lawrence represented his long tenure as a Company servant. The eleven year period following the Indian Mutiny was mostly spent

¹⁷⁶ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 685.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 715.

¹⁷⁸ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British Rule in India*, 304

¹⁷⁹ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 771.

*The census taken in 1872 recorded 206,000,000 people in India, but has been criticized for producing an unrealistically low estimate. Most sources estimate that the population of India was between 250,000,000 and 255,000,000 people in 1871.

¹⁷⁴ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 757.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 761.

stabilizing the subcontinent under the direct rule of the Crown and managed by people who had their understandings of India shaped in the years before the mutiny. After the departure of John Lawrence, however, successive Conservative and Liberal ministries replaced these fairly conventional appointments with more partisan candidates dedicated to governing India according to the developing agendas of their respective parties. The initial successors of John Lawrence presided over India while their respective parties were in the formative stages of policy development. The rising tide of a new enthusiasm for imperialism sprung up as the subsequent appointments of the dueling ministries of William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli were more actively involved in implementing the geopolitical agendas of their parties in the subcontinent.

The decade following the Indian Mutiny had increased the support of separatism between the British government and her overseas possessions as the responsibility of colonial administration wore on England and their relationship with the colonies of emigration became increasingly strained. The creation of Dominion Status in 1867, which allowed the colonies settled by British subjects the rights of an independent nation under the sovereignty of the Crown, strengthened the bonds between these Dominions and the mother country since these colonists were now given the full rights and privileges of British citizens.¹⁸⁰ More important to the resurgence of British imperial sentiments was the growing international competition English hegemony faced around the world. In the years following the Congress of Vienna in 1815, every ministry that arose to lead the British government supported the preservation of the balance of power according to the

provisions of the treaty ending the Napoleonic Wars. The Empire was buttressed in this endeavor by their status as the only industrialized power in the world and their unrivalled naval supremacy that formed the basis of their informal empire. The rapid industrialization of other European states began to erode the British edge that maintained the informal empire through free trade and manufacturing. Nationalistic forces on the continent were on the move and by 1871 the Germans, Italians, and Austrians had united their peoples into consolidated nation-states.¹⁸¹ The delicate balance of power was rapidly shifting as these nations began to actively seek imperial possessions across the globe and build up their naval forces to support their nascent empires. As the nations on the continent began to participate in Bismarckian power politics, the Liberal and Conservative parties in Britain diverged more noticeably in their opinions regarding the foreign policy of the Empire.

As the leaders of the battling Conservative and Liberal parties in Parliament, Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone formed the opinions of the two rival understandings of the Empire. The security of the most valuable colony in the world was a prominent feature of this debate as the Empire was dependent upon access to the markets of India, which now supplied 37.7 percent of British imports.¹⁸² Preoccupied with the preservation of English institutions, which included the Empire, Disraeli sought the strategic security of British possessions through both unilateral or bilateral intervention and the “unification and consolidation” of their colonies under the Crown.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Charles W.C. Oman, *England in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1923), 250.

¹⁸¹ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 449.

¹⁸² Porter and others, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3, 44.

¹⁸³ F.J.C. Hearnshaw, *The Political Principles of Some Notable Prime Ministers of the Nineteenth*

Focused primarily on the defense of imperial commerce and trade with the East, Disraeli did not seek the unnecessary annexation of colonies that would drain the financial reserves of Britain, but his realist foreign policy did not hesitate to engage threats forcefully. Distrustful of the rising nationalist states in Europe, he saw British hegemony as critical to global stability and believed that the maintenance of the Empire was essential to imposing their influence on the world amidst the growing contest for global leadership. Since the British had obtained sovereignty over India justly, these Conservatives, unlike most of their political forebears, saw the indefinite maintenance of the British Raj as crucial to the continued existence of the Empire and believed their duty was to ensure the persistence of their rule by providing efficient governance under a benevolent despotism. The Disraelian vision of the future saw Britain at the head of a commercial metropolis with India as the foundation of their imperial network. To secure this possession it was necessary to take preemptive measures when necessary and seize opportunities to guard Eastern investments strategically. One of the most important aspects of the Conservative program was the connection it drew between the Empire and patriotism in the public arena.

The rival conception of the Empire proposed by the Liberal party in the nineteenth century was formed over the four ministries that William Gladstone presided over as Prime Minister. Mr. Gladstone and his followers found themselves unable to resolve their liberal principles with the necessarily despotic elements involved with the Empire. Unenthusiastic about their imperial holdings, the Liberal Party saw their relationship with the Empire as a moral obli-

Century (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1970), 224.

gation thrust upon Britain which they could not abandon prematurely. He referred to the Disraelian belief that “the strength of England [depended]...upon its prestige... extending its Empire, or upon what it [possessed] beyond [its] shores” as “idle dreams” and wanted to maintain overseas possessions until the British could peaceably phase out colonial rule.¹⁸⁴ Unlike Conservatives, the Liberals had a foolishly idealized view of the nationalistic developments occurring on the continent and thought the bonds Britain shared with Europe could form the basis of Western cooperation. Consequently, Gladstone emphasized multilateral action, international order, and diplomacy to protect Britain and the broader interests of humanity.

A principled Evangelical Christian, Gladstone sought to constrain British foreign policy with moral considerations and earnestly desired to protect the rights of those under British rule in the Empire. As Europe moved towards protectionism and scrambled to obtain unconquered territories, Gladstone believed the economic benefits Britain enjoyed from her Empire could be retained through free trade policies without the burden of rule. Although he realized the immoral negligence of withdrawing from the Empire, he saw a moral duty to give colonies, such as India, practical experience in responsible government under British oversight with the aim of rewarding success with self-rule. The gradual introduction of British institutions and the progress of the native peoples would eventually lead to the devolution of the British Empire, but Gladstone saw this as an opportunity for Britain to fulfill their moral obligations

¹⁸⁴ William Gladstone, “The British Empire—Foreign Affairs,” in *Gladstone’s Speeches, Descriptive Index and Bibliography*, ed. A. Tilney Bassett, *British Prime Ministers of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Joseph H. Park (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 284.

while still retaining a unique relationship with their former possessions. While Disraeli possessed a more limited view of the future, William Gladstone expected the coming of the British Commonwealth “held together by loyalty to British culture and by shared economic interests,” but his lack of attachment to the Empire caused him to be more shortsighted and less decisive in his foreign policy.¹⁸⁵ Where the Conservatives were rallied around a specific platform designed to support the Empire by Benjamin Disraeli, the Liberals were simply left with a long term vision for colonial self-rule by William Gladstone.

In 1874, the British people turned the Liberal ministry under William Gladstone out of office and elected a sizable Conservative majority to Parliament.¹⁸⁶ Dissatisfied in part by the weak foreign policy of Gladstone, the people finally gave Disraeli the majority he needed to implement his imperial program. The most enduring legacy of his foreign policy was the purchase of a controlling share in the Suez Canal in 1875. He defended this action as necessary to protect the “highway to our Indian Empire and our other dependencies.”¹⁸⁷ Already in possession of the Strait of Gibraltar and the Cape of Good Hope, Disraeli understood the security of the canal was imperative to British strategic interests. As the foundation of the Second British Empire, concern over India prompted most of British imperial expansion in the late nineteenth century. The rapid acquisition of African territories was largely prompted by the endless quest to secure the locations that could function as choke points to Indian trade if they fell into the wrong hands. British forces were com-

pelled to move from Suez into Sudan in order to protect the Canal and launched preemptive action from Cape Colony into the Orange Free State to secure Cape Town. Their efforts to protect these legally-obtained, strategic trading posts en route to India were a part of the global initiative to guard the Raj and earned them most of their dependent Empire.

Disraeli appointed Lord Lytton in 1876 to serve as Viceroy in India and forcefully apply Conservative ideology in India.¹⁸⁸ As the most intellectual Viceroy in the history of the Raj, Lord Lytton would quickly prove himself to be prone to extremes in response to perceived threats to the Raj and gained a reputation for taking intemperate steps to encourage Indian dependence on the British presence. The most consequential of these immoderate measures was the ratification of the Vernacular Press Act in 1878, which censured the native press.¹⁸⁹ Lord Lytton enacted this measure to combat “the seditious language of the Vernacular Press” which he claimed was “growing more undisguised and audacious.”¹⁹⁰ Unfortunately, this law only aggravated the the expanding educated classes of Indian society, which had begun to establish native newspapers as a means to propagate their ideas and propose reforms. This measure was an attempt to contain the intellectual elite that was the product of the education system designed by the British to introduce the political ideals necessary to help steer India towards a timely independence. Though this class only represented roughly one percent of the population,

¹⁸⁵ William Gladstone quoted in Stephen J. Lee, *Gladstone and Disraeli*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 113.

¹⁸⁶ Lee, *Gladstone and Disraeli*, 86.

¹⁸⁷ Benjamin Disraeli, “Suez Canal Shares,” in HANSARD (CCXXVII [3d Ser.], 652-661, *British Prime Ministers*, ed. Park, 244.

¹⁸⁸ Sidney Low and Lloyd C. Sanders, *The History of England During the Reign of Victoria (1837-1901)*, vol. 12, *The Political History of England* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 305.

¹⁸⁹ Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India*, 1063.

¹⁹⁰ Lord Lytton “Lord Lytton to Lord Northbrook on the Vernacular Press Act of 1878,” in the Lytton Papers, vol. 4 of *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, ed. Philips, 111.

Lytton feared their potential to foment an independence movement or another rebellion. Without tact or prudence, he tried to apply arguably necessary controls to a press unaccustomed to the responsibilities of liberty. Only one newspaper had been closed under this act, but these policies still stirred a desire for self-rule and reform within this educated elite.¹⁹¹

When Lytton had arrived in India it was understood that his tenure would be focused on consolidating the position of the Raj under the Crown and securing the subcontinent from the intensifying threat of Russian expansion in Central Asia. Disraeli believed the first step in repelling this threat was to bind India to the institutions of the Empire and increase the attachment the native principalities had with the British government. With this in mind, he determined to have Queen Victoria declared the “Empress of India” in an effort to draw the devotion of native princes and their subjects towards the greatest ceremonial symbol of the British Empire. On January 1, 1877, Lord Lytton summoned the Delhi Durbar, which is the Court of Delhi, and presided over an Imperial Assembly conferring the imperial title on the British sovereign.¹⁹² Although the age of British imperial administration of India began after the Mutiny of 1858, this act formalized this reality and was a symbol of the growing association of British patriotism and the Empire. Though this act did not produce any material consequences, it signaled to the Eastern princes of India that they were loyal to the Western throne of Queen Victoria alone and was symbolic of the imperial grandeur that would accompany the Raj as it became an object of British patriotism.

Declaring Queen Victoria the Empress of India was not only intended to rouse British patriotism and fill the void left by the Mogul Court in the minds of the natives, but was also directed at sending the Russian Empire a clear message. The Eastern Question, which was the debate over the containment of Russia, dominated the majority of the Disraeli ministry. To protect the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean trade routes with India, the Conservatives simply propped up the Ottoman Empire as a buffer state, but the response to Russian infiltration of Afghanistan was a far more disorderly task. For twenty years between 1858 and 1878, the Viceroy of India had followed a “close border” policy with bordering nations, but the most recent administrations in Calcutta had pursued this doctrine so strictly that ties with Afghanistan had again soured.¹⁹³ In 1879, news reached the British that the Afghan Amir had signed a treaty placing his nation under the protection of the Russian Empire and Lord Lytton began attempting to engage the Afghan government diplomatically. Eventually the czar turned his attention to other affairs, and the British envoy in Kabul gained control of the Afghan foreign policy by reversing the Russian pact. It seemed as though the situation had been resolved when the entire British delegation was slaughtered and Lord Lytton launched the Second Afghan War. The war dragged on as British soldiers found themselves precariously in control of the territories surrounding Kabul and this heavily criticized military campaign roused Britons against the Conservative platform. In 1880, the electorate deposed the Conservatives, who the opposition had labeled jingoes, and returned the Liberals to power.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Sarvepalli Gopal, *British Policy in India 1858-1905* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1965), 119.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Low, *The Political History of England*, vol. 12, 307.

¹⁹⁴ Oman, *England in the Nineteenth Century*, 177.

The Conservatives had roughly eleven years to influence the policy in India and had done much to improve the internal efficiency of the imperial administration. They had successfully turned the Company apparatus into the center of the overseas Empire, united British patriotism behind the cause of passively civilizing the subcontinent, and guarded the trade routes that buttressed their constantly contested international hegemony. While he was able to create programs that raised large sums of private money for infrastructure investment and implemented a Famine Code that would save millions of lives, Lord Lytton was too radical in his dedication to Conservative ideals to be productive and wasted his talent on enacting regressive domestic policies. The elections of 1880 were an overwhelming rejection of the foolhardy incursion into Afghanistan and a clear reminder that the surging tide of British imperialism, which put these Conservatives into office, was limited by the desire of the electorate to pursue Empire with honor. Upon hearing news of the Conservative defeat, Lord Lytton resigned his post and the administrations of India and Britain changed simultaneously for the first time.

Although the early Viceroys of the British Raj had been largely apolitical appointments, the Conservative trend of selecting party members for this office culminated with Lord Lytton. Given the opportunity to exile Conservative policy from India, William Gladstone selected an ideological miniature of himself named Lord Ripon who would undoubtedly work to recast Indian government according to Liberal philosophy. He was dispatched to India with the mission of preparing the natives for receiving more democratic institutions of government and moving the Raj towards a more cooperative system. The Liberal vision of a self-governed India depended on encouraging and enlarging the Indian middle class

through responsible civil activism and education. The extreme significance of the rather brief and uneventful administration of Lord Ripon lies entirely in the impact his Liberal agenda had on this elite faction.

After Gladstone withdrew troops from Kabul in 1881, Ripon began the process of introducing moderate reforms and returned to the original British objective of preparing the natives for independent self-rule at the proper time.¹⁹⁵ Liberal initiatives including new secondary education programs and a failed attempt at local self-rule were transcended by the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act in 1882, which would have a tremendous legacy in India.¹⁹⁶ Lord Ripon mistakenly interpreted all the laws recognizing distinctions between Europeans and natives as testifying to a belief of racial superiority. He intended to extend equality to the Indian people through several bold measures, but the majority of the natives under British rule still required practice in the ways of popular government and liberty. To this end, he rashly introduced the Ilbert Bill in 1883 to rectify one perceived manifestation of racial discrimination by putting Europeans under the jurisdiction of native judges.¹⁹⁷ This bill was popular with the native population, but it was extremely controversial in Britain and the bill was revised under enormous pressure. The outcry from the Britons in India was excessive for a bill that was, in principle, only attempting to establish one standard of justice in the subcontinent, and this outrage displayed some of the arrogant qualities amongst the British that Ripon was condemning.

Nevertheless, the tactless handling of the situation surrounding the Ilbert Bill raised opposition to the liberal reforms of Lord Ripon and paralyzed his support from

¹⁹⁵ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 795.

¹⁹⁶ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 665.

¹⁹⁷ Ferguson, *Empire*, 198.

the weakening Liberal government in England. The withdrawal of this bill agitated the resentment fostered under the Lytton administration in the educated elite. Unlike the Indian Mutiny, the firestorm surrounding this event, later referred to as the “White Mutiny” by Indian nationalists, was generated entirely by the British reaction to the aggressive liberal agenda of Lord Ripon.¹⁹⁸ Though his principled crusade for reform was handicapped by his political foolishness, his tenure as Viceroy marked the beginning of drastic changes in Indian society. After the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act and the controversy over the Ilbert Bill, educated natives began to organize themselves and demand further liberalization. Ripon has successfully whetted the appetites of the natives for self-rule by tapping into a new reservoir of Indian nationalism that began to overflow under his successor. His impolitic zeal, however, froze his efforts to liberalize the Raj and he retired in 1884 as the Liberal Ministry neared collapse.¹⁹⁹ Beset by the divisive issue of Irish Home Rule, Gladstone was reluctant, perhaps unable, to appoint a Viceroy as controversial as the inflexible Ripon and settled for Lord Dufferin. Though he was loyal partisan, this Irish peer was not a philosophically rigid Liberal and was more interested in promoting his own popularity than pursuing any real accomplishments. While he did not actively encourage liberal policy, he passively allowed the momentum of the Ripon administration to continue unfettered throughout his tenure.

As the vigor of the British administration became dormant, Indian nationalism awakened under the leadership of native intellectuals who founded the Indian National Congress in 1885 to strengthen their

voice.²⁰⁰ Initiated by an Englishman, Allan Hume, who had been outraged by the future of the Ilbert Bill, the Congress began with 72 members and grew to an assembly of 1,200 delegates from across the country representing various societies and professions by 1888.²⁰¹ Their annual conventions served as forums for these educated professionals to help guide India towards the phases of responsible government and full dominion status. This body was the first truly Indian organization to represent the interests of the nation and the first native call to form a single country in the subcontinent according to Western conceptions of the state. Those with similar views to these nationalists were welcomed to join, but the dominant factions in the Congress were elite Hindus and educated Bengalis. Consequently, Muslims never fully trusted the Congress and hesitated to support their efforts. Since the Congress was devoid of political power, they depended on their membership to spread their influence across India and gradually acquired clout through their activities. Their early demands were gently expressed and they did not collectively suggest any radical programs or endorse immediate independence. The British government saw this league as a place for public debate that could help guard against private conspiracy, but they maintained reservations and the Viceroy cultivated good relations with them in their early years. As the Congress became larger, a small extremist minority began to form within their ranks in opposition to the liberal moderates, but the main dispute between this body and the Raj remained the prudent pace the British set towards responsible government.

By the time Lord Dufferin left India the liberal momentum spawned by his pre-

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 202.

¹⁹⁹ Wheeler, *Nations of the World: India*, vol. 2, 795.

²⁰⁰ Higham, *History of the British Empire*, 229.

²⁰¹ Brian Lapping, *End of Empire* (St. Martin's Press: New York, 1985), 30.

decessor had slowed to a halt and had been gradually replaced by the cautious imperialism that immediately followed the Mutiny. This shift in policy corresponded with the split of the Liberal Party in 1885 over the issue of Irish Home Rule that motivated some in their ranks to join Conservatives in forming a Unionist government under Lord Salisbury.²⁰² This massive realignment had a moderating effect on the imperial beliefs of these two parties while strengthening domestic support for the Empire. Regarding Indian policy, the main issue now defining sides in Parliament was the pace the introduction of responsible government should assume. The next ten years saw a rather static British policy in India aside from a few concessions granted to the Congress by unmemorable appointees from both parties.

In contrast with the new stability of British policy, the state of the subcontinent was disturbed by the resurgence of Russian mischief, the return of the bubonic plague, severe famine, and the collapse of the rupee. Amidst these disasters, the nationalist press was arousing discontent by blaming the British for the severity of these calamities and using them for their advantage. These outrageous claims from political opportunists were malicious lies designed to defame the British and obscure their tremendous efforts to mitigate these sufferings. The most severe droughts on Indian record struck between 1896 and 1900, but the Famine Code combined with expanded irrigation and British relief for over one fourth of the Indian population reduced casualties far below the historical precedent.²⁰³ British operations intended to contain the plague through sanitation improvements, however, were met with violent opposition from misguided natives. Similarly, government intervention to stabilize the rupee attracted

more illegitimate charges of ruthless exploitation. The creation of several civil commissions to evaluate their emergency response performances shows the British understood their need to modify their operations; the accusations of British negligence were absurd, but these claims resonated with the suffering masses. The nationalist movement had not yet gripped the general population, but the foundation had been laid for it by the formation of a national consciousness and the leaders of this crusade only needed the native public to be united by common agitation.

The decade of unassertive leadership from the Viceroys of India ended definitively with the appointment of Lord George Curzon in 1898.²⁰⁴ A Conservative aristocrat, Curzon went to India with no intention of widening native participation in the government. He desired to revitalize the efficiency of the Raj so as to give British rule a higher degree of permanence. Having seen much of the Empire, he saw British imperialism as a great force for the advancement of civilization around the world and felt that the preservation of the Raj was absolutely critical to continue Victorian progress. Curzon saw the necessity of benevolent despotism in improving the condition of the natives, but cast aside caution and set about a rapid program of reform. More focused on the improvement of India rather than the transformation of Indian character, he set out to strengthen the Empire by increasing the profitability of India through efficient administration and centralization. Unfortunately, in a manner reminiscent of the Dalhousie years, Curzon forgot to consider prudently the sentiments of the ruled and foolishly believed that they would eventually accept his forward agenda once they realized the benefits the British were bringing.

²⁰² Lee, *Gladstone and Disraeli*, 112.

²⁰³ Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India*, 871.

²⁰⁴ Gopal, *British Policy in India 1858-1905*, 223.

During his first year in office, Lord Curzon introduced twelve major reforms to strengthen the Raj followed, upon completion, by two subsequent twelve step programs to encourage industrialization and improve internal administration, respectively.²⁰⁵ From the creation of an Imperial Library to the development of smoke abatement projects, this energetic Viceroy completely overhauled the government while consolidating and creating the departments necessary for a modern economy and government. To help eradicate opposition to the widespread reforms he was rapidly imposing, he worked to improve the educational system and reinforce Western ideals in their curricula. Though there was a great deal of angst in various segments of society, this tension was not converted into outrage until the Universities Act of 1904 was passed to bring colleges under firmer control of the Raj.²⁰⁶ This action, though logical, threatened the control of the educated classes over many facets of the educational system and fed fears amongst these alienated elites that Curzon was attempting to remove them as obstacles to executive authority.

The firestorm over education reform was heightened by the announcement that Bengal was going to be partitioned in 1905 as a component of the last series of reforms proposed in the preceding year.²⁰⁷ Splitting this district into an eastern and a western province was completely logical from an administrative standpoint; this was a state with a population of 78,500,000 spread across 189,000 square miles, which possessed a wide variety of interests that were difficult to manage cumulatively.²⁰⁸ Hindu

nationalism, however, was provoked by this proposal because it created a Muslim majority in the Eastern province and combined the Bengalis with the despised people of Assam. Carelessly dividing this historical region reinvigorated the stagnate condition of the Indian National Congress, which was headquartered in Bengal, rather than serving the intended purpose of further weakening their fading presence. The animosity developed under the Curzon administration exploded over the partition of Bengal. Violent resistance to British rule was ignited on a scale not seen since the Indian Mutiny; this time, however, opposition was organized by radical nationalists and the previously cooperative moderates from the educated classes openly broke with the administration. Many members of the working class began joining boycotts, protests, and strikes while the revolutionary elements of the nationalist movement began resorting to terrorism campaigns, inciting riots, and organizing assassination attempts.

It is easy to see the problems the temerity of Lord Curzon generated in the subcontinent through his reckless domestic agenda and bungled foreign policy. His downfall came in 1905 after he lost a heated dispute with the military leadership of India over the reorganization of the army.²⁰⁹ The Curzon administration oversaw tremendous improvements in India and devised the most efficient administration the subcontinent had ever seen. By the time of his resignation, the state of India was vastly improved over the condition left by the Indian Mutiny because of his energetic leadership and almost five decades of efficient, imperial administration. By the early twentieth century, Britons had nearly £380,000,000 invested in Indian industrial development and infrastructure projects that returned large profits to Eng-

²⁰⁵ Porter and others, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3, 436.

²⁰⁶ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 670.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 671.

²⁰⁸ James, *Raj: the Making and Unmaking of British India*, 362.

²⁰⁹ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 760.

land.²¹⁰ These financial motives are often mislabeled as exploitive; they were, however, the surest engine of improvement for the people of India. The British were actually able to bring mutual benefit to both of these respective civilizations by using profit incentives to encourage private development and foreign investment. This arrangement prevented the vulnerable in both of these nations from being deprived for the sake of improving a distant society. Where other empires would steal the wealth of their overseas possessions, the British would provide India with economic assets while earning honest profits and improving the efficiency of the Empire.

During this time, investment groups and private companies were formed to extend the revolution in communications and transportation services to India. By 1905, 60,000 miles of telegraph lines spanned British territories and connected Calcutta with the far reaches of the subcontinent.²¹¹ Transportation was also responsible for uniting these vast regions together as distance was conquered by the construction of roads, railways, and canals. When Curzon left India, over £350,000,000²¹² had been invested in building a railway system composed of over 33,000 miles of track.²¹³ To combat the effects of drought and encourage inland trade, a sophisticated canal system was developed in the north to stabilize agricultural production and prevent famine. The largest of these irrigation systems branched out from the Ganges River with over 7,650 miles of waterways supporting 2,500,000 acres of farmland.²¹⁴ Over 6,500,000 acres

of land²¹⁵ was redeemed in the first five years of the twentieth century alone and these projects were continued until one quarter of Indian lands were supplied with water through irrigation.²¹⁶ The government also encouraged British investment in the industrialization and commercialization of the subcontinent beginning with the development of agriculture away from the meager subsistence farming that had dominated Indian life for centuries.

The British demand for cash crops and raw materials motivated businessmen and government officials to support nascent sectors of the economy. Production of traditional commodities such as cotton, jute, and sugar swelled as global demand grew and soon stimulated the growth of textile mills and refineries in India. Similarly, the tea trade, which had been dominated by China, was organized in plantations in India and Britain imported over 137,000,000 pounds in 1900.²¹⁷ The introduction of mining to procure the vast reserves of coal in India produced 6,000,000 tons of coal annually and finally enabled India to break into the industrial age by equipping newly erected smelting plants, chemical facilities, and steel industries with an inexhaustible supply of fuel.²¹⁸ India was teeming with over 300,000,000 people by the end of the century and the demand for labor in the British Dominions precipitated the emigration of 1,000,000 Indian workers to other parts of the Empire after 1850.²¹⁹ The burgeoning economic might of India had been completely freed from feudalism by the end of the Curzon years and India entered the

²¹⁰ Porter and others, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3, 440.

²¹¹ Valentine Chirol, *India Old and New* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1921), 87.

²¹² Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India*, 872.

²¹³ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 756.

²¹⁴ Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, 410.

²¹⁵ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 757.

²¹⁶ Ferguson, *Empire*, 215.

²¹⁷ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 712.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ Porter and others, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3, 442.

twentieth century with a sure foundation for future industrialization.

This period of imperial administration began and ended with the same uncertainties and marked the height of the Victorian Age. A great deal of material progress had been brought to India under the direct rule of the British government, though these reforms were not intended to bring about a transformation of society as the policies preceding the Mutiny were. In place of the ambitious attempts to transform the character of the Hindu civilization arose a cool imperialist regime subject to the will of Parliament. The first decade after the Mutiny saw both Liberals and Conservatives appoint moderates to restore order and rebuild the authority of the Raj, but this changed as support for imperialism grew in Britain and these parties formulated developed positions on the rule of India.

Benjamin Disraeli was the first to have the opportunity to exert influence over the policies of the subcontinent and Conservative Viceroys worked to secure and consolidate the Raj for nearly eleven years. Fixated on proficient administration and the preservation of the Raj, these years climaxed with the coronation of Victoria as Queen-Empress of India before falling victim to the extremes of the Lytton administration. His futile attempts to ensure the permanence of the regime were a departure from long-standing British policy and only resulted in galvanizing the opposition. The Liberals succeeded the fall of the Disraeli ministry and removed the muzzle from the nationalist movement. Lord Ripon enacted a liberalization program that was a partial return to the policies created before the Mutiny, but he similarly resorted to impolitic extremes that brought his term to a close. His alarming pace of reform produced the opposite effects as the Indian Mutiny, and the closing years of Liberal ministry gradually returned the Raj to the caution of the

early years after the Mutiny. Having visited both extremes of British imperial policy, moderate imperialists were dispatched to steer a prudent course for India, though there was nothing that could stem the rise of nationalism under the native intelligentsia.

Though this period was comparatively uneventful, the supervision of the imperial government under Parliament fostered constitutionalism in India. The liberal reforms of this era allowed qualified natives to preside over judicial affairs, engage in limited participation in local government, and be employed in the Indian Civil Service. Riled by Lytton and encouraged by Ripon, this process of decentralization was readily accepted by the graduates of English educational institutions and they became more demanding as the century waned. Earlier British statesmen foretold that Western education would eventually prompt Indians to demand self-rule and encouraged these programs for the purpose of equipping the natives with the necessities of free government. It had never occurred to the British to subjugate the Indians by imposing ignorance on the masses in the tradition of the regime they succeeded. Education was the means of preparing India for self-rule and the influence of Western curriculums was seen in the desire of educated natives to create a free government over a united nation. The great difficulty in this came when these elites demanded more freedom than the general population had been habituated to handle. The inauguration of Lord Curzon, whose objective was to reverse this trend towards self-rule, ended the decade of tentative administration.

The youthful energy and confidence Lord Curzon brought to Calcutta created an aura of optimism regarding the dawning twentieth century. The apex of British imperialism occurred during the magnificent durbar he held to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII as the Emperor of India in

1903.²²⁰ Within two years of the imperial durbar, however, the age of uncontested Victorian rule in India was ended as the crusade for independence was galvanized by the Curzon administration and mobilized against the Raj. As a result, the Indian population began to more fearlessly protest British rule and adopt increasingly aggressive tactics to obtain their demands. Faith in and fear of the Raj was greatly diminished in the early years of the twentieth century and the British government would have to rely increasingly on making concessions to preserve order. No longer the innovative agent directing India, the British Raj was locked into a defensive posture with rising nationalist fervor assailing their footing. The period of British imperial rule was opened by the violent reaction of disorganized dissidents to the controversial reforms of Lord Dalhousie and it closed with the aggressive protest of organized opponents to Lord Curzon.

Socialism on the Inside and Gandhi on the Outside: The Raj Challenged

The 1911 Delhi Durbar of King George V was the most majestic display of British might the Empire had ever seen and was symbolically held in Delhi, the historical capital of bygone empires.²²¹ For the first time in the history of the British Raj the reigning sovereign journeyed to India to be crowned King-Emperor before his native princes and over 100,000 subjects.²²² Through the pomp and pageantry of the coronation in Delhi, the striking presence of King George V and Queen Mary evoked a fleeting outpouring of loyalty from the masses and amazed the assembled spectators

with the splendor of the Empire. From the imperial throne, the King-Emperor stunned those present with the announcements that the partition of Bengal was to be repealed and the capital would be relocated from Calcutta to Delhi. Rescinding the partition of Bengal was an incredibly popular gesture of goodwill, but this announcement came just as Indian opinion accepted this reality and sent the message that unrest was the surest way to acquire concessions. The transfer of the capital was intended to bring the administration of the Raj closer to a conveniently located region of India and to link their weakening imperial authority with the memory of great empires. In many ways, the movement of the capital from the center of Western influence to the old city of patriotic loyalties foreshadowed the coming return of government to native hands. Where Edward VII reigned over this Empire with a firm hold on the government, George V was to preside over the gradual decay of British authority in India amidst great controversy. His imperial Durbar was to be the last.

The upheaval following the Curzon administration had a tremendous impact on the Indian National Congress. The body had been weakened by years of fruitless remonstrance gained widespread support and attention from the public. This time, however, the controlling influence of the moderate faction of the Congress was diluted by the growing number of radical members calling for total independence and various forms of resistance. Exacerbating this situation, the disaffected Muslim bloc in the Congress removed themselves in 1906 to form their own Muslim League and further depleted the ranks of the moderates to the point that extremists were almost able to forcefully wrest control later that year.²²³ Indian unrest spread across the Empire and political terrorism was reaching new heights

²²⁰ Ferguson, *Empire*, 210.

²²¹ James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, 321.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 672.

when the British intervened. Civil unrest was finally defused by the passage of the Morley-Minto reforms in 1909, which were named after the Secretary of State for India, John Morley, and the successor to Lord Curzon, Earl Minto.²²⁴ These acts calmed nationalist opposition by enlarging the number of seats elected by natives on Indian legislative councils and allowed natives to hold higher posts in the government.

Even though both Conservatives and Liberals wanted to give home rule to India in due course, writing the final draft of this bill was a laborious process that was complicated by the difficulties of introducing the early foundations of a parliamentary government in a nation where so few people were educated or willing to recognize minority rights under the rule of the majority. In particular, the welfare of the Muslim community was of concern to the British government since they could be easily overpowered by the overwhelming Hindu majority in India. Arranging institutional protections for these minority groups was an enduring task for the British and would play a central role in the history of the Indian Independence Movement. After the Morley-Minto reforms, sporadic instances of violence occasionally flared in Bengal under the ensuing term of Lord Hardinge but they declined after an assassination attempt on his life. Popular with Indian liberals, Lord Hardinge presided over an uneventful administration, but lent his influence to open negotiations over the treatment of Indians in South Africa between the Dominion government and a little known Brahmin lawyer named Mohandas K. Gandhi. After an agreement was reached, Mr. Gandhi triumphantly

returned to India in 1915 amidst the greatest conflict the Empire had ever entered.²²⁵

The eruption of the First World War in 1914 surprisingly caused the people of India to respond with a zealous display of support for the Empire. Calling on the aid of her dependencies, Great Britain was shocked to receive over £100,000,000 from India to finance the war and to count 1,400,000 soldiers from the subcontinent in their armed forces.²²⁶ For four years the majority of the Indian people stood united behind the Empire, but this titanic clash of nation-states opened even loyal Indians to the possibilities that could come with independence. The alliance between the Ottoman and German Empires was particularly problematic for the British since many Indian Muslims were sympathetic to the largest remaining Islamic empire in the world. The wartime economy combined with geopolitical stress quietly agitated the racial tensions prevalent in Indian society and internal animosities broke loose after the armistice had concluded the war. While most of India shared in the tense but settled mood pervading much of the Empire at this time, the radical fringes of society were motivated to renew their subversive intrigues against the Raj. By the middle of the war, radical nationalists were engaging in terrorist activities and the British were startled to discover a plot to overthrow the Raj by revolutionary extremists. The Raj wasted no time in clamping down on these dangerous dissidents, but there was nothing that the British could do to prevent these nationalist forces from capitalizing on the inevitable discontent generated by the jarring return to a peacetime economy.

The Indian National Congress pressed the British to outline more clearly their

²²⁴ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 674.

²²⁵ Arthur Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill: The Epic Rivalry that Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age* (New York: Bantam Books, 2008), 215.

²²⁶ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 415, 353.

strategy for responsible government in India. The war time ministry of David Lloyd George commissioned the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, to assist the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, in formulating a plan of action. On behalf of the Prime Minister, Montagu articulated the long-standing policy of the British government when he announced the resolution of the Crown to “[increase the] association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government.”²²⁷ With this, the coalition government under David Lloyd George took the historically unprecedented step of agreeing to relinquish gradually the political supremacy they possessed over India as the native population proved themselves capable of assuming those duties. The British were adamant about scrutinizing the rate of progress towards home rule, but were more than willing to reward responsibility with more responsibilities. The British believed that they had an obligation to train the Indians in the art of politics and refused to lay permanent claim to the despotic powers the duties of Empire had conferred upon them. Parliament expressed a deep aversion to withholding the civil right of self-government from those who were capable of judiciously wielding such power and had a desire to integrate India into the British Commonwealth of Nations as a free nation—eventually.

After six months of collaboration, these two officials released the Montagu-Chelmsford report that made several proposals attempting to balance the introduction of more native participation in government

with order under British authority. The result of their findings was the Government of India Act in 1919 establishing a “dyarchy” in the provincial administration of India. Under these provisions, the British would retain control over the national government, all military affairs, and certain reserved powers on the provincial level while the Indian legislative councils received control over financial matters and law enforcement. Furthermore, the electorate had been expanded and the size of the legislative and executive councils greatly expanded. Most importantly, this act substituted the Imperial Legislative Council, which had functioned as an advisory body to the Viceroy, with a bicameral assembly elected by a 1,000,000 member electorate.²²⁸

Ages had passed in the subcontinent without the slightest move towards free government and the great task of establishing democratic institutions in the Far East remained for the last of the alien empires to govern India. The ready consent of the British to the gradual process of governmental devolution is unprecedented in imperial history and the reforms of 1919 initiated the process of converting the Imperial Legislative Council into a system resembling the English parliamentary structure. The uniquely British process of imparting their revered political institutions into their colonial governments advanced considerably as they entrusted the citizenry of India with more provincial responsibilities and expanded participation in the administration of the Raj. Nevertheless, their standing was to be challenged by many nationalists totally dissatisfied by the lack of radical concessions in this bill. The propositions of the Congress were far too unsafe, and the British hoped that the promise to review the progress of India and the condition of the

²²⁷ Edwin Montagu “The Montagu-Chelmsford Report,” *Moving Here Catalogue*.
http://www.movinghere.org.uk/deliveryfiles/BL/V_4_Session_1918_vol_8_f.127/0/1.pdf
(Accessed 6 April 2010).

²²⁸ Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 788-789.

dyarchy in 1929 would quell opposition to the reasonable approach.²²⁹

The uniqueness of India in the British Empire made reforming their government an experimental process in most regards. The Dominion States circling the globe were populated by peoples from the British Isles who had been well-versed in the practices of free government and were devoted to the British Commonwealth. The other dependencies acquired during the Victorian Age generally did not possess either the sophisticated economy or the developed civilization that India housed. Confronted by these realities, Parliament could not depend on India to be a reliable Dominion within the Empire or remain a benevolent despotism. For an entire year these parties debated about how to properly impart responsible government to the centerpiece of their Empire and these proposals were not formally enacted until December of 1919.²³⁰ In the meantime, a series of unfortunate circumstances erased all of the goodwill that these measures could have fostered. Earlier that year, the government in India had inflamed public outcry when they decided to pass the Rowlatt Acts, which allowed the Raj to retain some of the emergency powers they had assumed during the war. Many of these provisions were intended to protect the birth of Indian self-rule from extremism and conspiracies against the Raj. These acts increased the penalty for sedition, permitted the government to try revolutionaries without a jury, and expanded executive power to deal with suspected rebels.

This attempt by the British to regain forfeited powers offered an opportunity for a man named Mohandas Gandhi to implement his philosophy of nonviolent resistance in

India for the first time. Gandhi had been a devout admirer of the Empire and was educated as a lawyer at the Middle Temple in London, but his enthusiasm for British imperialism disintegrated when he was exposed to the realities of war and the racial partiality in the South African regime. His disillusionment prompted a search for truth that ended when he concluded that he himself, like all humans, was a standard of truth and possessed a spark of the divine within his soul. It is the failure to realize this divine element or the denial of this aspect of human nature that corrupts the actions of man. By smothering animal desires humans could give freedom to their soul and comprehend truth by allowing their divine component more dominance. Without shielding the soul from animal actions the knowledge of self is hidden and god, therefore, cannot be known. Since the oneness of god in the universe is present in the whole of humanity, knowing god also depends on interaction within the collective society.

Following these premises, Gandhi created what he called the *satyagraha*, which literally means “soul force,” as a moral means to oppose those who suppress the divine spark within them and choose to oppress others. By willingly accepting suffering at the hands of these hardened individuals, the *satyagrahi*, who is someone that engages in *satyagraha*, could awaken the conscience of their oppressor. Gandhi believed the sight of suffering aroused an innate empathy in people and unveiled the natural connection between human beings. He misguidedly believed the tormentor could not deny this their humanity permanently and would eventually change their behavior. The *satyagraha* could be done as an individual, but was most effective when men rose together as brothers and joined in suffering before their oppressors. Calls to civil disobedience,

²²⁹ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 792.

²³⁰ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 726.

general strikes, fasts, and other tactics designed to bait superiors were considered moral alternatives to violence and supposedly offered the potential to bring even the oppressors to an understanding of the divine truth within themselves. This relativist philosophy caused Mr. Gandhi to accept all religions since he believed “there [were] as many religions as there [were] people” and fully believed religious harmony could be achieved once people realized they could come to a more developed understanding of god through the combination of their individual perspectives.²³¹ The religious diversity of India and the heated controversies over these radical differences could be overcome once the greed induced by the abuses of British imperialism was removed from the subcontinent. Together as a united India, the religious potential of the peoples in the subcontinent could be fully realized.

When Mr. Gandhi returned to India, he did not have political ambitions and sought to lead a theological movement to purify his homeland. It was his ambition, “in politics...to establish the Kingdom of Heaven” by freeing India from bondage and establishing her as the spiritual center of a worldwide, spiritual awakening. Based on his new age, relativist perspective, Mr. Gandhi offered India the political principle of *swaraj*, or self-rule, in which his native land was a loose association of villages composed of self-governed individuals that voluntarily did their natural duties without coercive government and led simple lives as subsistence farmers. Gandhi realized that this existence was rendered unfeasible by the developments brought by Great Britain and the process of industrialization, but sought the midpoint between these opposites as the best option. He was averse to the British Empire because he had developed a

Marxist view of imperialism that equated empires with exploitation. To him, greed was an inherent feature of civilization, as understood by the British, and motivated the process of industrialization that was stripping India of her simplicity. He, however, completely rejected the Marxist version of communism because it emphasized the material and, consequently, called for violence rather than partnership to curtail this exploitation. Rather than replace the individual with the state, Gandhi desired to use the political system to amplify the individual through the community. In place of an anarchic system that could possibly leave individuals isolated or abandoned, he promoted a limited form of socialism that could enforce social justice in the industries that did exist. By this process of cooperation and voluntary participation, the problems he saw with Marxism could be avoided.

In spite of the fact that the prerogatives of the Rowlatt acts were never once utilized, the outrage over these bills quickly eclipsed the debate in Parliament over responsible government and nationalist leaders began organizing protests across India. Mr. Gandhi employed the strategy he had developed in South Africa to combat the alleged oppression of the Indian government and called for a campaign of *satyagraha*, or nonviolent resistance, so that he could channel the outrage of the public into a widespread movement against the status quo. His first appeal to the populace for a campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience was a total failure; it was difficult to persuade people to stand against supposedly oppressive legislation that was not oppressing anyone or engage in civil disobedience against the Rowlatt Acts without proving their necessity. Mr. Gandhi then called for a countrywide *hartal*, or the general suspension of work for civil demonstrations, and these marches quickly engulfed Delhi in vicious riots. Relentless,

²³¹ Mohandas Gandhi, “From *Hind Swaraj*,” in *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology*, ed. Louis Fischer (New York: Random House, 1962), 213.

Gandhi began organizing protests in Amritsar and Delhi, but the British were afraid of more unrest and prohibited Gandhi from joining these protests. News of this action sparked pervasive disorder and mobs killed innocent people, burned government offices, and overran cities across the north. His quest to peacefully disrupt society led him to prompt India to revisit these escalating outbreaks in hopes they would become nonviolent.

These failures would have ruined Gandhi had it not been for the recklessness of General Reginald Dyer. The unrest in Amritsar forced the local government to send for the military to restore order and soldiers were immediately dispatched to end the violence. In command of a regiment of Sepoys, General Dyer restored order in the city and declared martial law to stop the unruly demonstrations. While his contingent marched through Amritsar, over 20,000 demonstrators had congregated in the Jallianwala Bagh, a public square in the city, against his orders.²³² It is likely that most of these people had not heard his instructions, but Dyer panicked at hearing this news and was not willing to risk another episode like the Indian Mutiny. He hastily rushed his soldiers to the square and commanded them to fire on the crowd without warning. Over the next ten minutes his soldiers fired 1,650 rounds, killed 379 people, and left 1,208 wounded natives in the street.²³³ Dyer was initially heralded as a hero in England for thwarting a repeat of the 1857 Mutiny, but enthusiasm for his leadership slowed once the details of his action were spread. He was recalled to England a year later after an investigation of his orders in Amritsar, but he was sadly never formally reprimanded for his recklessness and his actions permanently

sullied the reputation of the Empire while fanning the flames of nationalist discontent.

There is absolutely no justification for the atrocities of the Amritsar Massacre and the British were far too slow and lenient in their condemnation of Dyer. He had desecrated the principles of the Empire and brought the justice of the Raj into question across India. Rather than quelling the violence in the Punjab, Dyer added to it and defaced the image of the Raj beyond repair. In a misguided attempt to defend order and the Empire, Dyer brought down the last vestiges of the Victorian Era and energized the nationalist movement behind Mr. Gandhi. The Indian National Congress, already irritated by the gradual pace of liberalization, erupted with renewed vigor and began to issue bold demands. The Indian people were no longer content to adopt the prudent course towards self-government established by the British and were from this moment onwards attempting to outdistance an already brisk pace towards home rule. The Raj could no longer appeal to the respect the natives had for their moral authority to remain in power or to the fear of force, which evaporated as the British displayed their extreme hatred for cruelty. The impetus to resist mounted as nationalism spread from urban areas into rural communities and united India behind *swaraj*, or political and economic self-reliance. From this point on Britain would have to hold their Indian territories through negotiation.

Gandhi was completely stunned by the report of the Amritsar Massacre and entered the following year with a firm resolve to expel the Raj. Elections had been scheduled for the fall of 1920 by the Government of India Act and he determined to make this the center of his first non-cooperation campaign.²³⁴ With the backing

²³² Huttenback, *The British Imperial Experience*, 181.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 182.

²³⁴ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 790.

of key Muslims, who were angered by the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, Gandhi was able to introduce a resolution in the Congress that called for a nationwide satyagraha campaign, which in this case meant a boycott of all things British, and earnestly believed they could bring about the spiritual release of India through this process. Mr. Gandhi passionately declared that “co-operation...with this satanic government [was] sinful” and assured his many critics that if this strategy was adopted his ideal system of swaraj would be obtained within a year.²³⁵ Following this plea, the Congress narrowly voted to approve his resolution and a triumphant Gandhi was able to wrest control of the organization from the traditional moderates after he pressured them into ratifying a new charter. The new generation of Hindu nationalists and the small Muslim presence strengthened the hand of their new leader. Mr. Gandhi now stood at the head of his nationalist movement.

In the middle of 1920, boycotts were initiated to bring the Empire to a grinding halt; Mr. Gandhi had radically called for all students to abandon their classes, for policemen to forsake their sworn duty, for government officials to resign their titles, and for the populace to pass over British goods.²³⁶ He was completely opposed to any show of collaboration with the Raj on any level and demanded that the recently enfranchised electorate boycott the upcoming election. Mr. Gandhi had put his faith in humanity and slowly, rising up through the classes of India, a groundswell of self-sacrifice swept across the subcontinent before swiftly dying in less than two months time. Most gave no active observance to his petitions and twenty-nine percent of the electorate voted

in defiance of the Congress.²³⁷ In spite of the early complications of this campaign, the Viceroy, Lord Reading, prudently waited for the campaign to lose momentum and refused to intervene as long the demonstrations were peaceful. At this point, Mr. Gandhi changed the focus of his campaign in 1921 from swaraj to *swadeshi*, which is economic independence, mainly because his ambitious scheme to achieve self-rule within one year proved to be a miserable failure.²³⁸ Thus, the wisdom of his worldview had been tested by the outcome of his prediction.

In support of economic self-reliance, Mr. Gandhi began to produce his own home spun cloth instead of purchasing the materials imported by India or produced by mills dependent on Britain. The cotton khadi became a symbol of nationalist resistance and began to revive some interest in his otherwise lifeless campaign. Problems arose, however, when high ranking Muslim members of his coalition began using Islam to encourage Muslim sepoys to desert from the army. This seditious threat to order was swiftly met by Lord Reading and these Muslim leaders joined thousands of other unruly followers of Mr. Gandhi in prison. In response, all corners of India were subjected to horrific riots for three months; buildings were burned, police were assaulted, rural revolts fomented, and hundreds were butchered. Mr. Gandhi called for the cessation of violence, but, rather than call off the satyagraha to at least discourage the blood-letting, he endorsed a motion passed by the Congress that declared service as sepoys or policemen was dishonorable. A subsequent call for a hartal in Bombay quickly reignited violence and vanquished civil order as Indian law enforcement was now a target of brutality. These demonstrations continued for another two months until a peaceful

²³⁵ Mohandas K. Gandhi quoted in Bryan Lapping, *End of Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 42.

²³⁶ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 261.

²³⁷ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 790.

²³⁸ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 275.

march in Chauri Chaura was converted into a murderous riot that beat and burned twenty-three police officers to death.²³⁹ After this carnage, Mr. Gandhi finally called off his satyagraha campaign in February of 1922.²⁴⁰

Why did it take so much violence for Gandhi to end his campaign? The answer is complicated yet simple: he wanted suffering. According to his belief system, it was the common suffering of his people before their oppressors that would unite them together and liberate their tormentors by awakening their humanity. In order for civil disobedience to work effectively there must be oppression to oppose and suffering to incite more opposition. His problem was that he could not get the British to be at least unreasonable governors let alone the ones orchestrating acts of heinous violence and, therefore, the enablers of the satyagraha to spiritually purify India. All of his calls for passive resistance were only resisted by the British when the public safety was endangered by his followers. Essentially, he wished for an evil in his opponents that was simply not there. Gandhi had repeatedly told his followers that it would be a bloody undertaking to thwart the power of the Empire and he publicly expressed his desire for another massacre from the British saying, "Let some General Dyer stand before us with his troops...Let him start firing without warning."²⁴¹ Let this be clear: Mr. Gandhi did not want peace; he only wanted his side to be peaceful. It is true that he was a man who deplored violence, but a movement such as his could only be nourished by oppression and his repeated invitations for it were answered only by the manifold atrocities of his followers. Rather

than seeing the inherent flaws of his philosophy, he began to reinterpret the instability of Indian society as the result of the influence British subjugation had on India and he resolutely concluded that the Raj must be ended.

After these great disturbances subsided, Gandhi was arrested for encouraging sepoys to desert the army, given a fair trial, and sent to jail where he was humanely treated until his release in 1924.²⁴² In his absence, his coalition with the Muslims had collapsed and his great cause against the Raj disappeared. Mohandas Gandhi was released by the British government prior to the end of his full sentence, but he returned to a divided Congress that bitterly remembered the barrier his idealism was to their pragmatic ambitions. The hatred between the countless factions comprising Indian society had intensified during his imprisonment and a disillusioned Gandhi retreated to his ashram for several years of contemplation. Amidst the disruptions caused by his campaigns and during the relatively peaceful absence of his resistance-baiting campaigns, India was actually able to secure several advancements through their participation in the dyarchy and by revising their first national constitution.

Though the dyarchy system established by the British had many practical flaws that obstructed the efficient flow of the government, it did give a limited portion of the population experience in free government and was the source of several notable reforms. As the result of the boycott imposed by Congress, moderates went to the polls and elected a fairly reasonable body that removed the Rowlatt Acts, effected improvements to labor conditions, and worked to extend the influence of India to the developing British Commonwealth. Most of

²³⁹ Ibid., 278.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Mohandas Gandhi, *Collected Works* in Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 279.

²⁴² Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 790.

these affairs were overshadowed by the tremors shaking the stability of Indian society and the focus of most Indians was the inability of the dyarchy to maintain the efficiency of British administration. The constitution was functional enough, but it was hampered by disputes created over the division of powers between the two elements of the government and an inability of their society to manage a system comfortable with the existence of a dissenting minority. The dangerous presence of malevolent factions in Indian society greatly exacerbated the difficulties of organizing the dyarchy and made the formation of political parties to organize the government a dangerous proposition. Nevertheless, voter participation increased in every subsequent election and the authority of the Raj was not further compromised by the irritating antics of Mr. Gandhi.

Disgust amongst Indian intellectual circles simmered through this period of relative public peace and the British decided to initiate the imperial review of their latest constitutional revisions two years before it had been scheduled. In 1927, six members of Parliament, including future Prime Minister Clement Atlee, were selected to sit on the Simon Commission, which was named after the chairman, John Simon, and directed to investigate the general condition of India under the dyarchy.²⁴³ For two full years, these men examined the consequences of the 1919 Government of India Act, evaluated the constitutional needs of India, and attempted to gauge the readiness of the Indian people for further advancement towards responsible government. The ensuing Simon Report, released in 1930, was possibly the most insightful and comprehensive work on the state of India ever to be printed and had implications far beyond the

recommendations it submitted to Parliament.²⁴⁴

In this report, the panel concluded that the political structure best suiting the unique demands of Indian society was a federal union composed of provincial governments under a national authority. This arrangement was the only system these men could discover that offered to mitigate the difficulties imposed by the geographic vastness of the subcontinent and the pervasive hatred dividing Indian society. The former of these two obstacles was the greatest danger to free government in India; the British reluctantly embraced the establishment of provincial representation and the creation of communal electorates in the central government. By far, the most notable reform proposed by this commission was the end of dyarchy in the provinces of India and the transfer of the powers exercised in the local districts to either the central authority or local governments. This process, however, was not to pervade the executive authority of the central government until proven experience in provincial self-rule substantiated reasonable faith in the ability of Indians to wield such power; furthermore, the British reserved the absolute right to intervene anywhere that the rights of a minority were forcefully challenged.

The nationalist mood at this time was complacent; the Muslim League had long distanced itself from the Congress and was uneasy about their future prospects with less British involvement, though some members were supportive of the purposes behind the Simon Commission. The leadership of the Congress, on the other hand, was beginning to pass from the old style moderates to a new, more radical generation of activists who were totally unsatisfied with the slow pace of constitutional development. Since the Congress had issued a passive rejection of the initiatives of Mr. Gandhi, control of

²⁴³ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 794.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 795.

this body came into the hands of Motilal Nehru and his son, Jawaharlal Nehru, and they together demonstrated the divided ambitions that existed amongst the two generations existing in the Congress. Where Motilal Nehru was a Hindu interested only in attaining dominion status through the means employed by Mr. Gandhi, his son was an atheist demanding that all ties with Britain be immediately terminated through any means short of large scale revolution. Though these two men still harbored a deep affection for each other, the political differences they represented pushed the Congress into turmoil.

Motilal Nehru, as President of the Congress, had issued the aptly named Nehru Report detailing the first constitutional design proposed by natives, but the moderate tone of this document was splitting this coalition of nationalists. Both Nehrus realized that only the leadership of Gandhi could reunite the only factious divide in the subcontinent that was an asset to the stability and order of India under the Raj. Mr. Gandhi did return to the Congress in 1928 and, after forcing them to endorse several of his stances, threatened the British with the promise that he would launch a noncooperation campaign aimed at full independence if India was not assured full dominion status by the end of 1929.²⁴⁵ Parliament did not betray any weakness of resolve in the months following this ridiculously unfeasible ultimatum; even the fall of the Conservative ministry and the election of a Labour majority under Ramsay MacDonald did not move the British towards any form of compliance with this foolhardiness.

India was racing towards the end of the year when Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India named by the previous Conservative government, shocked the world by guaran-

teeing “India...in the fullness of time... equal partnership with the Dominions.”²⁴⁶ An obscure, inexperienced appointment, Lord Irwin clung to idealized images of India and irresponsibly preempted the Simon Report, the advice of the government, and the consent of Parliament. With this announcement, the Viceroy offered to India what had previously only been given to those nations that underwent a similar process of constitutional development to what the Britain had experienced—a critical progression that India desired to avoid entirely. Lord Irwin had singlehandedly marshaled the forces of extremism in India and drew battle lines across the House of Commons. Entering the throes of the Great Depression, facing the revived agitation of Mohandas Gandhi, and presiding over domestic indecision towards the mission of imperialism, the Empire could rely on few champions to oppose the many forces assailing her prestige; thus ended the first decade following the Treaty of Versailles.

The First World War had forever altered the fiber of the Empire. On the fields where many great empires had been dealt mortal blows, the British Empire experienced a rebirth, not as a more vital world or a renewed giant, but as a surviving relic of Victorian greatness clinging to the vestiges of imperial hegemony while existing in the new world order. England had emerged from the war financially weakened and her economy in seemingly endless stagnation. During the decades leading up to World War I, a rapid process of international industrialization enabled numerous Western powers to close the distance Britain had created through her unrivalled economic and technological capacities. Britain was still far

²⁴⁵ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 313-316.

²⁴⁶ Lord Irwin, “Lord Irwin’s Statement on Dominion Status, 31 October 1929,” in *India in 1929-1930*, pp. 466-468, vol. 4 of *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, ed. Philips, 286.

more productive and powerful than any nation with her size and population could ever have imagined, but her supremacy was chiseled away by the rapid development of larger continental nations and the awakening potential of the United States. The majesty of Edwardian England and the grandeur she enjoyed in those days was not based on military prowess, which had rarely been tested, or industrial might, but came from the command London possessed as the financial capital of the world. As the debts from the war mounted, however, England quickly became a debtor nation with little monetary edge and was fortunate to see New York City, the financial center of a friendly ally, replace her as the investment hub of the globe. At the end of the Great War, British citizens were confronted with an economy in shambles and had to deal with a substantial economic downturn within her own borders for the first time in many decades.

The rigors of total war had worn out the “jingoist” fervor that had for so long united the Empire with patriotism. The invincibility of the British Empire had been challenged to her limits and the enthusiasm once behind the cause of defending British dependencies and civilizing the globe had dissipated with the horrifying recognition of what that process entailed. The poisonous ideals Woodrow Wilson injected into European thought further tarnished their conception of Empire as calls for self-determination and international equality began to corrode their common sense and moral understanding. These toxic ideals, which Americans at home were prudent enough to reject initially, combined with the growing naval might of the United States, induced lethargy into the British Empire. Shouldering the responsibility of policing international waters slowly transformed into a healthy partnership with the United States to share these burdens before the determination of this financially worn Empire was extinguished.

All of the political parties in Parliament recognized this dwindling interest in the Empire and circumspectly focused their political platforms on economic improvement. Things such as making alterations to the tax code and social reforms quickly took precedence over the great issues that had dominated the debates in Parliament.²⁴⁷ The frantic concern of Britons for their social welfare led to the dramatic rise of the Labour Party and pushed most key Liberals to ally themselves with the party that was quickly stealing away their constituency. The promises of socialism allowed the rise of the far left on an unprecedented scale and had a profound impact on the future of the Empire. Most Labourites were opposed to imperialism since it was a form of exploitation which clashed with their notion of equality. The Empire to these Labourites was an extension of capitalist abuse into foreign lands and wrongly remained in place through the imposition of benevolent despotism.²⁴⁸ As the party expanded, the Labourite sympathies for native peoples under the Empire grew and they openly favored the extension of their domestic beliefs into the government of the colonies. They believed that the time to begin the process of transitioning from authoritarian rule into self-government had come and would come to partner with the leaders of independence movements across the globe. In the interwar years, the Labour Party was propped up by the political vagabonds of the collapsing Liberal Party and never obtained a large enough majority to affect sweeping reforms or destroy the Empire.

Similarly, the Conservative Party abandoned their traditional patriotic appeal to garner political support with a comprehensive agenda to address the economic ills of Britain. For this, Conservatives were

²⁴⁷ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 429.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 323.

rewarded with the consistent faithfulness of the electorate throughout this time. They were the only party to stand independently when forming a government during the interwar period, and they were the largest party in the coalition governments when they failed to win a majority.²⁴⁹ During the multiple ministries of Stanley Baldwin, Conservatives were fully capable of enacting any imperial agenda they so desired, but instead moderated their old position and worked to create bipartisan approval for the measures they proposed. Even when Conservatives were reduced to a minority in the Commons they consistently consented to the imperial policy developed by Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. Most in their ranks, like the British populace, were content to shepherd their dependencies towards self-rule. Consequently, many of the Viceroys chosen to serve in India by the ministries of Lloyd George, Baldwin, and MacDonald received almost undivided support from Parliament and pursued similar courses in India. There was still a substantial bloc within the Conservative Party that refused to surrender the prestige of Britain by abandoning the Empire. For years they quietly protested the mediocre policies adopted by their leaders and shuddered when Stanley Baldwin would embrace the consensus position. It was not until the unauthorized promises of Lord Irwin were issued from Delhi that the old guard showed themselves. Most of these men were realistic enough to understand the impossibility of maintaining the Empire indefinitely, but recognized the practical obstacles of granting immediate independence to the vast majority of their dependencies. Wary of conciliatory policies, the backbone of the Conservative Party, led by Winston Churchill, began to vocalize their minority

²⁴⁹ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 429.

opinion and challenge the weak imperial initiatives introduced in Parliament.²⁵⁰

By the time the old guard Conservatives were awakened from political hibernation, the Empire had already undergone a transformation in the decade following the First World War. The calls for self-determination impacted Great Britain in a distinct way from the other empires. The colossal battle against German militarism had roused nationalism in all of the Dominions around the globe and they began to demand full autonomy in both domestic and foreign affairs. Before war had erupted, a Round Table Movement was in motion to create an imperial federation to strengthen the bonds between Great Britain and the distant Dominions that shared her political principles and heritage. Efforts to create an imperial federation collapsed after the war, and all of the Dominions were granted virtually complete autonomy under the Crown. The Commonwealth conceived at the beginning of the twentieth century barely resembled the final product and, rather than being an imperial federation, was an association of “autonomous Communities within the British Empire” with Great Britain as the ceremonial leader of her Dominions.²⁵¹ Great Britain still stood mighty with her Dominions and above her dependencies as the head of the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations, but her legal standing and political perspective had forever changed after the Imperial Conference of 1926: she now stood “equal in status” with her Dominions.²⁵²

When Lord Irwin foolishly promised “the attainment of Dominion status” to the people of India, it was this conception of

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 753.

²⁵² “Balfour Declaration of 1926,” Imperial Conference, 1926, in Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 753.

participation in the Commonwealth that listening Indians had in mind.²⁵³ It no longer meant self-rule or domestic autonomy; it was complete independence of all things outside of nominal attachment to the Empire for those nations who were not drawn into the imperial community by a common heritage or similar political and religious principles. The solution to the nationalist movements in the White Dominions had not been complicated: the British simply allowed them to remain in the orbit of imperial influence while London quietly relinquished control of their political superiority. This was only possible since both the citizenry and the leadership of these possessions had extensive practice in constitutional self-government under British oversight and had functioned orderly as free societies for decades. Unlike most of their other dependencies, Britain could trust these established entities with the management of their own affairs and their commitment to maintain British political principles. It would have been wrong for the Empire to impose political inferiority on these fully capable Dominions, but it would have been equally wrong for London to release them from imperial guidance had they demonstrated themselves reliably incapable of self-rule.

Unfortunately, many Britons, such as Lord Irwin, did not understand this distinction and the sentiments that produced the transfer of political autonomy to the Dominions began to be applied to the dependent colonies in limited ways. The problems generated by rampant nationalism in the Empire caused many in England to be eager to see their colonial possessions mature politically and leave. Subsequently, the process of transferring authority accelerated beyond the pace of progress in India, but most Britons still realized that they had to

wait until they could give independence to all of the citizens of the subcontinent; at this point they could only liberate majority factions across India from any form of restraint and free them to work their violent horrors. The need for them to defend helpless minority groups was still apparent and British officials did not foresee the independence of India anywhere in the near future.

The firestorm in the House of Commons created by the rash announcement of Lord Irwin quickly translated into skepticism in India and more threats of mass civil disobedience from Mr. Gandhi. The Viceroy wrongly assumed that his nationalist rivals were reasonable and that such a declaration would enable some form of cooperation between these two parties. He had scheduled a meeting with Gandhi and his associates at the Viceroy House in Delhi, but was surprised by their open defiance to his conciliatory position. Refusing to compromise or participate in an imperial conference, Gandhi declared that he was going to start his promised campaign and made the salt tax the focus of his civil disobedience movement. Even though the government monopoly on salt production had existed since the Moguls, Mr. Gandhi decided to rally the masses by marching 240 miles to make his own salt illegally in the coastal city of Dandi.²⁵⁴ This time, however, he chose to bring with him only those who were trained in the ways of satyagraha in order to prevent the onset of large scale violence and to provide examples of how a satyagrahi resists authority. Unlike his earlier noncooperation campaigns, which called on the public to passively halt their legal activities and shut down the government, this civil disobedience movement called on his followers to actively break the law and overwhelm the government through supposedly nonviolent lawlessness.

²⁵³ Lord Irwin, "Lord Irwin's Statement on Dominion Status," vol. 4 of *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, ed. Philips, 287.

²⁵⁴ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 335.

To his astonishment and dismay, Mr. Gandhi reached his destination without any opposition from the government to his march and his countless village assemblies held before thousands of people. Joined by protesters across India, Gandhi began making his own salt and vowed to continue his gesture of deliberate defiance to the law until the arrest he hoped for happened. For an entire month satyagrahis were arrested across the subcontinent, but Lord Irwin decided to punish the lawlessness of Gandhi by fittingly refusing to reward him with incarceration. It was not long before Mr. Gandhi was frustrated with having his own backwards antics used against him. Within a few days, he ordered his followers to shut down a salt production plant without harming anyone. While his disciples marched on the facility, the native police, dispatched to protect the property, fought off the satyagrahis and hundreds of natives were injured at the bidding of their leader. Gandhi coolly blamed the British Empire for this bloodshed and Lord Irwin, fearing what this rebel would do next, had him arrested. The Viceroy thought that this would discourage native defiance, but the arrest of Mr. Gandhi accomplished the task of vilifying the Raj and fueled nationalism across India. Over the next several months between 60,000 and 100,000 people were imprisoned for violating the salt laws and violence brought havoc to portions of India.²⁵⁵

Lord Irwin fruitlessly attempted to negotiate with Gandhi in prison and scheduled an imperial Round Table Conference to discuss the future of India. This profound show of weakness heartened Indian nationalists while it outraged the old guard imperialists in Britain. The first Round Table Conference was held in London in the fall of 1930, but it failed due to the refusal of the Indian National Congress

to participate and the unwillingness of Indians to compromise over the proposed solutions to their remarkable sectarian issues.²⁵⁶ This was quickly overshadowed in the early days of 1931 when Lord Irwin decided to start the year with another stunning display of his total ineptitude and discharged Gandhi from prison before reissuing an invitation for him to visit the Viceroy House.²⁵⁷ Pressured by his followers, Gandhi consented to these talks and finally offered to end his campaign if his followers were sent home from prison. This “Gandhi-Irwin Pact” also included his promise to attend the next Round Table Conference later that year. Nationalists were particularly outraged because their sufferings had been exchanged for absolutely nothing; similarly, Winston Churchill, the spokesmen for the Empire, erupted in the House of Commons over the sight of “Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer now posing as a fakir...striding half-naked up the steps of the Vice-regal palace...to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor” because this honor could “only increase the unrest in India.”²⁵⁸

In the Round Table Conference later that year, the three parties in Parliament under the direction of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald were joined by Mohandas Gandhi, who was the only representative of the Congress present. Claiming to be the voice of India, Gandhi disinterestedly observed while his British colleagues worked to build on the constitutional framework from the last summit. Once again the primary issue of contention was the communal problem, which was the term for the deeply rooted sectarian hatred permeating

²⁵⁶ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 796.

²⁵⁷ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 352.

²⁵⁸ Winston Churchill, *Never Give In: The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches*, ed. Winston S. Churchill (New York: Pimlico, 2003), 97.

²⁵⁵ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 341.

Indian society, and all of the feasible solutions to this supreme concern were universally rejected as unnecessary by the self-proclaimed voice of India. Gandhi stubbornly asserted that this factional strife was the fault of the English and sectarian violence was “coeval with the British advent.” He blindly claimed that once the British left “Hindus, Mussulmans, Sikhs, Europeans...Christians, Untouchables, will all live together as one man.”²⁵⁹ Though Indian independence appeared distant, time would eventually offer the opportunity to test this convinced prediction. The delegates continued working to draft a new constitution for India during the remainder of the conference and Ramsay MacDonald closed the summit by promising India responsible government in short order. This verbal assurance was far from the tangible victory that the Congress and nationalist India had hoped for and their disappointment was justifiable; Gandhi had done nothing but protest, reject proposals, and refuse cooperation.

Fortunately for India, Lord Irwin had been replaced by an experienced and capable man, Lord Willingdon, while the conference was still in session. Willingdon refused to tolerate the mockery of law and order and responded to resurgent violence and terrorist activities by justly declaring a state of emergency. Gandhi called yet another civil disobedience campaign that petered out once he and thousands of his disciples were in jail. Even though the campaign was dying, the jails were rapidly filling up, and London scrambled to find a way to break this tension. Consistent with the policy themes of this decade, their solution was appeasement in the form of a

completed plan for responsible government. There was no possible way that the British could gain anything through this proposal since their solutions to the communal problem forced them to choose between endangering the existence of vulnerable minorities and arousing the hatred of powerful majority factions. The recommended communal electorates, which were the basis of this federative system, rallied India around the unsubstantiated, reckless, yet appealing vagaries offered by Mr. Gandhi regarding the unity of India and the brotherhood of man.

A particularly contentious issue surrounding this plan was the provision of untouchables, who were the members of the lowest ranking Hindu caste, with separate communal electorates. Upon hearing this news in prison, Gandhi called for a fast in protest of the imperial recognition of the untouchable caste with the belief that his suffering would incite the hearts of Britons to yield. As Gandhi neared death, the British accepted his protest and saved his life from his radicalism by revising their plans. It cannot be denied that few Empires would have spared their greatest enemy by giving into his demands or have aroused the ire of their opponents by attempting to protect the most vulnerable members of society. Mr. Gandhi meant well in attempting to end the inhuman and barbaric caste oppression of these innocent people, but, in this instance, he only succeeded in stripping them of the only protection they would have after the withdrawal of British forces and permanently ruining his health.

The process of finalizing the initial constitutional reform offered by the British government went through a third Round Table Conference and several revisions to accommodate Mr. Gandhi before being formally outlined in a White Paper released

²⁵⁹ Mohandas K. Gandhi, “Gandhi’s Speech at the Second Round Table Conference, 30 November 1931,” quoted in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 3, pp. 361-366, vol. 4 of *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, ed. Philips, 244.

by the government in 1933.²⁶⁰ Gandhi had obstinately prohibited the leaders in the Congress from participating in this imperial summit and from holding elective office in a British government. In doing so, he erased their influence on the constitutional structure of the revised government and prevented them from practically altering it as members of the legislature. Essentially, the only method he offered to his followers to oppose the British during his time in prison was fasting, a practice that ruined his health and almost killed him. Many of his followers began questioning his judgment and his popularity in Congress crumbled. After his release from prison, he tried to restore his ties with Congress, but the damage had been done and he left the organization shortly thereafter.

While Gandhi was in political exile, Parliament began debating the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935 in what promised to be a long, drawn out process.²⁶¹ The bill that was finally produced and ratified by Parliament would be one of the most monumental pieces of legislation in the history of the Empire. In it, India was given Dominion status, though it was not yet the same autonomous designation the other Dominions had recently obtained. Under this system, the British would retain command of Indian foreign policy, national defense, and most law enforcement, but nearly all remaining domestic affairs were transferred to native management. The provinces were given a free hand in the government of their territories and were only limited by the reserved power of the Viceroy to intervene for “the prevention of any grave menace to

the peace...of India.”²⁶² Many of these reserved powers allowed the Viceroy to make constitutional adjustments necessary to improve the new regime. Above the provincial level of government stood a federal government composed of delegates from princely states, electors from communal voting blocs, and provincial representatives. Elections would supply the bulk of the members of the central legislature and the right of suffrage was expanded to the furthest extent India had ever enjoyed. Over the two years after the act was passed, provincial governments would be reorganized for this transition and preparations for elections across India would begin. The experiment of self-government in India had taken a bold new step. For all intents and purposes the Raj had ended and the transition into full Dominion status had begun.

The Government of India Act of 1935 represents more than a massive transition in the administration of India; it represents a fundamental change in political principles that occurred in the early twentieth century. The progressive ideals diffused after the First World War gripped the British and caused them to place things such as the form of government, self-determination, and free elections above the time honored, British principles of civilization, the rule of law, and the protection of liberty. Britain had not abandoned these principles altogether, but the socialist mentality obsessing their nation was elevating a new set of untested ideals above their traditional philosophy and it would have tragic implications. While the British were retreating from their duty far too hastily for the good of the Indian people, they were at least providing the citizens of the subcontinent with some necessary practice in self-

²⁶⁰ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 798.

²⁶¹ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 46.

²⁶² “The Government of India Act 1935, 2 August 1935,” in 26 Geo. V, c. 2, vol. 4 of *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, ed. Philips, 320.

government before releasing them from their supervision completely. Parliament had overwhelmingly passed this bill into law and most members were confident in the morality of returning the government of India to the natives. Others in the chamber, such as Winston Churchill, vociferously fought this measure as a danger to the peace of India and the health of Britain; but it was to no avail. Churchill ended his fight against this bill with this grim warning:

[P]rotection and security cannot be removed from India. They have grown with our growth and strengthened with our strength. They will diminish with our diminution and decay with our decay...India will descend...into the squalor and anarchy of India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁶³

In time, the British would find that hastening the pace towards independence would not increase the ability of Indians to handle free government; it would only increase their demand for immediate self-rule.

Nonviolence, Noncooperation, and Nonsense: The End of the British Raj

Rather than rejoicing over the passage of the 1935 Government of India Act, Mohandas Gandhi entered a period of depressed isolation. From the very start of his campaigns in South Africa, the goal of his movement had been the spiritual purification of India and the religious transformation of Britain. He hoped the

visible sufferings of the Indian masses would bend the consciences of their imperial masters and gain them independence once the humanity within the British had been awakened. Rather than violently oppressing the satyagrahis, the British worked to appease the nationalists in an effort to avoid mutual slaughter and effectively obstructed the process of mass suffering that Mr. Gandhi believed was necessary to unify India and transform Britain. They saw his campaigns as attempts to gain political leverage and their attempts to make humane concessions actually allowed his antics to appear politically viable. Even the interest Indians had shown in his movement evaporated once their immediate concerns had been addressed, which revealed to Gandhi that they had only seen his spiritual exercises as tools for political expedience, not religious rites. Far from becoming spiritually yoked, a wider rift had been created between these two powers and the grandiose vision of transforming India into “a truly spiritual nation” appeared unattainable.²⁶⁴ Despondent, Gandhi retreated from public life to his ashram and continued his “numerous experiments with truth” alongside his devoted, spiritual disciples.²⁶⁵ Unfortunately, these insights into human nature did not cause him to reevaluate his principles while in political exile.

As India transitioned into their new system of government, the once principled nationalists and ideological leaders formerly devoted to Mr. Gandhi quickly satisfied their true cravings for public office through unsurprising displays of demagoguery. As the elections of 1937 neared, Jawaharlal Nehru became President of the Indian

²⁶³ Winston Churchill, “Winston Churchill’s Speech on the Second Reading of the Government of India Bill, 11 February 1935,” in *Parl. Debates*, H.C. vol. 297 (1935), vol. 4 of *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, ed. Philips, 315.

²⁶⁴ M.K. Gandhi, “Speech to the Economics Society, Muir College,” in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 1, 241-242, in *The Essential Gandhi*, ed. Fischer, 131.

²⁶⁵ M.K. Gandhi, “From *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*” (London: Phoenix Press, 1949), in *The Essential Gandhi*, ed. Fischer, 3.

National Congress and adopted a wholly pragmatic approach to Indian politics.²⁶⁶ The Congress had opposed the new constitution of India and refused to endorse it, but fielded candidates for the legislature as a political party for the purpose of reforming it from within. The results of the election were a resounding success for the Congress and they took 716 seats out of the 1,585 that were available.²⁶⁷ Once in power, this significant legislative bloc began to demand a native constitution. Most proponents of a united India wanted a constitutional convention that produced a system without communal electorates, which they saw as unnecessary, but the success of the Congress and these early calls for reform aggravated the Muslim minority.

Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, president of the influential Muslim League, had attempted to secure guarantees of Islamic communal electorates through an alliance with the Congress, but their Hindu opponents remained aloof. The Congress insisted that it represented all of India and their overwhelming success alarmed the Muslim League. Fearful of Hindu intentions and their numerical superiority, Jinnah began the process of restructuring the League so that it was for Muslims what the Congress was for Hindus: the singular, political head of their religious faction. As violence rippled across India on several occasions, Muslim support gradually rallied behind the League as the faithful sought to protect themselves against Hindu power. The ambivalence of the Congress in this situation did not bode well for India and Mr. Jinnah would not rest until he had explored every possible method to secure the rights and lives of Indian Muslims. As the sides were consolidated behind these two organized factions, the unthinkable

able notion of forming a separate, Muslim country began to slowly and quietly gain appeal inside of the League. The religious battle lines spreading across India were quickly losing the attention of Parliament as international battle lines were forming closer to home. The last great struggle of the Empire was underway.

As storm clouds gathered over Europe in 1939 and the greatest evil ever to assault the freedom of the West readied Germany to overrun the entire continent, the British Empire cast a wary glance at India as their policy of appeasement failed on yet another continent.²⁶⁸ It was apparent to everyone in India that all of the energies of the Empire would be poured into the defense of Great Britain itself and many nationalists saw this as their opportunity to forcefully liberate themselves. The radicalism permeating India motivated Gandhi to return to the nationalist movement. The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, was now in a difficult position. At the head of a teetering imperial apparatus, he now faced a resurgent Mr. Gandhi at the head of an energized movement and had little force to maintain order. There was little the government could do to refuse the demands of the nationalist movement, but the danger of unintentionally handing power to radicals, such as the Indian fascists or communists, was very real if they did make serious concessions.

The confluence of these unfortunate events could not have come at a more inopportune time; Parliament finally issued a declaration of war in the fall of 1939 and simultaneously drew India into the Second World War. This conflict would test the resolve of the British people and require the support of a united Empire to defeat the wicked malevolence of Nazi aggression. The horrors of the Nazi Party elicited complete

²⁶⁶ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 801.

²⁶⁷ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 410.

²⁶⁸ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 480.

indifferent from Mohandas K. Gandhi and revealed the absolute irrationality and moral weakness of his philosophy, though few cared to notice. The world was choosing sides in this colossal struggle as the Nazis raced across Europe and subjugated millions. Mr. Gandhi, however, resolutely opposed the efforts of the British to combat Adolf Hitler. As Nazi forces occupied Poland and Norway, prepared to devour France, and rounded up innocent Jews, Gandhi commented on the war by saying “I do not consider Hitler to be as bad as he is depicted. He is showing an ability that is amazing and seems to be gaining his victories without much bloodshed.”²⁶⁹ It is entirely plausible that Mr. Gandhi did not recognize tyranny when he saw it because, being a denizen of British India, he never really had to confront it himself. Nevertheless, condoning the aggression of Adolf Hitler and interfering with the just war to stop his reign of genocide cannot be defended or admired. The moral judgment of Gandhi ought to be seriously questioned. Where Winston Churchill and Great Britain accurately identified this Nazi hostility as an evil so great that they were willing to invest all they were into sparing the world from it, Mr. Gandhi saw a slight shadow of dissolution that could be reversed by actions committed to rouse the compassionate empathy of Adolf Hitler.

In lieu of forcefully opposing Adolf Hitler, Gandhi recommended the nations and peoples of Europe implement his nonviolent tactics to bring the Nazi juggernaut to a standstill. He fervently believed all of the atrocities descending on Europe could be thwarted by satyagraha and seriously offered the Jews this advice on how to defeat Hitler:

If I were a Jew...I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German may, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon; I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment...If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now. And suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy.... Indeed, even if Britain, France and America were to declare hostilities against Germany, they can bring no inner joy, no inner strength. The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in a general massacre of the Jews by way of his first answer to the declaration of such hostilities. But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant.²⁷⁰

Even once the extent of the violence committed against the Jews in the holocaust was revealed, Gandhi did not modify his position, but retained the beliefs that motivated his work to neutralize the war effort in India. Though he had pledged not to interfere with the war effort, Gandhi began to encourage civil disobedience in India after the early phases of the war had passed. He went so far as to oppose the violent response of Britain to Adolf Hitler and despicably used the precarious position of Great Britain in the Second World War as

²⁶⁹ Larry P. Arnn, “The Person of the Century,” *The Claremont Institute: Precepts*, December 29, 1999, http://www.claremont.org/publications/precepts/id.98/precept_detail.asp (accessed February 24, 2010).

²⁷⁰ Victor Davis Hanson, “Nonviolence Nonsense,” *The National Review Online*, January 14, 2008, <http://article.nationalreview.com/343472/nonviolence-nonsense/victor-davis-hanson?page=2> (accessed February 24, 2010).

a means to bargain for independence. A determined Winston Churchill, now at the helm of state in London, refused to allow the events of the war to compromise the existence of the Empire and declared that India would not receive independence after the war. Had Mr. Gandhi been in a conscienceless empire, his independence movement would have been short, bloody, and rightfully disdained by history.

As the war in Europe dragged on endlessly, many within the subcontinent were silently hoping that the British Empire would collapse under the Nazi onslaught and, thereby, guarantee their independence. Finally, India was shocked out of their indifference by the sudden advance of the Japanese into Singapore and Burma in late 1941.²⁷¹ The imperial soldiers of the Japanese Emperor brutally slew thousands of refugees and rolled across British territories. Gandhi resolutely refused to yield on his opposition to the war and stubbornly determined to outlast the crumbling Raj. As Japanese belligerence began to reach the subcontinent, pressure on Gandhi mounted to reverse his course, but he insisted that even the coming evil of Japanese militarism was the result of the British presence in India and would disappear once the Raj evacuated. Even if the Japanese came, he believed that Indians could repel their conquering advance through “soul force” and passive resistance.

The stakes were growing larger as President Franklin D. Roosevelt pressured Winston Churchill to make conciliatory guarantees to India as an effort to strengthen the tenuous hold the British government had on what remained of the Raj. As the Japanese navy menacingly patrolled the Indian coast, Churchill begrudgingly realized the need to issue concessions. For this

purpose, the government crafted what would come to be known as the Cripps Offer. In exchange for armed resistance to Axis aggression, the British pledged they would grant Indians complete independence, allow them to frame their own government, and recognize the right of states to withdraw from the Indian federation if they so desired. Stafford Cripps, for whom the pact was named, journeyed to India to conduct meetings with the leaders of both the Congress and the Muslim League, but both parties were offended by elements of the proposed agreement and would not compromise. The primary disagreement was over the potential for the partition of India over religious lines. The Muslim League had already added the creation of a separate, Muslim state to their party platform, but the Congress was adamantly opposed to any division of India. Rumors of interreligious war were rife as Cripps left for London. The British government was willing to commit themselves to a complete withdrawal provided that it was done in an orderly fashion. They unequivocally rejected widespread Indian demands for an untimely departure that would leave the nation without a government and adequate security forces. Most of all, the British would not abandon defenseless minority groups to the tyranny of religious fanaticism or sacrifice their welfare for a united India.

Mr. Gandhi chose at this moment to launch his largest campaign of noncooperation yet, called his “Quit India Movement.” In this campaign, all levels of Indian society would cease work, protest the government, and refuse all goods or services provided by the Raj until the British agreed to abandon India instantly. He effectively wanted the Empire to abandon their law enforcement duties and withdraw their military forces immediately in spite of the fact he knew it meant the entire state would vanish overnight. Mr. Gandhi was unafraid of this

²⁷¹ Burt, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 860.

anarchy because he thought a pure and free India could arise out of the disorder the British left behind—if there was any disorder at all. He declared that once the British were gone “[t]he fiction of minority and majority [factions] will vanish like the mist before the morning sun of liberty” and India would become “one mass of humanity.”²⁷² India was mesmerized by his simple charisma and energized behind the task of resisting the Raj. His reckless behavior was jeopardizing the fight against Adolf Hitler, tempting the Japanese to invade while the Raj was paralyzed, and offering the potential to foment more violence than all of his other nonviolence campaigns combined. Nevertheless, he pushed forward with his Quit India Movement.

Before Mr. Gandhi could sabotage law and order, the British arrested him and his entire party of dissidents and put them into indefinite detention using war time emergency powers. When news of these arrests broke, the “peaceful” noncooperation movement immediately exploded into nationwide slaughter and lawlessness on a scale not seen since the days of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. Lord Lithlingow very nearly lost complete control of the sub-continent and for six weeks continuous destruction and anarchic tyranny reigned supreme. While the police steadfastly resisted this mayhem, small contingents of soldiers abandoned their duties and prompted fears of mutiny in the Raj. For weeks, riotous mobs flooded the streets and viciously attacked law enforcement officials who were attempting to restore order. Communications cascaded across the nation, transportation was disrupted, and all government manpower was invested in quelling

this rebellion. Though the scattered remnants of this rebellion would flicker for the rest of the year, the full use and maintenance of emergency powers slowly reintroduced stability into Indian society. When the bloodshed finally subsided, the damages were truly staggering. It is beyond the imaginative capacities of humans to conceive of the damages that would have been wrought had Gandhi been granted his wish of immediate British withdrawal. Between two and three thousand had been killed,²⁷³ 1,318 government buildings destroyed, 208 police stations burned, 332 railroad facilities devastated,²⁷⁴ and critical damage was done to the infrastructure of India. In an effort to motivate the British to leave India, over 57 British divisions were deployed to contain the unrest and the unruly mobs proved their need for the Raj.²⁷⁵ For the safety of the people and the security of the war effort, the Congress was forbidden to act or assemble for the remainder of the war and the leaders of the party were detained to prevent these dangers from blazing across India.

Mr. Gandhi had been fully aware that his Quit India Movement was going to enflame India in turmoil, but he chose to cast aside public safety considerations if that is what self-rule required. He was no longer attempting to prevent violence, and was willing for India to endure whatever was going to happen for the sake of independence, even if it was a vortex of anarchy left in place of the Raj. He and his nationalist associates had anticipated the collapse of Britain, but the survival of the Empire against the Nazi threat inspired Gandhi to resist the British method of solving international conflicts by demonstrating the results of his campaigns. He was not being a

²⁷² Gandhi, “Mahatma Gandhi and British Withdrawal from India, 26 April 1942,” quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 6, pp. 93-94, vol. 4 of *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, ed. Philips, 340.

²⁷³ Herman, *Churchill and Gandhi*, 495.

²⁷⁴ James, *Raj the Making and Unmaking of British India*, 572.

²⁷⁵ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 426.

heroic champion of humanity; he was being an avowed enemy of the British cause to preserve liberty and fight the repressive evils of Hitler and Nazism. He was using the masses as a part of a nationwide political gamble and his highest ambition in this operation was to banish the government of India. The Quit India Movement was no principled action; there was a battle between chaos and order in the subcontinent and Gandhi was marshalling the forces of unrest to topple the Raj in the darkest hour of the twentieth century.

While Gandhi was detained by the British in the old palace of Aga Khan, all of the tortures that he endured were entirely self-inflicted. His every provision was adequately satisfied and he was only prevented from instigating trouble in the outside world. Nearing death on several occasions after several reckless fasts, he endangered his life through his radical ascetic practices and, consequently, the volatile stability of India. His time of imprisonment saw the hardening of the altered relationship between the Raj and the people of India. The Second World War compromised the strength of the Raj, cost her administrative efficiency, and increased the amount of resentment in this imperial relationship. Amongst other things, a famine had hit India and the untypically tepid response of British to aid the effected Bengalis betrayed a hint of bitterness over the flagrant defiance of the nationalist movement, though British resources were strained to the limit at this time. The Indians naturally reciprocated with more animosity and it became apparent that the days of the Raj were numbered. By 1944, the aging Mr. Gandhi had successfully weakened his health to the point that Winston Churchill ordered his release, believing that he could no longer be a threat to the Empire.²⁷⁶ For two years the tactics employ-

ed by Mr. Gandhi were diffused by a sensible and assertive counter resistance, but it was too late.

In 1945, the Allied Powers were finally able to triumph against the fearsome evil that had descended on Europe, but the war had brought many changes to the Empire and helped to continue further the political shift of Britain away from imperialism.²⁷⁷ Winston Churchill and his Conservative stalwarts, however, were still fighting to save the Empire, no longer from Nazi aggression, but from domestic apathy, international pressure, and colonial nationalism. Britons were not interested in any more fighting as World War II came to close and were weary of the responsibilities of the Empire. They were faced with an economy that had been crushed by the war effort and were indebted to other nations for \$40,000,000,000 in wartime loans.²⁷⁸ Concerned for their domestic welfare, the British people were not eager to invest massive amounts of wealth in an attempt to preserve an Empire that they were fully aware was crumbling. Faced with a choice to either fund a continued fight for the Empire or a welfare state, the British people went to the polls and chased after the illusions that were projected by the baseless promises of socialism. Within months of obtaining victory, the British electorate turned Churchill out of power and gave a resounding mandate to the domestic agenda of the Labour Party led by Clement Attlee.

By the time Clement Attlee assumed office as Prime Minister, the Viceroy of India, Lord Wavell, had freed the leaders of the Congress and was in the process of returning India to peacetime footing while factional violence was beginning to surface. The Labourites, who had always been cor-

²⁷⁶ Herman, *Churchill and Gandhi*, 524.

²⁷⁷ James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, 521.

²⁷⁸ Ferguson, *Empire*, 346.

dial to the independence movement, started designing the end of their Empire. Special attention was needed in India as uncertainty persisted over what faction was going to succeed in enacting their vision of independent India. To stabilize the condition of India, Attlee dispatched the Cabinet Mission in early 1946 to confer with nationalist leaders from all factions and develop the extremely complicated logistics behind the upcoming transfer of power.²⁷⁹ Elections had been held in India following the end of the war and the result was an intensified religious partisanship in the government. Amidst this increasingly polarized climate, these emissaries from London were tasked with meeting top party officials to work out a potential framework for government. Together they accomplished the remarkable feat of obtaining the reluctant support of Muhammad Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru, who were the leaders of the two most powerful political factions in India, for a complicated constitution of united India. The impossible task bringing the Congress and the Muslim League to enter negotiations was suddenly interrupted by Mr. Gandhi. Feeling as though the existence of a constitution crafted by British politicians was a perpetuation of the Raj, Gandhi persuaded the Congress to reject any form of government offered by the British and continued to insist that the Empire leave with or without a government in place over India. The senseless madness of these empty words destroyed the process of practically creating a unified India and within days the Muslim League announced it would only be satisfied with the establishment of a separate state. Shock waves of violence racked the subcontinent with this declaration and Gandhi had once again succeeded in murdering the potential for peace.

The political situation grew worse as both the Nehru and Jinnah essentially sever-

ed ties and the League refused to allow their members to join the national government. The British struggled to contain these intermittent bursts of unrest and protect the widespread minority groups from angered mobs. As the army was dispersed across the population centers, Lord Wavell found himself increasingly unable to control violence in rural areas and actually began to formulate a contingency plan for an emergency departure of all British forces. As the Hindus and Muslims took turns massacring each other across India, the Labour government became keenly aware of how misplaced their trust had been in their nationalist allies. Unsatisfied with the strategies employed by Lord Wavell, Attlee sent Lord Mountbatten to take over in Delhi and salvage the British efforts to secure an orderly departure. In March of 1947, Lord Louis Mountbatten was inaugurated as the last Viceroy of the British Raj and June of 1948 was officially marked as the deadline for the British departure.²⁸⁰

Lord Mountbatten entered India with the gargantuan task of averting what appeared to be a coming civil war and he sought a summit with Mr. Gandhi to begin this process. During their first encounter, Gandhi revived the impossible suggestion of integrating Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Nehru, and their respective associates into one government and Mountbatten quickly turned to other nationalist leaders that could at least offer a realistic or relevant dialogue. Mountbatten, who was enamored with the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru, began forming a plan for the partition of India in line with the demands of the Congress. The partition would be sloppy due to the personal favoritism of the Viceroy towards Nehru, and, as a result, Mr. Jinnah was to receive the raw end of a slanted compromise. The final details were worked out and Lord Mountbatten secured the political support that was necessary in

²⁷⁹ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 66.

²⁸⁰ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 70.

London, and Gandhi finally refrained from his characteristic sabotage. By the middle of 1947 the settlement had been established and the documents creating the separate nations of Pakistan and India were signed by the heads of the necessary parties. The rampant bloodshed continued unabated as the leaders declared that the partition of India was finalized, and Lord Mountbatten shocked the world by announcing that the British would be withdrawing from India and Pakistan within nine weeks.

News of the partition outraged Hindus and Muslims on both sides of the lines dividing India. Violence was reignited along the new borders, especially in the province of Kashmir, and the popularity of Mr. Gandhi rapidly collapsed as millions of his followers saw the failure of the dream they followed him to attain. Under the provisions of the partition, West Pakistan would receive most of Punjab, part of Kashmir, all of Baluchistan, and the province of Sind; a detached province, called East Pakistan, was carved out of Bengal and administered from Islamabad. The persuasive diplomacy of Jawaharlal Nehru was able to preserve most of the subcontinent for his party and even allowed them to retain profitable lands with large numbers of Muslims. Provinces such as the Punjab, Bengal, and Kashmir were divided with large numbers of Muslims still living in Hindu territory. The decision to give India a portion of the resource-rich province of Kashmir would prove to be a particularly controversial move since seventy-seven percent of the people in this united province were Muslim. There was no possible way to divide the lands of the subcontinent in a remotely agreeable fashion and the British quickly became eager to forfeit the troubles of India. Struggling to maintain order and anticipating more violence, the British began the process of quickly transferring the powers of the Raj to the governments of India and Pakistan. It

was not in the advantage of the British to partition India outside of the fact that it prevented the full fury of religious and racial hatred from completely destroying India. The British had intended to leave a strong, unified nation in South Asia to contain the advance of Soviet aggression towards the warm water ports of the Indian Ocean. These geopolitical considerations were, however, superseded by the moral necessity of preventing mass genocide from occurring across the subcontinent. As the end of the summer neared, the British were eager to leave the problems of the subcontinent behind and abdicate the responsibilities of Empire. Nearly two full centuries of British rule drew to a close when India officially celebrated her independence from imperial rule at midnight on August 14, 1947.²⁸¹ For better or worse, the condition of the subcontinent was now in the hands of the Indian people.

The Raj had entered the twentieth century as a mighty example of British imperial stature, but domestic movements in India and the United Kingdom were soon to erode their hegemony. The commitment of the British to impart free institutions is evident in the early phases of this time period and, though the Liberals pursued too fast a pace in this process, were working to lay the groundwork for responsible government when the First World War forever changed the fabric of the Empire. It was after the carnage of this global conflict that the nationalist sentiments spawned in the late nineteenth century matured and began altering the fabric of the entire Empire. Attempts to regain forfeited powers combined with the atrocities of the Amritsar Massacre causing small nationalist trembles to transform rapidly into jarring tremors that shook the very foundations of the Raj. At the epicenter of this earthquake, using these

²⁸¹ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 569.

great disturbances to advance his misguided theological outlook was a man named Mohandas K. Gandhi, who would serve as the symbolic head of the independence movement for almost thirty years. Through numerous campaigns and reversals of fortune, Mr. Gandhi clothed a rather violent movement in the rhetoric of peace and his personal nonviolent intentions. He repeatedly expressed grief over the bloodshed of his followers, but this remorse never motivated him to cease the campaigns that incited this reaction. Far from attempting to alleviate the sufferings of the masses, he sought suffering for himself and his followers as a means to expel the British from India. Somehow, this charismatic, little man was still able to attract a massive following and exercise political clout not even paralleled by the Raj.

During this period of time, he honed his talent for criticism and opposition, but never once branched out into the realm of constructively erecting a regime in line with the impractical demands of his unreasonable expectations. It is true that this man was a dedicated believer in his principles and lived a life in accordance with his philosophy, but the ultimate conclusions of his worldview were exposed by history as utterly worthless in accomplishing anything but discord. He tried to motivate his followers to be guided by the spark of the divine within themselves and pursue the path of the satyagraha through suffering and sacrifice, but he found that there are truly few people who are willing to impose the unnatural rigors of asceticism on themselves. British appeasement, however, intervened on behalf of Mr. Gandhi and gave his followers the impression that his tactics were working. Few people were willing or motivated to abide by his nonsensical principles and Gandhi only succeeded in enticing the masses to pursue their naturally unruly impulses. Though he was unable to bring his followers to oppose the humane Raj peacefully, Gandhi chided

the Allied governments during the war for using force to oppose the evils of Nazism and adamantly insisted that he could peacefully resist the aggressive advance of both the Japanese and Nazi Empires. Evaluating the actions and legacy of Mr. Gandhi against the standards established by his words, he was only successful in uniting the native population behind the movement to topple the most liberal regime India had ever housed thereby expelling the most benevolent Empire of this age from the subcontinent.

This claim, that the British Empire was the most benevolent power in the age of imperialism, is empirically verified by their persistent toleration of Mr. Gandhi and his relentlessly annoying tactics. The British Empire was the only power to unite the whole of India under a single government, rule by law rather than brutal force, introduce free institutions, and recognize individual liberties. Rather than seeing the Raj as a desirable alternative to the chaotic bloodshed of decentralized despotism or as a means to further Indian civilization, Mr. Gandhi used the principles of this liberal autocracy as the primary weapon to repulse their orderly government and somehow received the credit for the peaceful withdrawal of the British from India. The Indian Independence Movement survived and succeeded only as the British accommodated their demands and refused to use unjust or brutally repressive measures to stop this opposition. Gandhi relied on the generous protection of the rights to assembly, free speech, and a free press to penetrate every segment of Indian society and mobilize the effort to expel their overlords.

Where most imperial powers in history would have slaughtered the leadership of this movement and imprisoned peaceful demonstrators, the Raj guarded the rights of nationalist agitators and imprisoned violent protestors to maintain order in the subcontinent. Had they not exhibited such

forbearance and employed the violent tactics of oppressive empires instead, this movement would have been violently exterminated, possibly followed by several successive failures to gain independence through similar means, and abandoned in favor of the only remaining alternative: armed revolution. A militant rebellion was averted not as the result of the nonviolence promoted by Mr. Gandhi, but because the British chose to respond nonviolently to the poorly named nonviolence movement. In all their territories, the British refused to be entrenched in futile battles to retain their colonial possessions and avoided the bloody consequences that other European powers chose to endure. Unlike their imperial counterparts, the British withdrew at the behest of their colonies provided they felt that their colonies were not under the threat of communist subversion and possessed a stable government that was capable of preserving order. Though these standards are above moral reproach, they do depend on ample discernment to enact properly; discernment several successive ministries in Parliament did not possess.

By the time that the Second World War ended, there were really no alternatives to withdrawal left for the Empire. Owing over \$40,000,000,000 in war debts, militarily weakened, and short on manpower, the British government could only delay the evaporation of the Empire.²⁸² The Labour ministry of Clement Attlee entered office far too eager to depose the Empire and the moral obligation that they had to their imperial possessions, but the fault of the collapse of the Raj truly lies with the successive Conservative and Labour ministries that dominated the interwar period. The foolish policies of weak Prime Ministers, such as Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald, following the First World War

gave traction to the nationalist movement and honored the unreasonable defiance of Mr. Gandhi with the appearance of success. The hesitancy and indecision of Parliament rewarded the violence of mobs with increased self-government and, in doing so, did practically as much as Mr. Gandhi to inspire further resistance. After several decades of concessions and consistent turmoil, law and order had been so regularly assaulted that the British could no longer reasonably hope to maintain the Raj without having another war. The order of the subcontinent was the responsibility of the Raj and they failed to guard it vigorously against the likes of Mr. Gandhi. The consequence was the premature termination of the Raj; Gandhi insisted that Indians were ready for self-rule, and India was finally given the opportunity to prove the worth of his words.

Prophecies Tested: The British Empire Leaves

In the closing hours of August 14, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru addressed the people of India and heralded the coming “midnight hour” when “India [would] awake to life and freedom.”²⁸³ The next day he assumed office as the interim Prime Minister of the Union of India and made a broadcast to the Indian people commemorating their achievements amidst the Independence Day celebrations. The speech contained a grim plea to his countrymen: “to put an end to all internal strife and violence, which degrade us and injure the cause of freedom.”²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Jawaharlal Nehru, “A Tryst with Destiny” in *Independence and After: A Collection of Speeches 1946-1949* (Free Port, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 3.

²⁸⁴ Nehru, “First Servant of the Indian People,” *Independence and After*, 7.

²⁸² Ferguson, *Empire*, 346.

Throughout the summer unrest had simmered across India and frequently flared as the British hastened to meet their deadline for withdrawal. Lord Mountbatten was under orders from London to ensure an orderly transition and a safe extrication of British forces from the subcontinent. The military counsel of the Viceroy recommended that British troops remain in India until the new government was several months old, but Lord Mountbatten refused to endanger the safety of the servicemen or drag his country into another war. India had demanded freedom while Britain urged caution. India won the conflict and the Raj was truly powerless to do anything short of granting the ungovernable crowds the independence they craved.

During the final months of the Raj, the British clung to the little authority they had left and experienced more goodwill from the Indian people than they had at any previous stage of the nationalist movement. Nevertheless, unrest smoldered near the future borders of Pakistan and reignited constantly over the controversial issue of partition. Gandhi traversed the entire region in these troubled summer days working to quell the violence and dejectedly refused to celebrate what he saw as the dismemberment of India on Independence Day. Shortly after the flag of the Raj was lowered in New Delhi, the state of India ruptured with unparalleled virulence. The nationalist leaders, now in the government, were horrified by the expressions of hatred between sects of all varieties and were helpless to resist the lawlessness that was consuming the subcontinent. For three decades, Gandhi had essentially trained Indians to disobey the law in order to further their purposes, and he could in no way contain the furious passions of the mobs running rampant in India.

Anarchy reigned in the cities of India as hatred and violence multiplied at every display of hatred and violence. Chaos

and confusion radiated from centers of religious variation and even spread to the rural areas. The Punjab, which was partitioned and possessed a large religious minority, was the epicenter of the destructive carnage that was shaking the foundations of India. No place was safe. Defenses were constructed around Mosques. Businesses were looted by local gangs. Flames devoured entire neighborhoods. Indiscriminate crime violated innocents. Government officials were attacked and their workplaces ransacked. Women were ravaged and tormented before being brutally murdered. The streets were filled with the decaying corpses of the aged, men, women, and children as fresh massacres increased the death toll on each passing day. Mobs prevailed in India as the greatest fears of British statesmen were witnessed by the astounded leadership of India. Those who attempted to defend the victims of these attacks only escalated the intensity of the riots. The gruesome displays of human depravity grew in their utter hideousness and gratuitous slaughter became a competitive exchange between factions.

Fear and terror caused countless thousands to flee in the largest exodus in human history. People flooded through the border states in caravans spanning up to seventy-four miles long and poured into the nation where they could chase the elusive protection of becoming part of the religious majority.²⁸⁵ These defenseless hordes composed of thousands of impoverished families were magnets for ruthless gangs and suffered as much from the elements as they did from frequent raids. In desperation, many of these families agreed to the unthinkable act of trading daughters for safe passage into friendlier territories. The nations hosting these displaced multitudes were totally unable to cope with the stresses these millions

²⁸⁵ Leonard Moseley, *The Last Days of the British Raj*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1961), 243.

placed on their governments and infrastructures. Innumerable refugee camps formed to absorb these homeless masses, the largest of which contained 60,000 people.²⁸⁶ Lacking sanitation, clean water, and food, these shantytowns bred cholera, dysentery, and smallpox while providing convenient targets for angry, religious fanatics. By November, over 8,000,000 refugees had crossed into Pakistan and accounted for roughly ten percent of their total population.²⁸⁷

The government of Pakistan had been depleted by the flight of the educated class, which was generally composed of Hindus since Muslims refused British education, and was increasingly unable to function. The economy was paralyzed by the unrest in the subcontinent and prices soared in cities across India as shortages intensified discontent. The chaos of the Punjab multiplied across India and hit the major population centers along with the rural communities. The violent wave ferociously struck the capital city of Delhi and the government was strained to the brink of collapse by this nationwide state of emergency. Nearing bankruptcy, the government was crippled by anarchy and lacked the manpower to suppress the riots. They frantically enlisted every available corps, including boy scouts, to fill their ranks and seized private vehicles for law enforcement, but the violence continued unabated.²⁸⁸ Factions began disturbing the unity of the Congress Party and gridlock handicapped the administration. Within one month of gaining independence, the leadership of India approached Lord Mountbatten and covertly pled with him to reassume control over India

before the state crumbled.²⁸⁹ The legal constraints imposed by the Raj had been more necessary than the nationalists could have imagined and the position of Winston Churchill, that the Indians had not been habituated to self-rule and were not prepared, was fully vindicated by this plea. Lord Mountbatten denied their request to take full control of the situation, but secretly volunteered to head a commission overseeing emergency relief. By the end of November the capital was once again under control, but chaos endured in the provinces and border regions.²⁹⁰

The princely states were not in good order under normal circumstances, but their problems multiplied during the transition to nationhood. The British could not interfere with the affairs of the principalities and had petitioned them to put their states in order, but many refused and now had only the opportunity to cede their authority to whichever state they chose. The last of these principalities to commit themselves was Kashmir. This resource-rich province had a Muslim population under the jurisdiction of a Hindu government, and the leadership of this territory was vacillating between casting their allegiance towards India or Pakistan. While the Pakistani government was organizing an independent regime, Jawaharlal Nehru annexed Kashmir and both sides deployed soldiers to the area in preparation for hostilities. By the end of October, open war was wreaking havoc in Kashmir and continued for the remainder of 1947 and spilled over into the next year with each nation equally determined to triumph.²⁹¹

During this extended nightmare, Gandhi travelled across the subcontinent futilely attempting to stop the violence. His popularity had suffered tremendously as the

²⁸⁶ Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 143.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, xx.

²⁸⁸ Khan, *The Great Partition*, 144

²⁸⁹ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 95.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 575, 577.

result of his broken promise of a united India and his criticism of the operations in Kashmir. The folly of his worldview was obvious as reality screamed at Gandhi through the riots and massacres spilling blood across India, but he refused to heed these chilling warnings and foolishly blamed partition for the atrocities occurring across India. He interpreted the partition as a British attempt to divide India violently against itself as revenge for being expelled, but, without the partition, there would have been a civil war to separate forcefully what the British had separated peacefully. He repeatedly told his fellow countrymen “to not lose faith in humanity” amidst some of the greatest displays of human depravity in history.²⁹² Mr. Gandhi admonished his followers to reach out to their enemies in trust because “trust begets trust” and the chaos in India could be ended through mutual cooperation.²⁹³ After withdrawing from public for a time, he emerged to accept blame for the chaos following independence and vowed to fast until the violence subsided.

On January 13, 1948 the fast began; his feeble body was nearing death by the fourth day of his spectacle.²⁹⁴ His demands were for the payment of 550,000,000 rupees to the government of Pakistan and the peace of India.²⁹⁵ Most were not dissuaded by his failing health and the Indian people pushed their great hero closer to death than the British ever had. No one, however, wanted to be responsible for his untimely death and the government of India soon pledged the funds he insisted be transferred to Pakistan. As Mr. Gandhi lingered between life and death, an ecumenical council was held where the leaders of the major faiths of India

promised religious toleration in the future. Gandhi quit his fast and lived, but acknowledged that his dream of swaraj was dead. The violent tumult of India remained unbroken even though his conditions had technically been met. Gandhi continued petitioning for peace as he returned to his regular regimen. On January 30, 1948, twelve days after his fast ended, Mohandas K. Gandhi was walking with his grandnieces to a place of prayer when three gunshots shattered the evening silence and felled his aged frame.²⁹⁶ The radical Hindu assassin, Nathuram Godse, who had been outraged by Gandhi’s opposition to the creation of a Hindu state, was apprehended at the scene. Within moments Gandhi was lifeless in the arms of his beloved grandnieces. All India paused when they heard the news of his passing. The violence subsided as millions gathered to pay their respects to the giant of their age. The murder of their national icon at the hands of the senseless violence that gripped India shook the nation out of their lethal rampage, which is exactly what Mr. Gandhi would have wanted.

Thus the life of the man the Indian people called “Mahatma,” the great soul, ended. Mr. Gandhi was a person of deep convictions and steadfast dedication. He, however, was not a great-souled man. This mystic is venerated by countless Westerners for his commitment to principle and his noteworthy accomplishments, but few have ever taken the opportunity to examine his ideals or the effect they had on subsequent events as a part of his legacy. Gandhi was fully capable of being the great-souled man; he possessed a brilliant mind, had adroit political skills, was a charismatic leader, and could rally millions around his cause, but he committed himself to fundamentally flawed principles and disqualified himself from this honorable distinction. His relativistic worldview and backwards understanding of

²⁹² Mohandas Gandhi, “Letter to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, 29 August, 1947,” in *The Essential Gandhi*, ed. Fischer, 362.

²⁹³ Mohandas Gandhi, “Prayer Speech, 15 December 1947,” in *The Essential Gandhi*, ed. Fischer, 362.

²⁹⁴ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 578.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 583.

human nature reversed his potential to accomplish great things for humanity. Similarly, his many virtues were converted into destructive means to achieve the unrealistic ends established by his fatally impaired judgment. Only right beliefs can prompt right actions; Mr. Gandhi mixed his formidable talents with wrong beliefs and skillfully brought severe consequences to India through his misguided actions.

In the decades leading to independence, he disrupted society in the name of nonviolence, thwarted British attempts to impart representative institutions, opposed the war to destroy Nazism, ended the prospects for a unified India, and banished the forces preventing mass murder in the subcontinent. The dream of both Mr. Gandhi and the Raj had been to create a independent and unified Indian state through their labors. It was a dream that died with great disappointment on both sides, though Britain and Mr. Gandhi had radically different objectives and methods for achieving this political unity. The measured approach of Great Britain aimed at constitutional polity was abandoned two centuries into the experiment and exchanged for the idealistic approach of Mr. Gandhi that was aimed at forming a spiritual community. It will never be known if the pace towards independence advocated by old guard Conservatives in Parliament could have averted the evils of their early withdrawal, but their ominous predictions were confirmed exactly as they had been spoken and gave credence to the validity of their beliefs. Mr. Gandhi, on the other hand, received the opportunity to confirm his beliefs in reality, but the disastrous transition of power to India in no way resembled the unrealistic expectations he placed upon human beings. The deluded belief system espoused by this mystic cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of natives and ended the hope of a united India. When the British right was fighting against a premature with-

drawal, they were not attempting to retain India in the Empire perpetually. They were attempting to save hundreds of thousands from slaughter, including Mr. Gandhi.

Over 2,500,000 people turned out to honor Mohandas Gandhi at his funeral procession, and his death was the cusp of the birth pangs vexing the Union of India.²⁹⁷ The violence did not cease immediately. The war with Pakistan continued through the rest of the year and the riots dissipated enough that Nehru was able to revive the position of the government by late spring. The factional hatreds of India did not leave, they simply lay dormant. Their vicious powers still resurface in the present day, though with nowhere near the strength of the riots six decades ago. The destruction left behind by the months of turmoil in 1947 was unfathomable. The confusion obscures the exact numbers, but it is estimated that more than 600,000 people perished over a five month period of time in the streets of India.²⁹⁸ Between 10,000,000 and 20,000,000 exiles fled the deadly mayhem of their homelands and weathered the terrors of being refugees.²⁹⁹ Over 100,000³⁰⁰ girls were abducted or sold into slavery during the chaos; similarly, 83,000 wives were prohibited from crossing borders with their families and held as hostages, sold as laborers or forced into arranged marriages.³⁰¹ Not even the wildest conjectures could be valued with these rough estimates when considering the figures for the number of rapes, the theft of goods, the cost of property damages, and the injuries survived.

Both the father of India, Mohandas Gandhi, and the father of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, had died by the end of

²⁹⁷ Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 587.

²⁹⁸ Moseley, *The Last Days of the British Raj*, 244.

²⁹⁹ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 895.

³⁰⁰ Moseley, *The Last Days of the British Raj*, 244.

³⁰¹ Khan, *The Great Partition*, 135.

1948.³⁰² These men had been active on the political scene for decades, but they left the government in the hands of their self-appointed heirs in the wake of independence. The ailing Mohammad Jinnah selected Liaquat Ali Khan to be the first Prime Minister of Pakistan in hopes that he could lead the fledgling government to sure footing, but Khan was murdered in 1951 and the stable government died with him.³⁰³ Since that time, Pakistan has been entrenched in a cycle between military dictatorships and weak democratic leaders. The economy of Pakistan suffers from the political unrest of the nation and has not progressed substantially since the British departure. In international affairs, Pakistan was willing to forge an alliance with the United States against Soviet expansion in exchange for foreign aid, but tensions over the Indian occupation of Kashmir have not diminished since independence. The threat of war constantly loomed over the issue of Kashmir, and military hostilities over this wealthy province were reopened in 1965.³⁰⁴ This brief fight settled the occupation of Kashmir by Indian forces, but was a prelude to the next conflict in 1971.³⁰⁵

The union of West and East Pakistan, the two Muslim territories of the subcontinent separated by the Republic of India, was a strained relationship from the beginning and led to a secession movement twenty-four years after they were joined. India intervened in this civil war to aid the rebel cause, and the majority of the Pakistani population formed a separate nation named Bangladesh. The dissection of Pakistan damaged the position of this nation and revealed the internal weaknesses of their regime. The ancient animosities that poison the relationship between India and Pakistan

are as strong as ever and raise the menace of war frequently. Since 1998, both of these powers have been armed with nuclear weapons and have threatened the stability of international affairs on several occasions.³⁰⁶ The weakness of Pakistan in particular has caused the wild regions of their nation to become a breeding ground for terrorism and concern in the global community over the security of their nuclear weapons. There are many factors leading to the chronic ailments of the Pakistani regime. For decades the Muslims of the subcontinent refused the education offered to them by the Raj and the absence of an educated class was harmful to the future of their land. Furthermore, the Pakistanis had a brief experience under British rule, have suffered from an inability to overcome geographical obstacles, and struggled economically from a lack of resources.

Jawaharlal Nehru assumed command of the Indian government and steered the nation out of the British Commonwealth in 1950.³⁰⁷ For over sixteen years he served as the Prime Minister of India and commanded control over the government with the opposition unable to overcome his powerful sway.³⁰⁸ It was, however, this political domination and the sheer strength of his personality that compelled the numerous factions in India to moderate their ambitions. He was not able to reduce religious tensions, prevent outbreaks of violence, or make peace with Pakistan. Nevertheless, the Republic of India was able to survive infancy because his regime was stable under his rule. His political agenda, however, spelled disaster for India. In foreign affairs, Nehru chose to remain impartial in the struggle against the evils of Soviet commun-

³⁰² Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 586.

³⁰³ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 97.

³⁰⁴ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 100.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁰⁶ Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 157.

³⁰⁷ Burt, *Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 897.

³⁰⁸ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 98.

ism and further isolated India with protectionist measures. He desired to create a socialist state and introduced sweeping reforms modeled after the five year programs implemented in the Soviet Union. His economic program nationalized industries, raised tariffs, expanded the bureaucracy, and destroyed the Indian economy for decades to come. Some of these bad habits were sadly imported from Britain, which had created a welfare state after emerging from the war and suffered a similar fate. To his credit, he blocked attempts to create a Hindu state and prevented the lingering vision of Gandhian communalism from stripping India of all the industrial and administrative progress brought by the British Empire.

After Nehru died in 1964, he was eventually replaced by his daughter, Indira Gandhi, who implemented the strong methods of her father. Excepting two brief intervals, the Nehru family was supreme in India until 1984, and the left-wing Congress Party, which this powerful dynasty led, remained in power almost continuously until the last decade of the twentieth century.³⁰⁹ This coalition of socialists retained the devastating economic policies of the Nehru family and left the financial condition of India in shambles. It was not until the Hindu Nationalist Party gained control of the government that tariffs were reduced from one hundred twenty-eight percent to thirty percent and free trade allowed exports to double.³¹⁰ The reduction of government interference in the markets similarly enabled the industries left by the British Empire to develop fully and allowed India to better utilize the vast resources within her borders. Consequently, India has experienced a growth rate averaging seven percent since

1997³¹¹ and has increased wages across the country by fifteen percent.³¹² Though most of the laborers in India remain in the agricultural sector, their nation is continuing to expand at a rapid rate as the industrialization process is finally receiving limited opposition from the government.

There is much to accomplish in the future for India, but the infrastructure and institutions left by the British Empire have enabled the Republic of India to have the foundation necessary to facilitate this rise in economic output. The early years following the British withdrawal confirmed the worst fears of Winston Churchill, and there is no doubt he was never more reluctant to be proven correct. Fortunately, the condition of India allowed her to be far more receptive to some of the political and economic ideals of the British Empire than Pakistan was over the course of time. Today she is rapidly advancing due to the economic liberalization programs of recent governments, but there is still much to overcome in the form of factionalism, poverty, political corruption, and economic instability. The British are certainly not responsible for all of the successes of this nation in recent years, but they did play a fundamental role in developing India into a modern state. It is now left to India to continue upon this progress and solidify the gains she has made with more prudent decisions.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 99.

³¹⁰ Bruce Bartlett, "India's Backward Stance," *National Review Online*, May 19, 2004, http://old.nationalreview.com/nrof_bartlett/bartlett_200405190822.asp (Accessed 6 April 2010).

³¹¹ "India," *CIA World Fact Book*, March 26, 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html> (Accessed 6 April 2010).

³¹² Ibid.

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