

Modern South Asia

History, Culture, Political Economy

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Eighteen Fifty-Seven: Rebellion, Collaboration and the Transition to Crown Raj

Before: Causes

- Uniqueness of 1857:
 - Convergence of various strands of resistance
 - Expansion of scale
 - New level of intensity
- Company's army was mercenary and had revolted disparately previously; added provocations:
 - General service enlistment act of '56
 - Widened circle of recruitment
 - Bonuses cancelled
 - Prestige lost after Awadh annexed
 - High land-revenue demand

During: Progression

- Meerut: Cavalry revolted on 10th May
 - Immediate cause: Lee Enfield cartridges
 - Mutineers installed BSZ as head
 - Landed magnates, peasants lent support
 - Spread north and west
 - ERROR: Not fast enough to fight British in Punjab
 - ERROR: Did not establish administration
- Awadh
 - Rural and urban base: taluqdars, peasants, artisans
 - British garrison in Lucknow imprisoned
 - British troops fought village by village
 - British collaborated with Bhumihars of Banaras (rivals of revolting Rajputs)
- Central India

- Maratha rulers and peasants
- Rani of Jhansi
- Nana Sahib: went up to Kanpur and defeated British
- Other contemporaneous skirmishes
 - Hyderabad: Rohilla Afghans
 - * Nizam avoided due to Marathas
 - Punjab: Garrison towns, Muslim pastoralists revolted
 - * Sikh magnates were loyalist
 - Bengali intelligentsia were against “feudal oligarchs” + British military presence

During: Character

- Inchoate sense of patriotism
- Legitimist in nature, among indigenous rulers
 - Offering an 18th-century system
 - Involved to inter-state rivalries
- Religious millenarianism
 - British officials explained it as a plot by Muslim fanatics
 - Lakhnawi preachers had foretold the end of raj
 - Thousands of ghazis were involved
 - Calls for jihad were given in many qasbahs
 - BUT
 - * Sunnis were wary
 - * Success was uncertain; pragmatism
 - * Concerns for religious unity
 - * No Hindu millenarianism
- Agrarian protest
 - Peasant recruits: link between military and rural uprising
 - Chief villain: British tax collector
 - Political deprivation was X-factor
 - * High revenue demand reduced prestige
 - Multi-class in character
- Reaction against British racial arrogance

After: Modifications

- Rs. 500mn was owed to London
- Revamped taxation system
 - Land revenues moderated
 - Income tax on urban groups
- Recruitment policy
 - Upper castes of UP: untrustworthy
 - Punjab, Gorkhaland
 - No more than 2:1 British:Indian

High Noon of Colonialism, 1858 to 1914: State and Political Economy

- India became a colony to support British hegemony in the world economy, and for strategic defence
- Army's structure and composition was amended
- Economy was twisted to import manufactured goods and export raw materials
 - Offset British deficit in international trade

Reorganization of army and bureaucracy

- Army
 - High European ratio, 2:1
 - New social groups
 - * Sikhs, Gurkhas, Punjabi Muslims, Pathans
 - * Mixed regiments
 - * Anthropological theory of “martial races”
 - Disparity in wealth distribution
 - * Lasting legacy
- Bureaucracy
 - Upper echelons exclusively British
 - Indians discriminated against

Restructuring the Economy

- Cast into role of exporter of agricultural raw materials
 - Protectionist America, cont. Europe
- Export surplus funded home charges
 - Secretary of state's India office
 - Cost of wars
 - Military stores
 - Pensions
 - Interest on railways
 - Private remittances
- Indian rupee depreciated by 50%
- Council bill system
- Charges of exploitation led to law of property, an instrument of compromise
 - Bengal: occupancy tenants were given security
 - Punjab: peasant proprietors bolstered
- Commercialization of agriculture exposed peasants to world vagaries
 - Boom in cotton during ACW
 - Depressions in 70s, 90s
 - Famines in late 90s
 - Uptick in jute before WWI
- Maintain India as outlet for manufactured goods

- Customs duties were frozen, then abolished
 - * Despite crisis of Afghan war
- Reintroduced along with excise duty on Indian textiles
- Stunted industrialization
- Railways were supported by British industries
 - * Private investment at public risk

Indian collaborators in the Raj

- Made princely states solid bulwarks
 - Shallow sovereignty in traditional rulers
 - Freed them from popular sanction
- Loyal taluqdars had economic protection
- Local self-government
 - Indian Councils Act, 1861, 1892 (non-official)
 - 1909: Morley-Minto
 - * Social engineering: depressed classes, Indian Muslims
 - 1919: Montagu-Chelmsford
 - 1935: GoI Act

A Nation in the Making? ‘Rational’ Reform, ‘Religious’ Revival, and Swadeshi Nationalism, 1858-1914

- Anti-colonialism more variegated than “articulate dissent of educated groups” arising from “western concepts of liberalism and nationalism”
- Interconnectedness of social and political developments across regions on an unprecedented scale
- Idioms of communitarian identities were sought to be given coherence
 - Multiple and competing narratives
 - Census spurred competition for status
- Colonial power had announced intention to not interfere in religion and custom; BUT
 - Constitutional initiatives lent communitarian affiliations weight
 - * “Indian Muslim”
 - British-sponsored neo-Brahminical ideology

Reform vs. Revival

- Social reform vs. religious revival in late 19th c.
 - Hindu revival vs. reformist activities
 - Muslim tussle too
 - Attitude of resistance to colonial intrusiveness

Hinduism

- Maharashtra:
 - Revivalism in Pune: Brahminical content
 - Ranade's reformism
- Arya Samaj: Punjab, UP
 - Reformist but supremacist
- Bengal
 - Ramakrishna Paramahansa: not rational
 - SV: compatibilist
 - Anti-fanaticist

Islam

- Muslim elite was more nuanced
- Reform-oriented: Saiyid Ahmed Khan
 - Accept W. education but not all ideals
 - Established AMU
- Guarded against intrusions into personal law
 - Challenged distinction between legal and illegal waqfs
 - Ulema was hostile towards SAK
- Universalism
 - Jamaluddin al-Afghani : Hindu-Muslim unity
 - Akbar Ilahabadi
- Maulana Shibli Numani
 - Indian Muslims are not bound to submit to Khilafat

Subalternity

- Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: Sultana's Dream
- Multi-class rural revolt in Maharashtra 1879
- Mappila Lahala
- Birsa Munda

Urban Nationalism pre-1900

- Intelligentsia in organized protest
- INC 1885
 - moderate: prayer and petition
 - political aims:
 - * expansion of the elective principle
 - * Indianization of administration
 - * anti-drain
 - moderate success
- Mid-1890s: nationalists criticized
 - heightened until assassination
 - aggravated by Curzon's imperialism

- * restricted university autonomy
- * Bengal partition
- INC also opposed partition

The Swadeshi Era

- Four strands
 - Old moderates (constitutional)
 - Leaders of society (atmashakti)
 - Passive resistance (boycott, violence)
 - Revolutionaries
- Revs and atmas demanded swaraj
 - “full independence”
- Bengal: Boycott of British cotton textiles
 - Mainly Calcutta
 - Mill-owners took advantage
 - Coercive methods of swadeshis alienated poor
- Punjab, Maharashtra, Madras
 - Punjab: Increased canal-water rates
 - Maharashtra: Religious symbolism
 - Madras: Sympathy w Bengal
- 1907: Moderates went back to steady reform

Redefinition of Nationalism Aims

- Accompanying cultural awakening
- Steering path between unthinking eulogy of European enlightenment and indiscriminating assault on ‘modern’
- Conflicting legacies on relations between nation and R. community
 - Easier for Hindu symbolism to be national
 - Difficult to be Muslim & nationalist
 - Compounded by communal electorates
- No issue with linguistic communities
 - Bipin Chandra Pal, etc. propounded federalism

Colonialism Under Siege: State and Political Economy after World War I

- Wartime exigencies set the stage for mass nationalist movements in the 20s

Wartime Changes

- * Large-scale local recruitment in the army
- * Food and fodder exported to ME
- * Income tax, customs duties increased

- * Mad inflation, shortages

Resistance to war effort

- Food riots, insurrections, demands had no effect
- Gandhi supported war effort
- Cooperation between INC, AIML
 - Coordinated by Jinnah
 - Lucknow Pact 1916: Muslim electorates

Appeasement Policies

- Directed towards moderates
- Montagu-Chelmsford, 1919: disappointing
 - Dyarchy
- GoI, 1935: centre was still strong
- Concessionary and pre-emptive
 - Direct attention away from centre

Political economy

- Cotton industry quickly took over from Lancashire
 - 1922: Fiscal autonomy (taxes, duties)
 - L. lost during Depression
 - Withstood Japanese competition but not Indian
- Colony maintained home charges due to fixed exchange rate
- Deflation, tariff walls
 - Accelerated agrarian price collapse
- Set up RBI, under London
 - But no financial autonomy
- Mid-1930s: Indian subsidiaries to avoid tariffs

Gandhian Nationalism and Mass Politics in the 1920s

- When Gandhi arrived,
 - Constitutionalism had proved ineffective
 - Armed resistance had been crushed
- Bio
 - Gujarati bania
 - Studied law
 - 93-15: Natal, SA; protested SA's racism
 - Hind Swaraj
 - * Removal of British industrialization
 - * No virtue in representative institutions

- * Enlightened anarchy
- Travelled across subcontinent in 1915
- Three non-violent non-cooperative agitations
 - * Kheda: against state revenue demand
 - * Ahmedabad: workers vs industrialists
 - * Champaran: indigo peasants

The 1919 Movement

- Montagu-Chelmsford, Rowlatt
- First major all-India agitation
- HRLs, Islamic universalist groups, Satyagraha Sabha (not INC)
- Largest and most violent anti-imperialist mvmt since 1857
- Joined forces with pro-Khilafat Muslims
- Display of religious unity
- Punjab was under martial law
 - Jallianwala Bagh
- Gandhi's strategy
 - 1920: Combined ahimsa and satyagraha
 - * discipline and loyalty to commander
 - Offered INC the strategy of non-violence
 - Captured INC leadership in Nagpur, 1920
 - * Supported by Khilafatists
 - * Jinnah left in disgust
 - Boycott of reformed councils, British goods
 - Adoption of mass programme: swaraj through legitimate and peaceful means
 - * Political capital out of populist ferment
 - Had psychological impact due to kisan unrest 1919-22
 - * “national leadership was being pushed from below into positions they might have wanted to resist”
 - * INC was “fearful of people running ahead of leadership”
 - INC adopted revenue boycott but not rent
 - * avoid discord between landlords and tenants
 - Called off after Chauri Chaura

Post-1922

- Divisions within INC
 - M. Nehru, CR Das wanted to join councils
 - Broke off to form Swaraj party
- Hindu-Muslim conflict
 - UP, Punjab: shuddhi, sangathan vs. tabligh, tanzeem
 - Bengal: Deshbandhu CR Das' 50-50 principle
 - Punjab: Unionist in power, bigots among people

Late 1920s and Early 1930s

- Simon Commission: to enquire into future of Constitutional reform
- Boycotted by INC
 - Formed own committee under M. Nehru
 - AIML offered cooperation
 - Rebuffed on advice of HM
 - Beginning of “communalism”
- Recommended demand for dominion status
- SCB called for complete independence in 1928, but lost because of Gandhi
 - Afraid of giving radicalism space
 - Followed by labour strikes, protest
 - Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1929: repressed radicalism and militancy
- Congress took up purna swaraj in 1929
 - Reluctantly accepted release of Meerut prisoners

Political Upheavals

- New techniques for struggle changed INC from educated elite to a mass political party
 - Still often represented middle-class interests
 - Gandhi offered trusteeship of rich to the poor
- Swaraj party was successful in Bengal, CP; not Punjab
 - INC refused to support CRD’s strategy
- British consolidated support among princes, rural elites, religious minorities
 - INC had to harness opposition without being overwhelmed

The Depression Decade: Society, Economics and Politics

- Depression showed how vulnerable Indian society was to the world economy
- 1930s economic crisis unleashed nationalist agitations and also communal conflicts
 - Met with repression
 - Later, political engineering
- Old guard of INC lost out to radical, socialist elements
 - Rebuffed AIML, which looked for alternative strategy

Experiences of Depression

- Rural
 - Collapse of prices
 - * Prices weakened from 1926, but held up by govt
 - * Tumbled from 1929
 - * Flow of foreign funds into agrarian sector withdrawn

- Rupture in credit circuits
 - * Small landlords could not recover interest
 - * Bigger creditors pulled out
 - * Peasants could not sell
 - * Damage to credit relations
- Urban
 - More mixed
 - Industrialists shifted losses to the workforce
 - Cement, sugar industries boosted
 - Low prices enjoyed by salaried classes

Gandhian civil disobedience

- Disappointment compared to purna swaraj
 - Salt tax, land-revenue (peasants)
 - Textile industry protection, coastal shipping reservation, exchange rate drop (industrialists)
- March '30: Used salt to kick off movement
 - No-tax, no-revenue campaigns
 - Boycott of goods and institutions
- Tended towards radicalism
 - No-rent movements
 - Muslim debtors rose against Hindu moneylenders
 - Revolutionary violence increased
- MG opened talks with V. Irwin
 - March '31: G-I Pact
 - * Federation, Indian responsibility, minority safeguards
 - Suspended civil disobedience
 - Dismay of nationalists
 - Gandhi attended Second RTT
 - * Returned empty-handed
 - * Resumed CD in Jan '32
 - * Subdued by '34

Political engineering

- Communal Award, Ramsay McDonald, '32: Separate electorates for depressed classes
 - Gandhi threatened to fast
 - Poona Pact, '32 (Ambedkar): reserved seats
- GoI Act, '35
 - Provincial
 - * Dyarchy abolished
 - * Govt depts under elected Indians
 - * British reserved right to dismiss
 - Central

- * British held finance, defence, sovereignty
 - * Negated possibility of nationalist majority
- INC decided to contest '37 elections
 - Social base of Gandhian INC coincided with franchise
 - Won eight provinces of British India

Intra-INC conflict

- Left-wing: JN, SCB; Congress Socialist Party, CPI, Radical Humanists
 - MG tried to co-opt by making President
- Nehru was socialist but did not force INC
 - SCB set up planning committee for socialist reconstruction
 - Defeated MG's candidate in '39
 - Forced to resign by old guard
 - Formed Forward Bloc, tried to consolidate leftists
 - * Barred from elective office
- Concerted Muslim opposition under AIML was blunting unified nationalist mvmt
 - Jinnah deplored compromise with Hindu bigots in state govts
 - Spurned in '37
 - Denounced INC's provincial ministries

Nationalism and Colonialism during World War II and its Aftermath: Economic Crisis and Political Confrontation

- British will to hold on was strong in '39
- Forces of nationalism were radicalized but divided
- V. Linlithgow declared India a belligerent
 - Congress resigned

British War Effort

- Political denial
 - Detention of satyagrahis
 - Imprisonment of radicals (SCB)
- Economic intervention
 - Expansion in public expenditure
 - * Galloping inflation
 - London agreed to foot the war bill in credit
 - India was hit hard
 - * Bengal
 - Famine in 1943-4
 - Damage of credit relations

- No relief measures
- * Punjab
 - Farmers couldn't profit from high prices
- Reversed debt relationship between colony and crown

Political Confrontation

- Radicals and socialists wanted to take advantage of war
 - SCB tried to invade from NW
 - Communists began to support British
- INC gained courage from Japan's victory
 - Churchill sent Cripps Mission
 - Failed on account of demand for defence portfolio
- April '42: Gandhi's Quit India resolution

Quit India Movement

- Biggest civilian uprising since 1857
- Orchestrated by lower ranking leaders
- Began in urban areas; repressed
 - Spread to countryside in Sept
 - Admin collapsed
 - Repressed by spring '43
- Muslim majority provinces and right-wingers avoided
- Industrialists liked govt
 - Bombay plan
- British coercive policies gave Congress political credit

Indian National Army

- SCB launched INA from northeast
 - INA was notable
 - * Attacked the loyalty of British Indian army
 - * Harmony among religious, linguistic comms
 - * Women too
 - Halted at Imphal in '44 but lauded by INC
 - Revived in '45-6
 - INC gave legal backing in trial
- Precipitated public protests and mutinies
 - Bombay, Calcutta: Nov '45-Feb '46
 - MS Khan led naval uprising
- “Decisive shift in British policy on decolonization came about under mass pressure in the autumn and winter of '45-6”
 - Cabinet mission in spring '46 to discuss the terms and shape of Indian independence

The Partition of India and the Creation of Pakistan

- The contradictions and structural peculiarities of Indian society and politics eventually led to the creation of Pakistan
- British social enumerators invested Hinduism and Islam with a supra-local significance and cohesion never achieved before
 - Identities were redefined not simply as a function of skilful social engineering by the colonial masters but also as part of a process of the multifaceted resistance against colonial rule

Indian Muslim Identity

- Definition of IM triggered contradictions
 - But identities were formed by social and economic relations linked to colonial rule
 - Coherence and articulation
 - * Reformist mvmts w/ ideological links w/ West Asia
 - * But fractured by class, region, rural-urban
 - * Doctrinal, sectarian, heterodox divisions
- Role of British construction
 - End of 19c: British officials saw Muslims as a separate political community
 - Assertive Hindu educated class; revivalist Muslim lower class
 - * British allied w/ Muslim landed elite
 - SAK proposed 2NT to impress political importance of Muslims
 - Separate electorates: 1882, 1909, 1919
 - * Main aim was to confine politics to the provinces
 - * Muslim politicians could focus on competing among themselves
 - Muslims avoided pan-India organization until last decade
 - In colonial representative system, supra-communal alliances resisted association with AIML
 - Khilafatists supported Gandhi
 - 30s reforms were good for Muslims in majority provinces but bad for the rest – eliminated British safeguard

The Demand for Pakistan

- Minority provinces' Muslim politicians turned to Jinnah
 - But lacked support due to British grip on centre
 - AIML could not garner support in majority provinces or with Congress
 - Won 4.4% of Muslim vote
 - Congress needed no support from League
 - * Except in Punjab (Union), Bengal (KPP)
 - * Sikandar Hayat Khan, Fazlul Haq lent support to AIML under fears of Hindu Raj

- Muslim provinces disliked strong-centre federal arrangement
- Iqbal called for Muslim state in NW
 - * Chaudhri Rahmat Ali: “Pakistan”
- The war
 - Viceroy used AIML as an excuse to contest INC’s claim of representing India
 - 1940: AIML demanded Muslim states
 - * Rejected “communalism” and advanced AIML nationalism
 - * Drew strength from Muslim antipathy to INC
 - * Imprecise on degree of sovereignty
 - * Reciprocal arrangement for minority protection
 - “problem is one of sharing power rather than qualifying the terms on which power is exercised by a majority”
 - Unitary India formed by partnership between Pakistan and Hindustan

The Success of the AIML

- Jinnah had to garner support in P&B
 - Mainly landed magnates in charge of local politics
 - Started souring relations between communities in these provinces
 - * Jinnah needed agreement of minorities
 - * Cripps Mission almost brought out the inconsistency
 - * CRR proposed Pakistan taken from Muslim-majority districts of P&B, still united
 - Jinnah dismissed this
 - 1945-6: AIML won all Muslim seats to the central assembly
 - * But this was not backed by a specific agenda
 - * Based on
 - alliances of convenience with local leaders
 - Unionist anti-agricultural war exigencies
 - famine relief by Abul Hashim faction
 - * Depicted as mandate for Pakistan, from undivided P&B
 - * Minorities were still wary
 - * State assemblies were still not AIML

The Refusal for Pakistan

- 1946 Cabinet Mission
 - Three-tiered pan-Indian federation
 - * Grouping of provinces at second tier
 - But INC called for authority at centre
 - So AIML’s choice was
 - * Undivided India without guarantee of central Muslim representation
 - * Sovereign Pakistan, partitioned P&B
 - Would not receive significant share of central assets

- Jinnah rejected latter
 - * Former was decided upon
 - * But Nehru was opposing the grouping
 - * Jinnah panicked
- Direct Action Day: 16/08/1946
 - Sep: Congress joined interim govt at centre
 - * Oct: AIML joined
 - Violence spread in Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar, Punjab in Jan
 - Peasant rebellion in Telangana
- Attlee announced departure by 30/06/48
 - HM demanded partition of P&B
 - Congress echoed
- Plan for unified Bengal was ditched
- Mountbatten unveiled plan for partition
 - District legislators voted
 - Congress whip voted in favour
- INC refused to let AIML make claims on behalf of Muslims in minority provinces
 - Cast partition as secession of Muslim-majority areas from the Union
 - Decisive political abortion of 2NT
- The making of Pakistan was decided by the particularisms of the Muslim provinces, not the supra-local Islamic sentiment
 - Contradictory logic of emphasis on provincial politics along with communally compartmentalized electorates

Nineteen Forty-Seven: Memories and Meanings

- Pakistan became the largest Muslim state in the world (60mn)
- India became the largest Muslim-minority country in the world (40mn)
- It is claimed that Pakistan took Islamic ideology as its most important impulse
 - Jinnah was a proponent of HMU
 - Stood for a common INC-AIML programme
 - Gave no definition to Pakistan
- Was the AIML tactic sufficient to commit Pakistan to a theocratic state?
 - Religion-as-culture was important
 - Religion-as-ideology? Not so much
 - AIML support relied on local bosses; there was no local or regional Muslim politics
- Jinnah's strategy misfired
 - Underestimated the hurry of the British

- Underestimated INC's commitment to MG
 - Lack of control over followers
- The demand for Pakistan was Jinnah's path to all-India politics
 - His sentiments were more oriented to the INC than to his own followers
 - He had to recast himself greatly
 - Declared Pakistan a secular country
- The postcolonial state has suppressed these aspects of his ideas
- INC easily claimed the label of "Indian nationalist"
- Only INC-supporting Muslims qualified as "nationalist Muslims"
- Centre-region contradictions were obscured by the "settled" communal divide
- Myth of Gandhian success was propagated
- Disjunction between meanings and memories of partition
 - Why dominion status? Why partition?
 - INC laid claim to Delhi, princely states
 - Sovereignty was possibly only through this compromise of unity and independence
- The same compromise extends to the principle socio-economic betterment
 - India's poor are not free
- Legacy of the expediency
 - Federal dilemma
 - Threats to secularism
 - Class, caste conflicts
 - Pakistan military disputes
- Romanticization of Raj in 1980s