

# 'PUNJABISATION' IN THE BRITISH INDIAN ARMY 1857-1947 AND THE ADVENT OF MILITARY RULE IN PAKISTAN

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# **'Punjabisation' in the British Indian Army 1857-1947 and the Advent of Military Rule in Pakistan**

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## **1.1 Introduction**

This essay will seek to show the trends of organisation, regionalised recruitment policy, and institutional unification of the British Indian Army and how these trends were reproduced by the Pakistan Army after 1947. Previous studies on the British Indian Army such as Menezes' *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty-first Century*<sup>1</sup> and Byron Farewell's *Armies of the Raj: From the Mutiny to Independence*<sup>2</sup> have approached the study of the British Indian Army in relation to the shifting relationship between the governing (conquering) army and the common man in the subcontinent. Whilst they have provided valuable insights into the literature of the period, they have ignored the fact that the way the British Army worked autonomously under the British Empire was transferred to the post-colonial Pakistan Army. This work seeks to contextualise the trends and transformations from the British to the Pakistan Army and especially its autonomous nature within the state. It will also correlate the recruitment policy shift from Bengal to the Punjab after the Mutiny war of 1857 with the imbalanced dominance of one part of the country over the rest of Pakistan after 1947.

The British Indian Army was the strong arm of the British Raj. Its main purpose was to quell internal disturbances and to counter external aggression in the subcontinent. However, the mutiny of the Bengal army in 1857 exposed many weaknesses of the army. This resulted in its complete change and reorganisation. More powers were granted to the officers to address and avoid any repetition of such an uprising in future. This further concentrated their influence on administration and government. The most drastic effect of the 1857 Uprising was the regional recruitment shift in the British military from Bengal to the Punjab and North West Frontier Province NWFP of the subcontinent. This shift resulted in the de-

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<sup>1</sup> S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty-first Century* (New Delhi: Viking, 1993), pp.124-143.

<sup>2</sup> Byron Farewell, *Armies of the Raj: From the Mutiny to Independence, 1858-1947*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1989), pp.15-19 and pp.57-64.

Bengalisation and the Punjabisation of the Indian army – a punishment for the Bengal region that rebelled and a reward to the Punjab that suppressed the Uprising. This era also heralded the colonial theory of divide and rule on the basis of the so-called ‘martial races’. This martial race policy is contextualised in the broader framework of the historical debate on colonialism and ‘race’ in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The last part of the essay deals with the Indianisation of the Commissioned Army.

During the partition of 1947, the Pakistan army was created from the division of the colonial Indian army. The political role of the Pakistan army is frequently correlated with the teething problems of Pakistan especially after the first Kashmir war of 1948.<sup>3</sup> Whilst this may have been true in certain cases, the assertive role played by the Pakistan Army during the 1950s and 60s can be traced to the evolution of the colonial Indian army. This essay develops this analysis by exploring the historical background and evolution of the British Indian Army.

## **1.2 The Advent of the British Indian Army**

Major Stringer Lawrence,<sup>4</sup> who formed the first military units of the East India Company in Madras in 1748, is regarded as ‘the father of the Indian Army’.<sup>5</sup> He organised the British Indian army that was divided into three presidencies: Bengal,<sup>6</sup> Madras<sup>7</sup> and Bombay.<sup>8</sup> The three presidencies formed their own armies which later on constituted the Indian Army: the Bengal Army (eventually developed into the largest army); the Madras Army (a combination of companies of doorkeepers and watchmen); and the Bombay Army (that arrived as a detachment when Bombay passed to the British as part of the dowry that Catherine of Braganza brought to her marriage to Charles II).<sup>9</sup> The first British regulars, the 39<sup>th</sup> Foot, arrived in India in 1754 under the command of Colonel John Adlerscron.<sup>10</sup> He began the amalgamation of the East India Company’s Indian Army (European and Indian troops) and Royal

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<sup>3</sup> See Ayesha Jalal, *State of Martial Rule*, pp.25-48; Ayesha Siddiqi-Agha, *The Military Inc.*, pp.62-8; and Stephen Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, p.121.

<sup>4</sup> In 1752, he became the first army officer to be appointed Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of all the East India Company’s forces in India.

<sup>5</sup> S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Papers relating to the Bengal Army, Public Record Office (PRO) 30/9/4/3; PRO 30/12/33/7, National Archives London (NAL).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, PRO 30/12/30/11, NAL.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, PRO 30/9/4/47, NAL.

<sup>9</sup> Byron Farewell, *Armies of the Raj*, p.25.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.26.

British regulars (rented from the Crown and constituted the British Army) in India. Until this time all – British and Indian, Company and Royal troops – were officered by Britons.<sup>11</sup> The armies based in Madras, Bombay and Bengal functioned as three distinct entities. Training, discipline and professionalism were the primary requirements for Indian soldiers. Intensive training with an emphasis on discipline and efficiency and their separation from the fragmented Indian society turned the Indian soldiers into a professional, united and autonomous fighting force. Their loyalty was to their ‘homogeneous military units’ for which they served ‘full time, long term’ rewarded with a secure pay and pension system.<sup>12</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Company started sending troops on overseas voyages. Due to the reluctance of the Hindu soldiers to serve overseas, the troops were given options for such expeditions on a voluntary basis.<sup>13</sup> In 1846 and 1849, two important frontier forces, the *Sindh* Frontier Force (SFF) and the Punjab Frontier Force (PFF),<sup>14</sup> were created. The SFF was to deal with the *Baluch* tribesmen and was part of the Bombay Army. The PFF was raised for keeping order on the North Western border. It was to serve on the frontier and only in special cases elsewhere. Later on, the Gurkha Regiment was also added to the PFF. The Frontier Force was under the control of the Foreign Department of the Government of India through the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab. In 1886, this was brought under the operational control of the C-in-C, India, as part of the Bengal Army. It continued to maintain its separate character until 1903, when it was incorporated into the Indian Army.<sup>15</sup>

The East India Company administered India until 1858,<sup>16</sup> through three Presidencies each with its own army. These armies consisted of British and Indian regiments commanded by British officers. The Bengal Army (being the largest) had a distinct position as its C-in-C was also the head of the Company’s other armies. His powers were very nominal over the armies of Madras and Bombay. He was supposed

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen P. Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and its Armies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp.173-77.

<sup>13</sup> S.T. Das, *Indian Military: Its History and Development* (New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1969), pp. 83-85. Also see Raymond A. Callahan, *The East India Company and Army Reforms 1783-1798*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp.12-14.

<sup>14</sup> S.L.Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p.22.

<sup>15</sup> T.A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822-1922* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1974), pp.27-29.

<sup>16</sup> PRO 30/29/21/7, From John Crawford’s presentation to the House of Lords... asking for direct British rule in place of the East India Company, 13 February 1858. NAL.

to exercise supervisory control over them. Prior to 1886, he had no authority over the Punjab Irregular (later Frontier) Field Force – known as the ‘Piffers’ – on the North West Frontier, which was controlled by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab.<sup>17</sup> Also, of course, he had no direct control over the armies of the Princely states. In fact, no officer exercised control over all of the Indian land forces.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 1: Three armies of the East India Company and their recruitment areas in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.**

| Army        | Recruitment Areas                                                                        |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bengal Army | Bihar, Oudh, Agra, Punjab, Nepal. (Caste based recruitment)                              |
| Madras Army | Madras, Hyderabad, Central Provinces, Burma. (Supra-caste, religion & class recruitment) |
| Bombay Army | Bombay, Sindh, Rajputana, Aden. (Supra-Caste, Class & religion)                          |

From the second half of the eighteenth century, the Bengal Army recruited from the communities that had served the Muslim dynasty in the past. Recruitment focussed on high caste Hindus, mainly from Bihar, Oudh and Agra. The Gurkhas and the Punjabis were also recruited. It was a high-caste ethnic army.<sup>19</sup> The Madras Army concentrated for recruitment on Madras, Hyderabad, and the Central Provinces, and later, Burma while the Bombay Army’s focus was on Bombay, Sindh, Rajputana and Aden. Unlike the Bengal Army, both of these armies’ recruitment was supra-caste and supra-religion.<sup>20</sup>

With the British Government taking over the reins of the East India Company, the shape of all the three armies was completely changed. In August 1858, the British Government introduced a major shift in their organisational setups. For such drastic changes, the Peel Commission (1859)<sup>21</sup> and the Eden Commission (1879)<sup>22</sup> played a major role. The Commission reports stressed the need to maintain a disciplined,

<sup>17</sup> S.L.Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p.76.

<sup>18</sup> Byron Farewell, *Armies of the Raj*, p.27.

<sup>19</sup> Seema Alvi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770-1830* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.39,45-46,49.

<sup>20</sup> Many authors have given details of the armies of the East India Company including S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, pp. 11-12,14.

<sup>21</sup> (Major General) Jonathan Peel Commission Report, Report from Commissioners: 1859, *Organisation of Army (Indian)*, Volume 5. (Peel was then the Secretary of State for War) [hereafter Peel Commission Report], National Library of Scotland (NLS).

<sup>22</sup> Report of the special commission appointed by His Excellency the Governor-General in Council to enquire into the organisation and expenditure of the Army in India [Eden Commission]. Simla: Govt of India, 1879; Appendices to the report, Simla/Calcutta: Govt of India, 1879-80. 4 volumes. IOR/L/MIL/17/5/1687, 1879-1880, British Library (BL).

professional and loyal trained army. All three armies were retained, but the position of the C-in-C was braced with more powers. The strength of the British troops was raised to 80,000; of which 50,000 were for Bengal, 15,000 for Madras, and 15,000 for Bombay. They were also given total control over artillery and some other branches of the Army. Additionally, according to the Peel Commission, Native forces were not to bear a greater proportion to the European, in Cavalry and Infantry, than two to one for Bengal, and three to one for Madras and Bombay respectively.<sup>23</sup> All such developments were the after-effects of the Mutiny War of 1857.

The homogenous nature of the Bengal army was one of the factors that contributed to the outbreak of the Mutiny. Hence, in future, the British maintained distinction and separateness of castes and class in the army. No single caste or class was allowed to dominate or command another caste or class.. To avoid unity amongst native soldiers, the Peel Commission Report recommended that 'the Native Army' should be composed of different nationalities and castes, and as a general rule, mixed promiscuously through each regiment'.<sup>24</sup> However, local regiments were also limited to their respective areas of recruitment except in case of emergency.<sup>25</sup>

The separation of the three armies in India was usually debated by the British Administration at different points. The Eden commission recommended the 'endeavour ... to carry out the principles of segregation'.<sup>26</sup> However, it was in the year 1895 that all the three armies were amalgamated to create the Indian Army, headed by a C-in-C. Under the C-in-C there were four commands: the Madras Command, the Bombay Command, the Bengal Command and the Punjab Command, each headed by a Lt. General.<sup>27</sup> The former Bengal Army was split into Bengal and Punjab Commands. The title of Indian Army began to be used officially from 1

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<sup>23</sup> Peel Commission Report, p.9.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.14.

<sup>25</sup> The army in India adopted different organisational systems: 1. The general mixed composition system: each company in a regiment consisted of different races and castes which were mixed together irrespective of caste and creed. 2. The class company system: each company in a regiment has soldiers of one caste and social class. In this way, each company was pure; different castes and classes were kept separately at the company level. 3. The class regiment system: the whole regiment comprised men of one distinct social class or caste. At times, a regiment could have soldiers enlisted exclusively from one district/region.

<sup>26</sup> Report of the [Eden Commission]. Simla: Govt of India, 1879; Appendices to the report, Simla/Calcutta: Govt of India, 1879-80. 4 volumes. IOR/L/MIL/17/5/1687, 1879-1880. BL.

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum by His Royal Highness the Field-Marshal Commanding in Chief on the proposed formation of the three Presidential Armies of India into one army under one Commander-in-Chief divided into four Army Corps, each under a Lieutenant-General. War Office, 31 Oct 1882. IOR/L/MIL/17/5/1705, 1882. Also, Report by the Military Committee, India Office, 27 Mar 1882. IOR/L/MIL/17/5/1704, 1882.

January 1903. In 1911, George MacMunn recalls the Indian Army as one which became one of the marvels of modern times, and for which the people of the subcontinent used to say:

*Khalk-i-Khuda  
Mulki-i-Sirkar  
Hukm-i-Sahiban Alishan.*<sup>28</sup>

**Table 2: Four commands of the Indian Army and their areas of recruitment in 1895.**

| Command | Recruitment Area                                                                                                      |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Punjab  | Punjab, NWFP                                                                                                          |
| Bengal  | Assam, Bengal, the United Provinces, parts of Central Provinces and Central India                                     |
| Madras  | Madras Presidency, the Garrisons in Hyderabad and Maysore, and Burma                                                  |
| Bombay  | Bombay Presidency including Sindh, Aden, Baluchistan, Rajputana, and Parts of Central India and the Central Provinces |

### 1.3 Post-1857 Regional Recruitment Shifts – The Evolution of *Punjabisation*

The 1857 Mutiny or the War of Independence was a major upheaval for the colonial masters. From the military's point of view, the main responsible factor in the outbreak of the mutiny was the Bengali soldier. His ethnic majority in the Indian Army and his defiance resulted in a war between the Indian soldiers on the one hand and the British troops and their loyalists, such as Punjabis, on the other. Therefore, the British military policy needed a structural overhauling, a well-organised, systematic and planned British Indian Army. But for the British, the recruitment strategy needed a major shift from the defiant Bengalis to the loyalist Punjabis. Hence, recruitment from 1857 onwards shifted to the North and North Western regions of India (Present-day Pakistan) at the expense of other regions, especially Bengal. As a result, during the first half of the twentieth century the army was dominated by the soldiers from the North and North West of India. *Gurkhas* from Nepal, the Punjabis and the Pathans were preferred. The number of Punjabis increased gradually. The main 'martial races'

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<sup>28</sup> Mankind belongs to God,  
The land to the Government,  
And power to the powerful Sahibs.  
See George F. MacMunn, *The Armies of India* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1911), p.220.

of the west Punjab recruited were the *Tiwanas*, *Noons*, *Gakkhars*, *Janguas*, *Awans*, *Baluchis*, *Khattars*, *Khokhars*, and *Sials*.<sup>29</sup>

The British Army's senior officers believed that certain classes and communities in India were warrior races – Martial Races. Such classes and communities were believed to prove better and braver soldiers and to be more suitable for army service. The Eden Commission reported in 1879 that the Punjab was the 'home of the most martial races of India' and that it was 'the nursery' of the best soldiers.<sup>30</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, who was the governor of Punjab at the time of the fateful *Jallianwala Bagh* massacre, endorsed the praise and appreciation of the Punjabi soldier expressed by such authorities as Lords Roberts and Kitchener. He said that their argument "was ... irrefutable ... that if India could only afford a small army of seventy-five thousand British (now reduced to under 60,000) and one hundred and sixty thousand Indian troops for the protection of a subcontinent of over 300 millions of people, it would be unwise to take any but the best Indian material and this was to be found mainly in the Punjab".<sup>31</sup>

The martial race theory helped to bring about an end to the Peel Commission recommendation that 'the (regional) armies must balance each other'.<sup>32</sup> According to Field Marshal Frederick Sleight Roberts, the so-called 'balance' was discarded in the 1880s.<sup>33</sup> The Mutiny brought about a search for a martial race which would not turn against the British once again. The crux of the matter of the 'martial race theory' was that some races were superior to others.<sup>34</sup> All natives were not equal in soldierly qualities.<sup>35</sup> Roberts boldly asserted that 'no comparison can be made between the martial values of a regiment recruited amongst the Ghurkhas of Nepal or the warlike races of Northern India (Punjab and NWFP), and those recruited from the effeminate peoples of the South'.<sup>36</sup> The Punjab's population accounted for less than 10% of

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<sup>29</sup> Denzil Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes*. A reprint of "*The races, castes and tribes of the people*" (Lahore: Superintendent, Government Printing, Punjab, 1916), pp.166-67.

<sup>30</sup> *The Eden Commission*, IOR/L/MIL/17/5/1687, 1879-1880. BL.

<sup>31</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India as I knew It: 1885-1922*, (London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1926), pp.213-14.

<sup>32</sup> Peel Commission Report, p.14.

<sup>33</sup> Field Marshal Lord Frederick Sleight Roberts of Kandahar, *Forty-one years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-In-Chief*, Vol. II (London: Richard Bentley & Sons, 1897), pp.441-2.

<sup>34</sup> *The Military Papers of Field Marshal Roberts*, 1876-1893 (London: Alan Sutton, 1993), Field Marshal Roberts to C-In-C Stewart, 30 June 1882, p.257.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p.258.

<sup>36</sup> Field Marshal Roberts, *Forty-one years in India*, II, p.442.



British India,<sup>37</sup> but contributed over half the entire Indian army. The British accommodated communities like Punjabis and Pakhtoons in the Army more than others. It was the beginning of establishing the trend whereby the future security and strategy of the subcontinent would be concentrated in the Punjab and not in Delhi, the capital of the subcontinent.

The reasons for the British tilt towards Punjabis were further substantiated by the perceived Russian threat to the British Empire. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a security and strategic peril from the North West – the Russian threat to North-Western India. The Russian Empire expanded in Central Asia, and, by 1850, it was about a thousand miles from the British Indian Empire.<sup>38</sup> Rather soon, it had to touch the tribal belt of NWFP, thus making Afghanistan a buffer between the two empires. Keeping Russians out of Afghanistan, or extending British influence over it, became a principle of British foreign policy.<sup>39</sup> The policy became more assertive after Lord Lytton arrived in India as viceroy in April 1876.<sup>40</sup> ‘The British had already fought two wars with Afghanistan and expected a third in which there might also possibly be Russian involvement’.<sup>41</sup> According to Field Marshal Roberts, the presence of a ‘European army near our frontiers’ had ‘completely changed’ the position.<sup>42</sup> Thus more focus was given to filling the deficiencies in the Indian Army by concentrating on recruitment from the areas closer to these borders, namely the Punjab.

If the British needed the Punjabis’ loyalty in the post-Mutiny period, the Punjabis, for the solution of their personal financial problems, also needed the British. The personal economy of the peasantry contributed greatly to military recruitment from the Punjab. The availability of man-power, but no jobs, was an imbalanced equation in the region’s economy. It was an agrarian land, but due to shortage of water, soil fertility, erratic rainfall, and shortage of personal finances, the common peasant was facing acute poverty. The memories of the famines of 1753, 1759 and 1783 were still haunting the people.<sup>43</sup> In the meantime, the struggle between Sikhs,

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<sup>37</sup> *Statistical Abstract from British India*, 1931-32, Table 1, pp.2-3, Asia and Africa Collection, (BL).

<sup>38</sup> S.L.Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour* p.86.

<sup>39</sup> *The Military Papers of Field Marshal Roberts*, p.291.

<sup>40</sup> Field Marshal Roberts, *Forty-one years in India*, II, pp.86-87.

<sup>41</sup> Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947*, (Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988), p.43

<sup>42</sup> Field Marshal Roberts to C-In-C Madras, Arbutnot, 6 April 1889, *The Military Papers*, p.393.

<sup>43</sup> *Administration of the Punjab: The Land of Five Rivers*, 1921-22, Volume 1, (Lahore: Government Printing, Punjab, 1923) p.08, (NLS).

Afghans and Mahrattas in the Punjab had further aggravated the situation. The desolation which Ahmed Shah's army carried out on its route was expressed by the saying that was still current throughout Punjab: 'What one eats and drinks is one's own; the rest is Ahmed Shah's'.<sup>44</sup> During the 'great famine' of 1783, the country was depopulated, the peasants abandoned their villages and died of disease and want in thousands; the state of anarchy was almost inconceivable. So many died of starvation that 'bodies were thrown into wells unburied, mothers cast their children into rivers, and even cannibalism is said to have been restored'.<sup>45</sup> In the circumstances, army service was a blessing in disguise. It provided them with an alternative to agricultural income. These peasants-turned-soldiers who until now were malnourished, under-paid and maltreated by the rich feudal class were more committed, hardworking, disciplined, and willing to take assignments with more rigor and vigour. The army provided everything: salary, uniform and prestige, as they were working directly with the colonial masters. A large number of them came from the salt range and the *Potwar* (Potohar) regions of Northern Punjab (especially the districts of Jehlum, Rawalpindi, and Attock) and the adjoining region of NWFP where the peasants were also facing serious economic problems.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, military service provided a guaranteed salary while the peasant class working in the fields was faced with poverty and an uncertain source of income. The new recruitment policy aimed at exploiting the socio-economic life of the Punjab. As a result, the *Raj* concentrated more on the rural population and discouraged the urban and town-city dwellers. Recruitment focus on rural population was another lesson learnt from the 1857 Uprising.

The Punjab was the first province where an Act restricting land transfers was introduced. It was called the 'Punjab Alienation of Land Act'.<sup>47</sup> Its aim was to prevent the money-lender from exploiting the cultivator. To gain the support of the peasantry, several other legislative measures were also passed. The cultivator in the Punjab was undergoing great hardships owing to the exploitation of the money-lender. It was true, therefore, that the peasant should get some relief. The Act limited the transfer of landed property only among the agricultural classes.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, now the peasant

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p.9.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.10.

<sup>46</sup> David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 49-52.

<sup>47</sup> *Administration of the Punjab*, p.132.

<sup>48</sup> Satya M. Rai, *Partition of the Punjab, A Study of its Effects on the Politics and Administration of the Punjab (I)*, (London: Asia Publishing House, 1965), pp. 27-28.

could not be evicted by a civil court without the intervention of the revenue authorities.<sup>49</sup> The Act had a three-pronged effect: it restored confidence in the British and encouraged peasants to join their ranks; the non-agricultural class was forced to join the armed forces to save their prestige, while even the landowning class sent their sons to join the British Army.<sup>50</sup> If they already enjoyed a high eminence in the society, military service granted them a more certain way of keeping their social status.

Granting rewards in return for loyalty was a very traditional and old tool of British domestic and international policy. This contrivance was applied in the North. Those who joined the British Indian Army were previously peasants. For them the best and the biggest reward was the allotment of land. The British used to allocate land to the soldiers in return for loyalty, gallantry, and on their retirement. Such land awards made the army service an attractive profession amongst the peasant-soldiers. It improved their socio-economic status. The policy of granting agrarian land as a reward for military service also encouraged recruitment. The British Indian government began construction of a new work of canals, their branches and distributaries in the plains of the Western Punjab. This process was initiated in 1885 and continued intermittently until the end of the British rule, during which period large tracts inhabited by semi-nomadic peoples were brought under cultivation. There were nine such areas, called the Canal Colonies, where land with sufficient canal water became available.<sup>51</sup> The British Indian government distributed this land mainly on political considerations, that is, to reward people and communities for services to the *Raj*.<sup>52</sup> Substantial tracts of the colony lands were allotted to ex-servicemen, both officers and other ranks,<sup>53</sup> which enhanced the attraction of army service for peasants. Land was also granted for keeping breeding horses, camels, and other animals for the supply to the army and taking care of them. Substantial allotments of land were made to the veterans of World War I.<sup>54</sup> No other field of work was pledging such a great return in the North than joining the Army.

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<sup>49</sup> *Administration of the Punjab*, p.132.

<sup>50</sup> Lord Curzon's Imperial Cadet Corps in 1901 was for the feudal and rich classes of society. It will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming pages.

<sup>51</sup> *Administration of the Punjab*, pp.167-176.

<sup>52</sup> Imran Ali, *The Punjab under Imperialism, 1885-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp.109-126.

<sup>53</sup> Imran Anwar Ali, 'Business and Power in Pakistan', article in *Power and Civil Society in Pakistan*, edited by Weiss and S. Zulfiqar Gilani, (Karachi: OUP, 2003), p.104.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*.

## 1.4 Punjabisation with Caution – The Fallout of the Bengal Mutiny

The events of 1857 were unforgettable for the British Officers. The South Indian soldiers (the Bengal army) were in the forefront in the mutiny. The Punjab had no such quarrel with the British. Rather the British were grateful to the Punjabis for their role in suppressing the rebellion.<sup>55</sup> As a result, the Bengal Army was gradually replaced. One lesson learnt from the mutiny was the danger of allowing any one part of the army to attain a vastly preponderating strength over others. The Mutiny was the Bengal Army's 'homogeneous' 'fusion into one huge body of soldiers'.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, 'the post-mutiny Bengal Army was reconstituted in practically two separate bodies: one comprising the old Hindustani element; and the other carved out of the Punjabi levies which had been raised to put down and overpower the mutinous Bengal *sepoys*'.<sup>57</sup> However, the regional recruitment shift was about to repeat the same mistake that was committed in the Bengal army – a vast homogeneous fusion of soldiers of the Punjab. Therefore, to avoid repetition of the Bengal of 1857, the British divided the Punjab. In 1901, the Viceroy Lord Curzon, adopting and modifying an idea of Lord Lytton, created North-West Frontier Province out of the Punjab. The NWFP was administered by a Chief Commissioner with headquarters at Peshawar who was responsible directly to the Government of India.<sup>58</sup>

The post-Mutiny period saw distinct parts of the Bengal Army (Hindustani and Punjabi) coming gradually into closer contact with each other. The Hindustani regiments were distributed over the whole Presidency, and the Punjab regiments were employed in Bengal and the North Western Provinces. This practice was opposed to the policy that insisted on the importance of keeping each part of the army in its own country during peacetime. Military service not too remote from his home was much more popular with the *sepoy* than service at a distance and in a climate to which he was unaccustomed.<sup>59</sup> The policy had deeper roots in the divide and rule principle than anything else. 'If troops were brought together in peacetime, class feeling and *esprit*

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<sup>55</sup> Edwin Henry Hayten Collen, *The Indian Army – A Sketch of its History and Organisation*. Reprinted from the third edition of the 'Imperial Gazetteer.' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p.19.

<sup>56</sup> *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, The Indian Empire, Vol. IV: Administrative*, New Edition, (Oxford, 1907), pp.347-53.

<sup>57</sup> Accounts and Papers 14: 63 Volumes. East India, *Proposed Changes in the Indian Army System*. Dispatch No. 172, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1892. Session 31 January 1893-5, March 1894. Vol. LXIII, p.254. NLS.

<sup>58</sup> *Administration of the Punjab*, p.22.

<sup>59</sup> Accounts and Papers, p.254.

*de corps* would become stronger than natural race antagonisms; whereas if the two classes were kept apart, then, should one of them show signs of wavering in its loyalty, the other might be trusted to come in as a foreign and to a certain extent antagonistic body, and overawe it, as happened in the mutiny, which the Punjab troops so effectively assisted the British troops in putting down'. Until then, principles of segregation had been more carefully observed. Similarly, the Hindustani and the Punjabi troops 'chiefly served within the areas which embraced their recruiting grounds'<sup>60</sup>.

In 1857, the Punjabis constituted about 44% of the Bengal Army and the Punjab Frontier Force, but only a quarter of the entire Armed forces. By June 1858, of the total 80,000 'native' troops in the Bengal army, 75,000 were Punjabis.<sup>61</sup> In 1893, the Punjab, which also included the NWFP until 1901<sup>62</sup> and Nepal, formed 44% of the entire Indian Armed Forces. This further increased to 57% in 1904.<sup>63</sup> This is the point where one can see a sharp under-representation of other regions. The other castes and classes, as well as areas, were practically ignored in the new army recruitment policy adopted in the post-1857 period. So much so that in 1929, 62% of the whole Indian Army was Punjabi.<sup>64</sup> Now the chemistry of conscription was such that, in Bengal, there were 7117 combatant recruits out of a total population of 45 million; whereas Punjab offered 349689 out of a total population of 20 million.<sup>65</sup> One out of 28 males was mobilised in Punjab<sup>66</sup>; this ratio was one to 150 in the rest of India.<sup>67</sup>

At the outbreak of the First World War, there were 100,000 Punjabis serving in the army, of whom 87,000 were combatants. 380,000 were enlisted during the war, of whom 231,000 were combatants. This made a total of 480,000 who served from the Punjab.<sup>68</sup> According to another estimate, the Punjab supplied 54% of the total combatant troops in the Indian army during the First World War and, if the 19,000

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, pp.254-55.

<sup>61</sup> The Peel Commission Report, Organisation of the Army (Indian) Report, 1859. Appendix 71, Evidence by Lt. Col. Durand.

<sup>62</sup> In 1901, the North-West Frontier Province was separated from the Punjab. See *Administration of the Punjab Report*, 1921-22, Vol. 1, p.22.

<sup>63</sup> David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, pp.10, 15, 19.

<sup>64</sup> *Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, and Others*: [Hereafter RCIO] Ten Volumes. Vol. 4. East India Continued. Session: June 1929-August 1930, p.96. NLS.

<sup>65</sup> *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. 1, Survey, RCIO, (Calcutta: Official publication of the Government of India, 1930), p.61.

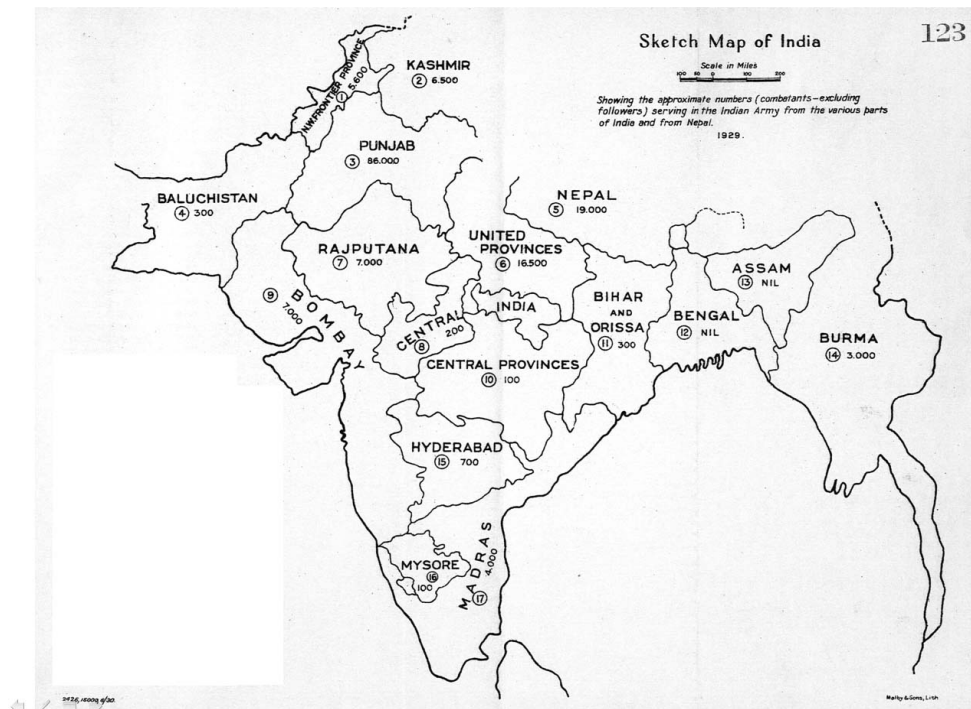
<sup>66</sup> RCIO, p.67.

<sup>67</sup> *Administration of the Punjab*, p.28.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

*Gurkhas* recruited from the Independent State of Nepal was excluded; the Punjab contingent amounted to 62% of the whole Indian Army.<sup>69</sup>

**Map 1.1 Map of India in 1929 showing Regional Recruitment**<sup>70</sup>



**Table 3: Areas of Recruitment 1929.**

| Number | Area                         | Recruits       |
|--------|------------------------------|----------------|
| 1.     | <b>Punjab</b>                | <b>86,000</b>  |
| 2.     | <i>Nepal</i>                 | <i>19,000</i>  |
| 3.     | United Provinces             | 16,000         |
| 4.     | Bombay                       | 7,000          |
| 5.     | Rajputana                    | 7,000          |
| 6.     | Kashmir                      | 6,500          |
| 7.     | North West Frontier Province | 5,600          |
| 8.     | Madras                       | 4,000          |
| 9.     | Burma                        | 3,000          |
| 10.    | Hyderabad                    | 700            |
| 11.    | Bihar and Orissa             | 300            |
| 12.    | Baluchistan                  | 300            |
| 13.    | Central India                | 200            |
| 14.    | Central Provinces            | 100            |
| 15.    | Mysore                       | 100            |
| 16.    | Assam                        | Nil            |
| 17.    | Bengal                       | Nil            |
| 18.    | Miscellaneous                | 1,900          |
|        | <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>158,200</b> |

<sup>69</sup> RCIO, 4<sup>th</sup> Volume, East India Continued, p.96.

<sup>70</sup> RCIO, p.123.

During the late 1920s, Bombay and Madras furnished only 13000 troops; on average, the Central Province, Bihar and Orissa provided 500 each; and Bengal and Assam offered none at all.<sup>71</sup> Before 1857, the British Indian Army was called the Bengal Army. By 1929, the same Bengal region was contributing none in that army. It was the revenge of the British from the region called the Regional Recruitment Shift. Whatever the recruitment, NWFP and the Punjab kept their numerical lead.

During the First World War, despite the emergency, the recruitment number was sharply contrasted between the regions. Bengal, with a population of 45 million, provided 7,000 combatant recruits; the Punjab, with a population of 20 million, provided 349,000 such recruits.<sup>72</sup> NWFP, with a population of 2.25 million,<sup>73</sup> contributed 32,181 combatant recruits.

**Table 4: Contribution of India to the Great War – Recruitments up until armistice.**<sup>74</sup>

| No. | Province          | Combatant Recruits enlisted | Non-Combatant Recruits enlisted | Total            | Percentage |
|-----|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1-  | Madras            | 51,223                      | 41,117                          | 92,340           |            |
| 2-  | Bombay            | 41,272                      | 30,211                          | 71,483           |            |
| 3-  | Bengal            | 7,117                       | 51,935                          | 59,052           |            |
| 4-  | United Provinces  | 163,578                     | 117,565                         | 281,143          |            |
| 5-  | Punjab            | 349,688                     | 97,288                          | 446,976          | 40.72%     |
| 6-  | NWFP              | 32,181                      | 13,050                          | 45,231           | 4.12%      |
| 7-  | Baluchistan       | 1,761                       | 327                             | 2,088            | 0.19%      |
| 8-  | Burma             | 14,094                      | 4,579                           | 18,673           |            |
| 9-  | Bihar and Orissa  | 8,576                       | 32,976                          | 41,552           |            |
| 10- | Central Provinces | 5,376                       | 9,631                           | 15,007           |            |
| 11- | Assam             | 942                         | 14,182                          | 15,124           |            |
| 12- | Ajmer- Merwara    | 7,341                       | 1,632                           | 8,973            |            |
|     |                   |                             |                                 |                  |            |
|     | <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>683,149</b>              | <b>414,493</b>                  | <b>1,097,642</b> |            |

### 1.5 The Indigenous Indian Army and the British

The military is the ultimate guarantor of a country's sovereignty and freedom. It is the custodian of a state's borders and secures internal order for the rulers. According to Umer Hayat Khan, a member of the Committee to enquire into the

<sup>71</sup> *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, RCIO, p.61.

<sup>72</sup> RCIO, 4<sup>th</sup> Volume, East India Continued, p.96.

<sup>73</sup> *Report of Indian Statutory Commission, Area and Population (1921 Census)*, Appendix 1. p.108.

<sup>74</sup> RCIO, p.97.

administration and organisation of the Army in India in 1929, 'It [the British Indian Army] is the only instrument in the hands of the [British] Government to maintain internal peace and to cope with external aggression'.<sup>75</sup> The British Raj, therefore, wanted a stable, strong and well-equipped army loyal to them. The army, though yet not *Indianised*, was shaped in such a fashion that the British kept a firm control on the institution with central powers in their own hands.

Generally, an army is maintained in the country for external defence. However, soldiers in barracks are also regarded as the last resort to deal with domestic disturbances with which policemen cannot cope. However, this was not the case with British India. Troops were employed in the country many times a year to prevent internal disorder and, sometimes, to quell it. The use of the Army for the purpose of maintaining or restoring order was always on the increase. Even after its preponderant position was firmly established, the army regularly undertook internal security duties in order to foil any bid to challenge British authority and to maintain peace and tranquillity.<sup>76</sup>

Amongst the situations that the colonial rulers needed to prepare for were revolts, violent attacks, guerrilla activities, banditry, peasant revolts, lockouts, labour unrest, and Hindu-Muslim communal riots. According to one estimate, the troops were used for internal security duties on 46 occasions during 1860-79. The use of troops in such a way was increased many fold by the end of the nineteenth century, when they were called out 69 times between 1899 and 1901.<sup>77</sup> Sometimes the excessive use of force was employed to curb the independence movement. The *Jallianwala Bagh* incident of 13<sup>th</sup> April 1919 was one such occasion. During this incident, troops opened fire on a protest meeting without any warning and killed 379 people.<sup>78</sup> After a couple of days, martial law was imposed in Amritsar and Lahore along with a few more districts of the Punjab.<sup>79</sup> It was the first Martial Law in South Asia in the Twentieth Century.

With regard to external defence, India had to provide against dangers on her North-West frontier. This contrasted with the situation of most of the Dominions of

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<sup>75</sup> Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for India to enquire into the administration and organisation of the Army in India, Annexure II, Minutes by Umer Hayat Khan, (printed and published by Her Majesty's Office London, 1920), p.105, BL.

<sup>76</sup> Hassan Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*, p. 42.

<sup>77</sup> David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, p. 216.

<sup>78</sup> *Administration of the Punjab Report*, 1921-22, p.30; also O'Dwyer, *India As I knew It*, pp.283-86.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, O'Dwyer.



the British Empire in other parts of the world. The 3000 miles of land frontier which separated Canada from the US were undefended by a fort or a gun, and armed conflict with her neighbour was unthinkable.<sup>80</sup> Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland were islands; the union of South Africa was equally unlikely to be invaded. The withdrawal of British troops from such self-governing areas and indigenous recruitment had become the norm. The following table shows that only a fraction of British revenues was spent on maintaining local forces in these countries.<sup>81</sup>

**Table 5: Defence expenditure -- financial year 1927-28.**

*(Pensions are not included)*

*Figures in thousands of pounds*

| <u>Country</u>          | <u>Central Expenditure</u> | <u>State or Provincial Expenditure</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Net Defence Expenditure</u> | <u>% of Central Expenditure*</u> | <u>% of Total</u> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Australia</b>        | 82,121                     | 113,847                                | 195,968      | 4,733                          | 5.8%                             | 2.4%              |
| <b>Canada</b>           | 65,700                     | 31,300                                 | 97,000       | 2,785                          | 4.2                              | 2.9               |
| <b>Irish Free State</b> | 31,473                     | -                                      | 31,473       | 2,264                          | 7.2                              | 7.2               |
| <b>New Zealand</b>      | 24,945                     | -                                      | 24,945       | 969                            | 3.9                              | 2.9               |
| <b>South Africa</b>     | 22,841                     | 10,635                                 | 33,476       | 809                            | 3.5                              | 2.4               |

*Source.* Compiled from the *Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors and others: 1930* data.

\* From the League of Nations Armaments Year Book.

Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Irish Free [Republic of Ireland] were all self-governing. Therefore, in the light of war preparations of 1914-1918, they developed immensely powerful uniform armies of the highest fighting quality under the stress of emergency. But in peacetime, these countries had no such organised scheme of national defence, as they had no threatening borders and no serious internal movements of dissent which they needed to suppress. In contrast to this situation, India throughout history experienced incursions by foreign invaders via the North West.. It was the difficult and necessary role of the Army in India to guard against a repetition of these dangers. Therefore, 60,000 British troops and 150,000 Indian troops (as well as 34,000 reservists) were organised into a Field Army, into

<sup>80</sup> RCIO, p.93.

<sup>81</sup> RCIO, pp.93-94.

covering troops, and into a garrison for internal security, with this task amongst others constantly in mind.<sup>82</sup>

In peacetime, the duty of the covering troops, assisted by frontier levies of various kinds, was to prevent the independent tribes on the Indian side of the Afghan frontier raiding peaceful inhabitants of the plains below. Behind and beyond this belt of unorganised territory lay the direction from which, throughout the ages, the dangers to India's territorial integrity had come. None of the states behind India (especially Russia) were members of the League of Nations. Hence, a strong though expensive military presence for the defence of the British Raj was necessary. Indian political leaders raised the question of the enormous cost of the British Army in India ('one British soldier was estimated to cost between three and four times as much as an Indian soldier'). They argued that the replacement of the British by Indians would not only save costs but also involve the indigenous people in the defence of their land, making them more loyal to their land and people. Indigenous recruitment would result in an increase in the British Indian Army along the North-Western borders but at much less cost.<sup>83</sup>

The perceived Russian threat to India was one of the major reasons for indigenous recruitment from the Punjab and NWFP. Keeping a very cautious country-Afghanistan- in view, Russia was the prime fear of the British Empire from the North West. The Russo-Afghan cordiality was not only threatening to India but also to the entire empire.<sup>84</sup> The Simon Commission of 1930 observed: '*The North West frontier is not only the frontier of India; it is an international frontier of the first importance from the military point of view for the whole empire*'.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, the Russians were kept at bay by the British by their defensive arrangements on the border and by maintaining Afghanistan as a buffer zone. In 1886, the Punjab Frontier Force which was looking after this part of the international border of India was transferred from the Punjab government to the C-in-C.<sup>86</sup> A border demarcation agreement was also signed with the Afghan government in November 1893; the Durand Line,<sup>87</sup> to stabilise

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<sup>82</sup> RCIO, p.94.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Wali Ghaznavi. (Edinburgh, 12-10-08).

<sup>85</sup> *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, 1930, Vol. 2, p.173.

<sup>86</sup> Accounts and Papers: 63 Volumes. East India, *Proposed Changes in the Indian Army System*. Dispatch No. 172, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1892. Session 31, January 1893-5March 1894. Vol. LXIII, p.254, NLS.

<sup>87</sup> O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It*, p.104.

bilateral relations. Various developments showed the weakness of Russian empire: the Russo-Japanese War 1905<sup>88</sup>, the Bolshevik Revolution<sup>89</sup> and the early withdrawal of Russia from the First World War,<sup>90</sup> which reduced British fears from the North. However, they continued indigenous recruitment from the region. Later on, one fear was replaced by another, Marxist ideology, and hence they maintained a strong profile on the North Western frontier<sup>91</sup> (two detailed security plans were designed by the British government to contain the 'Russian military menace' in 1927 and 1931. The first was called the Blue Plan (1927) asking for an army advance towards Afghanistan from the NWFP and Baluchistan to Kabul.<sup>92</sup> The second plan was called the Pink Plan (1931) giving a limited military action in the bordering areas of Afghanistan<sup>93</sup>).

Besides fears from Russia and Afghanistan, the British were facing a series of skirmishes with *Pakhtoon* tribes in tribal areas of NWFP bordering Afghanistan. The purpose of the division of NWFP into tribal and settled areas was to break the backbone of such armed resistance. Lord Curzon created a separate province NWFP in 1901, which was divided into settled – Peshawar, Kohat, Hazara, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan – and tribal areas along the Durand line. Owing to its geo-strategic location, its proximity with an international border (Durand Line) and the fighting nature of tribesmen, the tribal areas were placed under direct control of the government of India with very little administrative interference.<sup>94</sup> Situated between the two countries, keeping tribal areas peaceful was a difficult task. Tribal areas are/were composed of numerous tribes- *Afridis*, *Shenwaris*, *Mahsuds*, *Wazirs*, *Burkis*, *Mohmands* etc each headed by its own chieftain. In Pashto language, a dictum defines the tribal *Pakhtoons* propensity for fighting. It says: *when you see an unhappy Pakhtoon; it means he is not fighting*.<sup>95</sup> According to one interviewee, 'the British government used different tools to pacify them like official bribery to the tribal chieftains, the golden and experienced principle of Divide(ing the tribes) and Rule,

<sup>88</sup> WO 32/7560, National Archives London (NAL).

<sup>89</sup> FO 538/2, Documents illustrating the more political aspects of the Bolshevik Revolution, NAL.

<sup>90</sup> GFM 33/2334, World War I: General HQ: Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest, June 1917 - Sept 1918. NAL. Also see *Administration of the Punjab*, p.28.

<sup>91</sup> N.C. Sinha and P.N. Khera, *India's War Economy – Supply, Industry, and Finance* (Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-45, general editor, Bisheshwar Parasad) (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1962), pp.15-16.

<sup>92</sup> War Staff 'WS' Series Files: File WS 3048: IOR/L/WS/1/281, 1920-1934, BL.

<sup>93</sup> WO 33/1266, Plan of Operations in the event of War with Afghanistan, 1927, NAL.

<sup>94</sup> Ijaz Hussain Peshori, *Humaray Kaba'ili Hurria-tpassand* [Our Tribal Freedom-Fighters], (Peshawar: Khyber Press, 1949), Vol. 1, Section 7.5, p.34, National Archives Peshawar (NAP). The volume is mostly based on recorded interviews.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Wali Ghaznavi.

arresting one in place of another from the family, and blatant use of force'.<sup>96</sup> A local militia or '*khasadar* force was setup, contributed by the tribesmen loyal to the *Raj*. Each Chieftain had a quota of his tribe to contribute to the militia. The bigger the quota, the more awe of the Chieftain in the society and hence more loyalty to the British.

Soon the *Khasadar* force became a kind of police of the area.<sup>97</sup> The regular troops were limited to key strategic army fortifications for reinforcing the militia (in local language, the militia was/is called *Khasadars*).<sup>98</sup> It was reported that there were 72 expeditions against these tribes from 1850 to 1922, an average of one expedition per year.<sup>99</sup> The major army operations included 'Chitral 1896, Malakand 1897, the Waziri tribe 1901-2, 1919 and 1937, the Mahsuds 1925, and the Mohmands 1933'.<sup>100</sup>

Army expeditions in the tribal areas demonstrate that the military in general and the indigenously recruited military in particular provided not only external security but also internal order to prolong and firm the establishment of the British *Raj*. Indeed, it was a difficult task for the civilian administration to keep order and stability without employing the British Army against the challengers. Hence, to keep order, the civilian administration had to use militarised civilian powers. An average of one expedition per year showed that it was not a novel practice for the civilian administration to control internal disturbance by the use of British military might. In the past, 'the Company's dominance in North India was based on its superior military power'.<sup>101</sup> The force that kept the British in India was the army.

## 1.6 Social and Psychological Influences on Indigenous Soldiers

An army recruited, trained and disciplined in military ethos was a strong support for the British military campaigns – at home as well as abroad. Influenced and impressed by the British traditions, norms and values, the recruits looked up to their foreign military leaders. Their mental calibre and approach to life was also influenced

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Malik Nadir Khan of Derra Adam Khail. Mr. Khan, former MNA, remained chief of his tribe during 1950-90. The interview was conducted in Pashto, the local language of tribal area. (Kohat, 16-03-07)

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> James W. Spain, 'Political Problems of a Borderland', in Ainslie T. Embree (ed.), *Pakistan's Western Borderlands* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1977), pp.1-23. He also mentions this militia in another paper, 'The Pathan Borderland', *The Middle Eastern Journal* (Vol. 15, No.2, Spring 1961), pp. 165-177

<sup>99</sup> RCIO, p.94

<sup>100</sup> Ijaz Hussain Peshori, *Humaray Kaba'ili Hurriyat-passand*, p.34.

<sup>101</sup> Seema Alvi, *The Sepoys and the Company*, p. 3.

by foreign expeditions. Punjabis fought in nearly all arenas of the [first] Great War: France and Belgium, Gallipoli and Salonika, Aden and the Persian Gulf, Mesopotamia, Egypt, East Africa, North China.<sup>102</sup> They were exposed to a new and different world beyond their cloistered village. They saw lands and technological advances that they had never envisioned. Their perspective was enlarged. This opened them to a new world, one greater than and different from the peasantry class under the *Zamindar* (landholder) of their villages. They saw Western civilisation more closely during their service in Europe. The colonial master also showed himself more splendidly in London. Peasant-soldiers were impressed by the magnificent civic life of London and Paris. Their interaction with the educated class, especially women,<sup>103</sup> led them to reflect on the comparisons between the life of a woman in Europe and in their respective villages in the Punjab. High levels of cleanliness and sanitation;<sup>104</sup> wax statues at Madame Tussaud's<sup>105</sup> museum and their amazement at the London underground<sup>106</sup> train network all left an impression on the Indian soldiers, as collections of their letters reveal. They were immersed in new thoughts and concepts when they returned to their bullock-cart, plough, and indebtedness after the War was over. They had many stories to tell. The soldiers on leave home or after retirement provided useful propaganda for the '*Gora Sahib*' [Mr. Whiteman], giving a good impression to the civil society for the British.<sup>107</sup> One Punjabi Muslim wrote from Boulogne in his mail: 'When one considers this country and these people in comparison with our own country and our own people one cannot but be distressed. Our country is poor and feeble and its lot is very depressed... In fact they [the British] have a real moral superiority'.<sup>108</sup> Their exposure to the outside world also brought with it prosperity and a positive change in soldiers' lives. In a time-and-land-locked social capsule, this much traveled "cosmopolitan" rose to a new social status and acquired a new influence in society. Folk songs of the time reflected their growing

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<sup>102</sup> *Memorandum on India's Contribution to the War in Men, Material, and Money. August 1914-November 1918*, p.03, Asia and Africa Collection, BL.

<sup>103</sup> *Censor of Indian Mails, 1917-18*, [henceforth called *CoIMs*], part 6, p. 757, no.1, 30 December 1917, Asia and Africa Collection, British Library (Censored correspondence of Indian troops in World War I. Not all letters in the censor's reports gave details of the names of correspondents, the places they were in, or the date, nor was every letter numbered. All were English translations.)

<sup>104</sup> *CoIMs, 1914-15*, part 1, p. 26, 18 January 1915.

<sup>105</sup> *CoIMs, 1914-18*, part 2, p. 338, no.12, 18 April 1916.

<sup>106</sup> *CoIMs, 1915-16*, part 7, p. 1198, no.32, October 1915.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Malik Nadir Khan.

<sup>108</sup> A Punjabi Muslim serving as a packer in the Indian Base Post Office in Boulogne to a friend in Rawalpindi, *CoIMs, 1914-15*, part 1, p. 49, no.1, 02 February 1915.

social status and importance: “*Vasna fauji de naal, paanway boot sanay lat maaray*” (I will live with a soldier even if he kicks me with his boot on).<sup>109</sup> Therefore, given that two-thirds of the Indian Army was recruited from within [Punjab’s] borders the Punjabi soldier was the chief recipient of societal awe.<sup>110</sup>

Salary, living conditions, facilities for the soldiers’-families, post-retirement benefits and rewards were offered with distinction (*Jagirs*-grants of land- were sanctioned annually)<sup>111</sup> so that the military service would remain attractive to forthcoming generations. The British Empire in return, gained the security and control of the ‘Golden Sparrow’ – India. By now the primary focus of the Raj was to keep firm control over India, so that very little attention was given to the social and developmental civilian sector. As stated earlier, colonial control of India was via the Army. Hence, more and more funds and resources were available for the single largest item in India’s annual budget- Defence Expenditure.

**Table 6.**

| <b>The expenditures on Military Services 1914-1947 in India(in Rupees)<sup>112</sup></b> |                |                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1914-15                                                                                  | 306.5 million  |                                                                                   |
| 1918-19                                                                                  | 640.7 million  | Rise                                                                              |
| 1920-21                                                                                  | 873.8 million  | Rise                                                                              |
| 1931-32                                                                                  | 517.6 million  | Fall                                                                              |
| 1936-37                                                                                  | 454.5 million  | Fall                                                                              |
| 1933-34                                                                                  | £1,500,000     | British government began to contribute to India’s military expenditure every year |
| April 1939                                                                               | £2,000,000     | British contribution per year increased.                                          |
| September 1939- 1944-45                                                                  | 4583.2 million | Steep rise due to World War 2 (excluding British Contribution)                    |
| 1945-46                                                                                  | 3953.2 million | End of the war eased the financial Burdon                                         |
| 1946-47                                                                                  | 2096.1 million | Still higher than the pre-war expenditure                                         |

The British controlled and defended the entire subcontinent by focusing and working on only one section of the society - the Army. The Army provided a security umbrella against any kind of threat to internal peace or external aggression. Hence,

<sup>109</sup> Ahsan, Desai, *Divided by Democracy*, p.92.

<sup>110</sup> Rajit K. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, (New Delhi: Pauls Press, 2003), p.30; Also Malcolm Lyall Darling, *Wisdom and Waste in the Punjab Village* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 331. Darling made two tours across the whole Punjab province in 1928-9 and 1930-1. His first book describes his reflections during his first tour to the Punjab province titled: *The Old Light and the New in the Punjab Village* (London: OUP, 1930).

<sup>111</sup> Field Marshal Roberts, *Forty-one years in India*, II, p.443.

<sup>112</sup> The figure is prepared after taking data from N.C. Sinha and P.N. Khera, *India’s War Economy – Supply, Industry, and Finance*, pp. 293-302, 320-339.

heavy spending on the Army was an investment for long-term goals. The significant sums expended for the defence budget became a tradition that continued even after partition of 1947 by the successor states. India and Pakistan's defence budgets continued to grow.

### 1.7 'Indianisation' of the British Army

No Indian was allowed to become a direct commissioned officer until the end of the First World War. They could become Viceroy's Commissioned Officers (VCOs) or junior commissioned officers. The highest rank an Indian could achieve was that of Subedar-Major.

**Table 7: VCOs equivalent to KCOs**

| VCOs           | KCOs               |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Jemadar        | Second- Lieutenant |
| Subedar        | Lieutenant         |
| Subedar- Major | Major              |

The VCO was a promoted cadre from the lower ranks and served as a middle rank between the ordinary soldiers and the Commissioned officers, called King's Commissioned Officers (KCOs), at the Company level, but the holder of a 'Viceroy's Commission', whatever his experience and length of service, was lower in rank and command than the most newly joined of British subalterns.<sup>113</sup> Below the KCOs and VCOs, the Indian Army had a series of non-commissioned officer positions like: Rifleman (private), Lance-*naik* (Corporal), *Havildar* (Sergeant), *Havildar Major* and quarter master *Havildars* of various levels. As the British were keen to keep an Indian aristocratic class on their side, Lord Curzon introduced the ICC (Imperial Cadet Corps) or ISC (Imperial Service Corps<sup>114</sup>) in 1901, in which the sons of Princes and the wealthy classes more generally could assume officer ranks. It was designated '*His Majesty's Native Indian Land Forces*'.<sup>115</sup> Their training was wholly conducted in India. However, they were not at *par* with the KCOs, which were still the domain of the British. By 1911, 78 Indians had joined the ICC.<sup>116</sup> The role of the ICC was

<sup>113</sup> RCIO, p.129.

<sup>114</sup> Percival Spear, *A History of India*, Vol. 2, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1968), p.175.

<sup>115</sup> S.L.Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p.224.

<sup>116</sup> Correspondence regarding the Imperial Cadet Corps &c. India Office Mil Dept, 1911. IOR/L/MIL/17/5/1749 1911; also IOR/L/MIL/17/5/1750. BL.

essentially ceremonial. These officers did not have any power of command over British personnel. In the Indian Army, they could not rise above the level of squadron or company officer. It was not surprising that the total number was dropped gradually to 11 by 1914. But it was, as Byron Farewell says, the first small step towards the ‘Indianisation’ of the Indian Army officer corps.<sup>117</sup>

There was no concept of an indigenous army in British India until the late nineteenth century. The First World War proved the worth of the Indian soldier. The Indianite ranks in the British Army were also a demand by political parties of India. The blunt demand in this respect was found in the ‘Report of the Committee appointed by the All-Parties Conference, 1928, to determine the principles of the constitution for India,’ which was commonly called the ‘Nehru Report’. Though no passage is found in the Report itself, or in the sketch of recommendations in Chapter 7 of the document, the Army matter was touched upon in the introduction. It states that the authors recommend the transfer of control over the Indian Army to Ministers. The author of the report quoted Professor Keith’s pungent observation, ‘Self-Government without an effective Indian Army is [an] impossibility, and no amount of protests or demonstrations or denunciations of the Imperial Government can avail to alter that fact’. Criticising the statement, they added: ‘This is true but we do not accept the constitutional position that without an Indian or Dominion army, India cannot obtain Dominion status. In the first place the Indian Army has not to be created; it exists there already. In the next place historically the position taken by our critics is not correct’.<sup>118</sup>

The First World War compelled the British to take drastic steps in regard to the colonies. One such change was in August 1917 when the Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu, in his famous statement on ‘increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration’, announced admission to the commissioned cadres for Indians.<sup>119</sup> The Montagu-Chelmsford Report was written during the Great

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<sup>117</sup> Byron Farewell, *Armies of the Raj*, p. 217.

<sup>118</sup> *All Parties Conference (Nehru) Committee 1928: Report. Allahabad; All India Congress Committee, 1928* IOR/V/26/261/14 1928. Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library. Also *The Nehru Report: An anti-separatist Manifesto/the committee appointed by the All Parties Conference 1928*, (New Delhi: Michiko & Panjathan, under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Applied Political Research, 1975); First ed. published on 12 August, 1928 by the All India Congress Committee, Allahabad, under title: *Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to determine the principles of the Constitution for India*.

<sup>119</sup> Anirudh Deshpande, *British Military Policy in India, 1900-1945: Colonial Constraints and Declining Power*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), pp.90-91.



War. In the three paragraphs (328-330) which it devoted to the subject of the Army, the way in which the services of the Indian Army in various theatres of war had been and would be recognised was discussed. The authors mentioned the announcement of His Majesty's Government that the bar which had hitherto prevented the admission of Indians into the commissioned ranks of His Majesty's Army should be removed. It further declared that this decision had established the principle that an Indian soldier could earn the King's Commission by his military conduct. This apparently referred to promotion from the ranks. The Report went on to say that other methods of appointment had not yet been decided upon, and emphasised 'the necessity of grappling with the problem'. As discussed in the earlier paragraph about the demand of Indian leadership for the commissioned ranks for Indians, the Report stated "it is impossible to deal with this large question in connection with our present proposals. The war is yet not over... The requirements of the future will very largely depend upon the form of peace which is attained. We, therefore, leave this question for consideration hereafter, but with the note that it must be faced and settled"<sup>120</sup>.

The authors of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report admired the services rendered to the common cause by Indian arms. They contented themselves with noting the urgency and importance of the Army question that would emerge after peace had been restored. However, no concrete steps were taken for the general commissioning of Indians. Therefore, the start of the *Indianisation* of commissioned ranks was rather slow. Under the pressure of the Montagu-Chelmsford proposed reforms, 'in 1918 a change was made [according to which] the Indians became eligible for the first time to hold the King's Commission. Ten vacancies were annually reserved for Indian cadets for competition amongst themselves at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst'.<sup>121</sup> Completion of the course here was a must to get the King's Commission for an Indian. Keeping in view the colonial legacy and loyalty to the Raj, the Indian government selected the candidates preferring favourites of the Raj- sons of loyal and politically influential families. The debut Commissioned Indian batch that passed out from Sandhurst was posted in Infantry and Cavalry in 1920.<sup>122</sup> A cadet

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<sup>120</sup> Montagu-Chelmsford Report Para. 328, Mss Eur F170/36, April 1918, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, BL.

<sup>121</sup> RCIO, p.129

<sup>122</sup> Major General Iskander Mirza, Governor General (1955-56) and President (1956-58) of Pakistan belonged to the first batch of Sandhurst.

college was also opened in *Indore* in 1918, which granted permanent commission to its 32 graduates in 1919.<sup>123</sup>

Many factors contributed to Indians' lack of interest in getting their sons admitted to or commissioned from Sandhurst. Very tough *modus operandi* of selection, huge expenses, travel to England, and a weak academic record as compared to the British students discouraged Indian cadets. It further contributed to their high rate of failure (30%) in the early years as compared to their British counterparts (3%).<sup>124</sup> As there was some criticism in British circles regarding the Indianisation of Commissioned ranks, 'an Eight Unit Scheme was introduced by the then C-in-C Lord Rawlinson in 1923'.<sup>125</sup> According to the scheme, it was obligatory for every Indian KCO to spend his first year with the British regiment in India before he was posted on a permanent basis in one of eight units selected in 1923 for complete Indianisation.<sup>126</sup> Indian officers holding commissions in the Indian Army were to be transferred and posted to these eight units. In this way they could fill up the appointments for which they were qualified by their rank and by their length of service. The purpose of such a scheme was four fold: to limit Indian KCOs to these Units; in due course such units would be entirely officered by Indians; to keep the British Officers in to command Indian Officers over and above; and to accelerate the pace of *Indianisation*. As the senior officers retired and junior officers acquired seniority and were promoted, the time could have come when each of these Indian Units would be commanded and completely officered by Indians. However, it was a very lethargic process based on slow progression. The process could not be completed 'until the year 1946 at the earliest, since in the Indian Army promotion was regulated by a time scale'.<sup>127</sup>

International relations between the two world wars brought about further changes in the British approach towards its colonies. It had to introduce positive measures to keep the empire from disintegration. Hence, during the inter-war period, not only were reforms introduced but various recommendations were put forth for the

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<sup>123</sup> General K. M. Cariappa, first Indian Army Chief of the Indian Army (1949-53) got the King's Commission in 1919 after graduating from the Indore College.

<sup>124</sup> Collection 430/49 Part 1 Reports on examination of Indian candidates for Sandhurst, May, September 1923, May 1924, September 1925. IOR/L/MIL/7/19058 1923-1926. Also see Collection 430/49 Part 2, 1927-1928. IOR/L/MIL/7/19059 1927-1930, BL.

<sup>125</sup> RCIO, p.129.

<sup>126</sup> Indianisation of the Indian Army. CAB 24/190, 20 December 1927. BL. The eight Unit Scheme was comprised of following Units that were selected for induction of Indian Officers: 7<sup>th</sup> Light Cavalry, 16<sup>th</sup> Light Cavalry, 21 Madras Pioneers, 4-19<sup>th</sup> Hyderabad Regiment, 5<sup>th</sup> Maratha Light Infantry, 1-7<sup>th</sup> Rajput Regiment, 1-14<sup>th</sup> Punjab Regiment, and 2-1<sup>st</sup> Punjab Regiment.

<sup>127</sup> RCIO, p.102.

increase of Indians in the British Army. General Henry Rawlinson the British C-in-C in 1921 recommended an increase in Indian Officers.<sup>128</sup> In March 1922, a pre-cadet college – the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College – was established in *Dehra Dun* to prepare young men for Sandhurst.<sup>129</sup> A committee was appointed in June 1925 under Major General Sir Andrew Skeen (at that time, it was popularly known as ‘Indian Sandhurst Committee’ but later on called ‘Skeen Committee’) to establish a military college along the lines of Sandhurst in India and to discuss prospects to increase the number of Indian candidates for the King’s Commission.<sup>130</sup> The committee visited different military institutions which included: England, France, Canada and the US and were given briefings from the officers and trainers alike.<sup>131</sup> At the end of the study tour and following long deliberations, the committee submitted a report in 1926. It recommended an increase in the pace of Indianisation; induction of Indians to the commissioned ranks in the technical branches of the Army as well as the Air Force; abandonment of the Eight Units Scheme, and the establishment of a military college in India.<sup>132</sup> The first two recommendations were accepted by the British government. Instead of the last two recommendations, the government increased the Indian quota at Sandhurst to twenty-five. It also created six vacancies per year at the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell, to train Indians as pilots, and six places at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, to train Indian officers for the artillery.<sup>133</sup> Regarding the establishment of a military college in India, Indians were not yet filling all the 10 vacancies annually at Sandhurst. The following figure shows the annual number of Indian Cadets admitted to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, since 1918, and their disposal. The result was disappointing. Therefore, the recommendation for the establishment of a military college in India was declined by the British Government.

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<sup>128</sup> 430/35 Part 2 Formation of Royal Indian Military College, *Dehra Dun* for preparing Indians for commissions: terms of service of masters, matron, commandant, etc. IOR/L/MIL/7/19043, 1926-1940, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collection, BL.

<sup>128</sup> 430/36 Part 1 Indianisation of Indian Army: report and recommendations of committee appointed to examine question in India. IOR/L/MIL/7/19044 1921-1943.

<sup>129</sup> 430/35, IOR/L/MIL/7/19043, 1926-1940, BL

<sup>130</sup> RCIO, p.102.

<sup>131</sup> Riaz Ahmed, Quaid-i-Azam and Indianisation of Officer Ranks of Army, *Pakistan Army Journal*, (Vol. 35, No.3, Autumn 1994), pp.3-21.

<sup>132</sup> 430/62 Indianisation: Government of India proposals on Indian "Sandhurst" committee's report. IOR/L/MIL/7/19092, 1927-1928.

<sup>133</sup> 430/55 Appendix 1 Indian "Sandhurst" committee's report: Legislative Assembly debates. IOR/L/MIL/7/19084 1927.

**Table 8: Annual Numbers of Indians to (Royal Military College) Sandhurst.<sup>134</sup>**

| YEAR               | Number of vacancies for Indians at Sandhurst | Number of Indians admitted to Sandhurst to fill such vacancies | Number of Indians ultimately commissioned |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1918 (first half)  | 5                                            | 5                                                              | 1                                         |
| 1919 (first half)  | 5                                            | 5                                                              | 4                                         |
| 1919 (second half) | 5                                            | 5                                                              | 2                                         |
| 1920 (first half)  | 5                                            | 5                                                              | 3                                         |
| 1920 (second half) | 5                                            | 5                                                              | 2                                         |
| 1921 (first half)  | 5                                            | 5                                                              | 4                                         |
| 1921 (second half) | 5                                            | 4                                                              | 3                                         |
| 1922 (first half)  | 6                                            | 4                                                              | 4                                         |
| 1922 (second half) | 6                                            | 6                                                              | 3                                         |
| 1923 (first half)  | 6                                            | 6                                                              | 5                                         |
| 1923 (second half) | 7                                            | 6                                                              | 6                                         |
| 1924 (first half)  | 6                                            | 6                                                              | 4                                         |
| 1924 (second half) | 6                                            | 5                                                              | 4                                         |
| 1925 (first half)  | 7                                            | 5                                                              | 4                                         |
| 1925 (second half) | 8                                            | 2                                                              | 1                                         |
| 1926 (first half)  | 12                                           | 8                                                              | 7                                         |
| 1926 (second half) | 8                                            | 8                                                              | 8                                         |
| 1927 (first half)  | 7                                            | 7                                                              | 7                                         |
| 1927 (second half) | 5                                            | 3                                                              | 3                                         |
| 1928 (first half)  | 7                                            | 3                                                              | 2                                         |
| 1928 (second half) | 10                                           | 7                                                              | -                                         |
| 1929 (first half)  | 11                                           | 11                                                             | -                                         |
| 1929 (second half) | 10                                           | 10                                                             | -                                         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>157</b>                                   | <b>134</b>                                                     | <b>77</b>                                 |

Up to and including the first half of 1928, vacancies were filled by nomination, after that date by examination.

**Table 9: Summary of vacancies for Indians at Sandhurst (till 1929).<sup>135</sup>**

|                                                                                                         | Number |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Total number of vacancies                                                                               | 157    |
| Total number of admissions (including 3 VCs nominated in 1928 & 1929 but not shown in the figure above) | 134    |
| Total number commissioned                                                                               | 77     |
| Died or resigned from illness                                                                           | 03     |
| Failed to receive commissions (prior to 1927)                                                           | 22     |
| Presently, the number of cadets at Sandhurst (1929)                                                     | 22     |

It was first decided to admit Indians and Anglo-Indians to Woolwich in 1928, and, by 1929, nine vacancies were offered. But there were only two successful

<sup>134</sup> RCIO, p.104

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

candidates. Similarly, the first examination for Cranwell was held in November 1928 and, by the end of 1929, twelve vacancies had been offered but only six filled.<sup>136</sup> Ayub Khan was also chosen for training as a commissioned officer at Sandhurst. He did remarkably well, securing the top position among the Indian cadets. Among his colleagues was General J. N. Choudhry who later became C-in-C of the Indian Army.<sup>137</sup>

The demand for the Indianisation of the forces did not end with the submission of the Skeen report. The issue was taken up once again during the Round Table conference when its sub-committee on military affairs made a demand on similar lines, including setting up a military college in India on the Sandhurst model.<sup>138</sup> Finally, the struggle was accomplished in the shape of the establishment of an Indian Military Academy at *Dehra Dun* in October 1932.<sup>139</sup> Its first batch, commissioned in 1935, were called Indian Commissioned Officers (ICOs).<sup>140</sup>

After the Second World War, the Eight Unit Scheme was brought to an end, and all the branches of the army were opened to Indian officers. Training facilities at *Dehra Dun* were expanded. A large number of officers were recruited on short and long courses (short and emergency commissions). By early 1947, out of 9500 Commissioned Officers, about 500 were pre-war KCOs and ICOs.<sup>141</sup>

Only nine Indians (five non-Muslims, four Muslims) reached the senior rank of Lt. Colonel during World War II. Out of four Muslim Lt. Colonels, one was appointed temporary Colonel and one acting Brigadier. A few days before independence, the acting Brigadier Muhammad Akbar Khan was promoted to the rank of Major General. Promotions were given on similar lines to others in the substantive ranks below that of Lt. Colonel. The officers recruited during the war period were in junior positions.<sup>142</sup> Ayub Khan was then a Brigadier in the Indian Army and was attached to the Boundary Force, under Major General Rees. In January 1948, five

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan: Pakistan's First Military Ruler*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. xxxiv.

<sup>138</sup> Memorandum, CP 179 (31), *Indianization of Indian Army*, Wedgwood Benn, Records of the Cabinet Office, Papers Nos. 151(31) - 204(31), 29 / 0029, CAB 24/222, 17 July 1931.

<sup>139</sup> Expansion of Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College, Dehra Dun, IOR/L/MIL/7/19133, 1923-1933.

<sup>140</sup> 430/106 Report on quality of cadets at Indian Military Academy; reports on final passing out examinations. IOR/L/MIL/7/19145 1934-1941.

<sup>141</sup> Hassan Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*, p.49.

<sup>142</sup> Hassan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan*, pp.31-32.

months after Independence, he was posted as General Officer Commanding (GOC) of 14 Division in East Bengal.<sup>143</sup>

The army was always a very special and private concern of the British in India. They kept it away from any kind of politics. Rather, in case of any clash between the country's politics and security, they favoured the latter. Even as late as 1946, the Viceroy's civilian Executive council had no powers over defence and the defence budget. The British Indian Army was kept free from a strong influence on Indian politics as there was no synthesis between the two. Defence had nothing to do with the politics of the country. Thus the British-Indian Army proved an autonomous entity. Their training (discipline and professionalism) and separation from the society strengthened their organisational ties and loyalty to the British authority. The army's administrative and professional powers were concentrated in the hands of the Army chief, who after the Curzon-Kitchener dispute emerged autonomous in military affairs. This was the beginning of the exclusion of army matters from civilian control. The contest between the *Mulki Lat Sahib* [Curzon] and the *Jungi Lat Sahib* [Kitchener] weakened forever the once great influence of the Viceroy of India.<sup>144</sup>

It is interesting to note here that most of the Governor Generals and Viceroys of India were formerly military officers. One Governor – Robert Clive<sup>145</sup> (Dec. 1756-Feb. 1760, April 1765-Jan. 1767) – and three Governor Generals – Lord Cornwallis<sup>146</sup> (Sept. 1786-Oct. 1793 and July 1805-Oct. 1805), the Marquis of Hastings, Lord Francis Moria (Oct.1813- Jan. 1823), and Lord William Bentinck<sup>147</sup> (1828-35) – functioned as C-in-Cs. Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell, C-in-C, 1941-42, 1942-3<sup>148</sup> was promoted to the post of Viceroy in 1943,<sup>149</sup> a position he held until March 1947. At this time, few could have imagined that this trajectory would later be used by junior officers as a short path to become military rulers of the future state in the North-West of the subcontinent.

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<sup>143</sup> Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan: Pakistan's First Military Ruler*, pp. xxxiv, xxxv.

<sup>144</sup> Walter Roper Lawrence, *The India We Served*, (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd, 1928), pp.246-47. NLS.

<sup>145</sup> PRO 30/53/8/126, GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1681-1772. NAL.

<sup>146</sup> PRO 30/11/270; 30/11/269, 'Letters to Lord Cornwallis from many important people'. NAL.

<sup>147</sup> PRO 30/9/4/12. NAL.

<sup>148</sup> CAB 64/44/31. NAL.

<sup>149</sup> PREM 5/532. NAL.

Indian politicians made several demands for legislative control over defence forces, the defence budget and foreign policy during the 1920s and 30s.<sup>150</sup> Any such control by the politicians would have been a British nightmare. Politicising the British Indian Army was the last thing the British could ever imagine.<sup>151</sup> The Esher Committee (1919-20) maintained that the Indian Army was a unit in the security system of the British Empire and that its administration could not be dissociated from the total armed forces of the empire.<sup>152</sup> There were many political activities that provided acid tests for the army, but the Army personnel held on to their professional ethos and stood by the British administration. The Punjab, with its hardy and martial rural population of peasant proprietors, had, since its inclusion in the Empire, been rightly regarded as the “Shield”, the “Spearhead” and the “Sword-hand” of India. ‘It earned such proud titles due to its association with the British Army and help in every Eastern campaign from the Mutiny down to the present day’.<sup>153</sup> A colonial army had to serve colonial masters. The autonomous nature of the colonial army chief and military affairs remained unchanged even after the independence of Pakistan.

## **Conclusion:**

This essay has provided a historical overview of currents and trends of the British Indian Army. These developments transformed a segment of the British Indian Army into the Pakistan Army. The impact of the 1857 Uprising on regional recruitment to the British military played a large part in the *de-Bengalisation* and consequent *Punjabisation* of the Colonial Indian Army; a punishment for Bengal as a region that had rebelled and a reward to the Punjab that aid in the suppression of the Uprising. As a result, it is argued that this shift gave civil and military leadership to the Punjab after the partition, which contributed to Punjabi dominance over other provinces following independence.

The post-partition Indian security threat to the newly carved out Pakistan, as well as the first Kashmir war of 1948, resulted in an increase in the Pakistan Army’s strategic importance within the country. Security against India became the *raison*

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<sup>150</sup> *The Nehru Report: An anti-separatist Manifesto/the committee appointed by the All Parties Conference 1928*, (New Delhi: Michiko & Panjathan, under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Applied Political Research, 1975).

<sup>151</sup> Interview with General (Rtd.) Kamal Matinuddin (Islamabad, 23-03-07).

<sup>152</sup> *India in 1920*, (Official publication of the Government of India), pp. 16-17. NLS.

<sup>153</sup> Michael O’Dwyer, *India As I Knew It*, p.213.

*d'etre* of the Army. The military leadership and political administration considered it necessary to strengthen the army against any potential security threat. The political forces of the country, due to the fear of India, also accommodated the Army in the national and international decisions of the government. This encouraged it to increase its political influence. Historically, 65 to 75% of the Pakistan army was drawn during the 1950s and 60s from the same areas of the Punjab where the British formerly used to recruit.<sup>154</sup> This was the culmination of the *Punjabisation* of the Army initiated by the British during and after the Mutiny war of 1857. However, even after independence, the Pakistan Army was still following the trend set in colonial times - recruiting more Punjabis and discouraging Bengalis. That is one of the main reasons why despite constituting 56% of the total population of Pakistan, Bengalis made up less than 7% in the Pakistan Army during the 1960s.<sup>155</sup> The Pakistan Army always demonstrated a lack of trust towards Bengalis, as had the British, and doubted their loyalty to the state. This further alienated them from the ranks of governmental administration.

The Pakistan Army borrowed numerous other autonomous features from the British Army. Intensive training with an emphasis on discipline and efficiency and their separation from the fragmented Pakistani society turned the Pakistani soldiers into a professional, united and autonomous fighting force. However, they formed a force parallel with the government of Pakistan. As the country was a security-oriented entity, any important decision taken by the initial governments of Pakistan needed a nod from the Army's General Headquarters (GHQ). The meeting of the Corps Commanders turned into a kind of a domestic and foreign policy reviewing committee. Sought in the name of Islam and democracy, Pakistan was moving closer towards the form of a military dictatorship.

During colonial rule, the swelling defence budget was a prerequisite for keeping a strong British Army against internal and external threats. However, this practice was continued by the Pakistan Army at the cost of the development of civilian sectors. The defence budget grew in the name of a perceived Indian threat. If the nation could not provide enough for development of the Army, military alliances were signed with the US to muster more resources. Whatever the plight of the nation,

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<sup>154</sup> Interview with Brigadier (Rtd.) Inam-ul-Haq Afridi, (Peshawar, 20-06-07)

<sup>155</sup> Air Chief Marshall ® Muhammad Asghar Khan, '*Tareekh say kuch nahin sikha- Siyyasat aur Afwaj-e-Pakistan*' (We learnt nothing from history, Politics and Pakistan Army) An autobiography, (Karachi: OUP, 2005), p.21.



the Army remained a well-developed, well-nourished, well-trained, well-equipped, well-organised, united and well-off autonomous institution within Pakistan.

The manner in which the British Indian Army was groomed within the province of Punjab ultimately enormously affected Pakistan. At the time of partition, relatively but significantly speaking, Pakistan had neither a bourgeoisie, nor a strong middle class. It lacked a business class. The Punjab was the power centre of the country, but it lacked an industrial establishment. Aitzaz Ahsan contends that the British intentionally kept the Punjab industrially backwards as it might have affected recruitment if other means of livelihood, except agriculture, were available to the Punjabis.<sup>156</sup> The absence of a Bourgeoisie increased the influence of feudal elites. The landowning aristocracy were in favour of the British due to the benefits they received from them in exchange for contributing *Jawans* and *Sawars* to the Army.<sup>157</sup> Thus, the tradition of British military recruitment in the North West of the subcontinent (Punjab and NWFP), was a major factor in the emergence of Pakistan as a quasi-militarised country. It was a country with a weak political structure, feeble political parties and politicians, but a strong feudal class and civil and military bureaucracy. This naturally ‘consolidated the linkages between the military service, agricultural land and political power’.<sup>158</sup> Hence the Muslim League, due to its weak control within the newly created country, had to abdicate in favour of a stronger giant, the Pakistan Army. With the firm support of the feudal class, more agricultural land under its domain, and with its organisational and professional culture, the Pakistan Army began to assert its political role in the hub of the country’s politics. The irony of fate is that it lacked political training. Hence, the Army ran the country like a defence establishment by increasing the defence budget, having defence pacts, and appointing defence services people in the policy making bodies of the country, with effects that ultimately were to be deleterious in the future development of the county.

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<sup>156</sup> Ahsan, Desai, *Divided by Democracy*, p.94.

<sup>157</sup> Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, (London: Hurst & Co, 1998) pp.43-44.

<sup>158</sup> Imran Anwar Ali, ‘Business and Power in Pakistan’ article in *Power and Civil Society in Pakistan* p.104.

