

TRANSFORMATION OF BRITISH POLICIES IN INDIA AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

In this review, I will be tracing the key events taking place from the ascendancy of the British government after the revolt of 1857 to the August Offer in 1940, while placing emphasis on the nature of the policies introduced by the British, which is the focal point of this study. The aim is to establish that the British policy towards India underwent a remarkable change after the outbreak of the First World War and the manifestation of its impacts; the transition being from a hardline and uncompromising policy to a reformative and appeasement-oriented one. For the same, I will be focusing on the legislation, declarations, concessions in relation with India and other such things, which were introduced by the British, and making deductions regarding their implications, to prove if this transition did occur. The underlying aim of this study is to shed light upon the instrumentality of the First World War in the Indian Liberation Movement, and show how happenings linked directly or indirectly with it sparked off important events in the movement, making it increasingly difficult for the British to deal with. This paper doesn't wish to extend the argument that the British actually meant to provide reform, but instead argues that the occurrences sparked off by the war, either directly or indirectly, drove the British to a state where they had to introduce reforms or make concessions, to appease the Indians.

Keywords: British government, British policy, First World War, India.

In his hymn of 1899, Rudyard Kipling explored the concept of the "White man's burden" while alluding to the US colonization of the Philippines.¹ It emphasized on the racial superiority of the Europeans, implying that it was their responsibility to properly govern and administer the darker-skinned, and adopt a paternalistic outlook towards them. Although his hymn was directed towards this case in peculiar, its message has been applied to cases of western imperialism in general, and can be aptly applied to the British position in India after the Revolt of 1857, with the British legitimizing their hold over the country, through the Act for Better Government passed on

¹ Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden: The United States & the Philippine Islands, 1899." *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition*.

1st September 1858. This was done through transferring the power from the East India Company to the Queen.² It also abolished the Court of Directors and Board of Control for their inefficiency and negligence towards the traditions and beliefs of the Indians, which was one of the major causes for the outbreak of the revolt and the Queen exercised her power through a Viceroy, who was her agent in India. Soon after the Act was introduced, on 1st November, the Queen issued a proclamation to publicly declare her assumption of power over India. The proclamation revealed a great deal about the British's psyche at that point of time. The proclamation promised many concessions to the Indians. The Queen, in her proclamation mentioned, among other things:

"And it is our further will that so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race or creed be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our services, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and ingenuity, duly to discharge."³

The implication here is that the British promised fair and equal treatment to all, regardless of their race or ethnicity to ensure that the Indians don't turn hostile towards the crown and their new rulers; in simpler words, to appease the Indians. These promises, however, went unfulfilled and were merely an eyewash to keep the Indians happy. We can back this up by taking the example of the Indian Civil Services examination for which Indians were although made eligible, but were put at a disadvantage as the examination was to be given in Britain and the minimum age was reduced from 21 to 18.⁴ Moderate leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji realized this and even presented resolutions to the British House of Commons to allow simultaneous examination in India as well. Seeing this, it can be said that when governments, especially those of an imperialistic or dictatorial character, are presented with situations which could threaten their authority or when unrest or violence may break out in the country, then that government looks at implementing reforms or passing legislation which is aimed at appeasing the people.

Yet, it is inaccurate to say that the revolt of 1857 pushed the government to a state of insecurity and an eventual exit, as the British weren't really challenged by the Indians at this stage. If we take a look at the war figures, we can see that over 800,000 Indians were slain during the war and the famine and epidemic caused by it⁵, compared to 6,000 Europeans.⁶ Moreover, the British, after the revolt made many military changes in India as well, so as to strengthen their position in the country. They altered the proportion of Europeans soldiers to Indian soldiers to one to two in the Bengal army, and three to five in the Madras and Bombay army. Furthermore,

² Mahajan V.D. Modern Indian History, S. Chand & Co., 1999 p. 266.

³ Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad, November 1st 1858), British Library IOR/L/PS/18/D154.

⁴ "The India List and India Office List 1905" as published by India Office and India Office Records.

⁵ Peers, Douglas M. (2013), India Under Colonial Rule: 1700–1885, Routledge, p. 76

⁶ ibid

the branches of army which were considered important such as the artillery were placed exclusively in European hands; along with them occupying important and strategic geographic locations and regions.⁷ Moreover, Lord Canning had introduced the “Gagging Act”, through which the British aimed at restraining any publication that may fuel hatred or excite disaffection towards the government, soon after the revolt. All publications required licenses issued by the government. All this points to the fact that Britain were actually strengthening their hold over the nation.

Hence, we come to two conclusions about the impact of the Revolt of 1857:

1. It prompted the government to introduce certain reforms to appease the Indians, however only to ensure that a relapse doesn't occur, and does not imply that the British were weary or rattled by the revolt.
2. In the broader sense, the British Crown used it to get rid of all intermediaries, and establish a firm and direct hold over the country.

Soon afterwards, two pieces of legislation were introduced by the British, which clearly depicted the nature of the rule the British established over the country. In 1878, Viceroy Lord Lytton proposed for the passing of the Vernacular Press Act, to curtail all native and vernacular publications that expressed resentment towards or criticized the British. The Anglo-Afghan war had been recently fought with many Indians serving, therefore the Indians were expressing their discontent for the large loss of Indian life during the war, among the general discontentment they had towards the British. In response, Lord Lytton and his council passed the Act, realizing that the previously introduced “Gagging Act”, which was passed during the Revolt of 1857, proved to be ineffective.⁸ With the introduction of the Act, the government could begin censoring reports and editorials in the Vernacular press, they began monitoring vernacular publications more and could warn or even ban newspapers that were deemed ‘seditious’ by the British. The British also introduced the Arms Act, in 1878 which made it illegal for anyone to possess arms without a license, according to the 13th Article of this Act. While this seemed fair on first glance, the power of making and granting these licenses lay with the government only, as stated in the 17th Article of this Act.⁹ Therefore, the British could tweak this Act and use it to discriminate against Indians. In addition, the British also introduced two factory Acts, one in 1881 and one in 1891, to improve working conditions in the factories operating in India. The Act of 1881 focused

⁷ History of Modern India, Bipin Chandra, Orient Blackswan pvt. Ltd. 2009

⁸ Akhtar, M. Javaid; Ali, Azra Asghar; Akhtar, Shahnaz (2010). *"The Role of Vernacular Press in Subcontinent during the British Rule: A Study of Perceptions"*. Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences. **30**: 71–84.

⁹ The Arms Act, 1878, Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, retrieved 2019.

on inhibiting child labor, limiting the work hours of children aged 7 to 12 to 9 hours and granting them four holidays every month. The second Act limited the work hours for women at 11 hours and lessened those for children to 7 hours. Furthermore, all workers were given weekly holidays. However, these didn't apply to British owned tea and coffee plantations and most of their labor force was recruited from abroad by through coercion. In fact, the government aided the British planters when they ruthlessly exploited their workers, by introducing penal laws 1863, 1865, 1870 and 1882. These Acts made it easier for the planters to overwork laborers and when they decided to sign contracts wherein they agreed to work for a plantation, they could not withdraw, as it would amount to a violation of that contract and lead to the arrest of the laborer.¹⁰

When the turn of the century took place, the British policy remained unchanged; but only for the time-being. In 1907, the British introduced another piece of legislation, the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act, enabling the government to prohibit any unauthorized political meeting by more than twenty persons in any province designated as a 'proclaimed area' by provincial authorities. The Act's scope extended to those provinces designated as "proclaimed areas" by the local government upon the governor general's notification in the Gazette of India of the provinces chosen as "proclaimed areas" of operation. The Act specified a single instance of such notification as valid for a period of six months, but expressly noted that this did not "prevent the Local Government from making any further notification in respect of the same area from time to time as it may think fit."¹¹¹² This again, was a tool used by the British to repress any meetings that could excite any form of disaffection towards the government and to ensure they had a firm hold over the country. In 1910, the British introduced the Indian Press Act, which was similar to the Vernacular Press Act, passed during Lord Lytton's term as viceroy, in 1878; for it aimed at curtailing any publication that was deemed seditious and violent by the British. It gave the provincial governments the power to ask publication houses for a security deposit of Rs. 5,000, if they felt that they were likely to incite sedition or violence. As a result many publications were forced to shut down, owing to their inability to make the security deposit.¹³

When the war broke out, the British grew weary of a possible revolt breaking out in the country; only this time, they would be far less prepared than they were in the revolt in 1857. Acting out of this fear, they introduced the Defence of India Act, in 1915, wherein the viceroy's powers were increased temporarily during the wartime. Freedom of writing and speech was curtailed, arbitrary and preventive detentions were permitted, internment without trial and curtailment of freedom to

¹⁰ History of Modern India, Bipin Chandra, Orient Blackswan pvt. Ltd. 2009

¹¹ The Lawyer, Vol VIII Part II, 1907, pg 47-48

¹² "VI: Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act". 48A *Collection of the Acts passed by the Governor General of India in Council, 1907* (PDF), Calcutta 1908. Pg 57-60.

¹³ The History of British India: A Chronology, John Riddick, 2006, Greenwood Publishing Group

move were all features under this act. In the initial stage, the Act received universal support from Indian political leaders and non-officiating members from the Governor-General's council.

Moreover, the Indians were supportive of the British war effort, with over a million serving for the British during the war.

This support provided by the Indians, however, was short-lived as the British government applied the act on the general population and moderate rulers when they had clearly expressed that it was meant to be used to combat revolutionary violence¹⁴. The British used the Act to suppress the Home-Rule leagues established by Annie Besant and B.G Tilak. These leagues, which functioned as debating societies, acted as sources from which the Indian Home-Rule movement was being operated, by issuing political pamphlets and setting up libraries for their cause. They were by no means violent or militant; yet the British, applying the Act, interned Tilak and Annie Besant, during war, leading to protests in the nation. At this stage, hints of mass protest and demonstration by the Indians was starting to emerge against the British, on a scale that had not been observed before. This indicated that the Home-Rule movement was laying the groundwork for the subsequent mass movements which were soon to occur.

Meanwhile, another important development had taken place in 1916, whose outcome resulted in the British to make its first major political concession, although only verbal; since the Queen's proclamation of 1858. Due to the increased Indian participation in the war, the Indian leaders were expecting some form of political reform in return from the British. The British did initially provide reform, in the form of a series of proposals, which stated that half of the Executive Council of the Viceroy would be elected. Moreover, a majority of members of the Provincial Legislative Councils too would be elected, which accepted by both the All-India Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. Yet, both the Congress and the Muslim League felt that if they were to unite with the Muslim League, they could gain more concessions from the British. This drove the two to take a cooperative stance against the British.¹⁵ This temporary alliance between the two parties was termed as the Lucknow Pact, and in 1916, they produced a set of joint demands to the British. These included:

- The number of elected seats on the councils should be increased.
- Laws/Motions which were passed by large majorities in the councils should be accepted as bindings by the British Government.
- Minorities in the provinces should be protected.

¹⁴ British Administration & the Amritsar Massacre, Benjamin Horniman, 1984, Delhi: Mittal Publications.

¹⁵ The History and Culture of Pakistan, Nigel Kelly, 2014, Peak Publishing, p.61

- All provinces should be granted autonomy.¹⁶
- Separating the executive from the judiciary
- At least half of the members of the Executive Council being elected, the Legislative council having a majority of elected members.¹⁷

Most important of all was the reaction of the British, which hinted that they had been rattled by the cooperation between the Hindus and Muslims; dealing a blow to their previously followed policy of divide and rule. In reaction to the demands placed by the Congress and the League, the British Secretary of State Edwin Montague made a declaration in 1917 which came to be known as the August Declaration, wherein he defined the policy of the British government with regards to India. It stated:

‘Increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration, and the gradual development of self-governing Institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible governments in India as an Integral part of the British Empire’.

We can see that the British claimed that their policy in India now aimed at developing Self-Governing institutions in India and incorporating Indians in administration. It also aimed at establishing a responsible government, one that was responsible to Indian needs as well, it could be inferred. The Declaration was not well received, and saw criticism from many congress leaders. Annie Besant claimed that the declaration was ‘unworthy of England to offer and India to accept.’ It was seen as an eyewash to some leaders, however other leaders like Surendranath Banerjee saw the declaration as a boon for the Indians and supported it in a conference held in 1918, resulting in the Congress to undergo another split.

Till the war ended, the British continued to exercise the Defence of India Act, which was clearly introduced as a temporary measure for the war period. Most Indians were expecting its termination when the war ended, and even in the 1917 session of Congress, the Moderate leaders had heavily criticized the Act and its enforcement. However, to most of the nation’s surprise, the British indefinitely extended their emergency powers, as guaranteed by the Defence of India Act, along with introducing new provisions which enabled them to act more ruthlessly towards anyone they suspected as a terrorist. It provided for stricter control of the press, arrests without warrant and indefinite detention without trial. The accused were denied the right to know the accusers and the evidence used in the trial. Those convicted were required to deposit securities upon release, and were prohibited from taking part in any political, educational, or religious

¹⁶ The History and Culture of Pakistan, Nigel Kelly, 2014, Peak Publishing p.61

¹⁷ The History and Culture of Pakistan, Nigel Kelly, 2014, Peak Publishing p.61

activities.¹⁸ The legislation was initially embodied in the form of a couple of bills, which, for their unpopularity, were labeled 'Black Bills'. These bills were passed in 1919, and came to be known as the Rowlatt Act, which was passed by a committee known as the Rowlatt Committee. While there is not any concrete reasoning for the introduction of the Act, it is speculated that the British used it to combat the upsurge that was slowly developing in India that arose out of a lack of reforms provided to the Indians after their participation in the war. Another possible reason for the introduction of this Act could be the desire of the British to extend the powers they enjoyed during the war period, where they could arbitrarily arrest or detain anyone that challenged their authority. What is for certain is that the introduction of the Act represented a very hardline approach which was adopted by the British. In return, the Indian leadership, both Hindus and Muslims, opposed the Act wholeheartedly. Gandhi led the charge against the Act, organizing protest marches or 'hartals' which saw widespread support¹⁹.

Two Indian leaders, Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew were deported under the Act, leading to mass resentment among the Indians, which culminated into heavy protesting. The British were forced to impose martial law in Punjab and banned all protest meetings. In defiance of the ban, a peaceful protest was held on 13th April, against the deportation of the two leaders, in Amritsar. The British army general, General Dyer, who was in command in Punjab ordered his men to shoot at unarmed civilians, who were protesting. It was after this horrific incident, that Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation movement in 1920, along with the Khilafat Movement, the first mass movement in the freedom struggle, making it much more defined and setting the ball rolling for further mass movements, which the British found increasingly difficult to deal with.

Following the declaration made in 1917, Montague met with the Viceroy of India, Lord Chlemsford, and deliberated with him regarding the concessions the British were to make for the Indian participation in the First World War. After discussion, the Montague-Chlemsford report was formed in 1918 and it was embodied in the Government of India Act, 1919. The Act came in December, months after the horrors of April. The Act called for 'Diarchy' or a dual form of government for the major provinces. The responsibilities were divided among two governments: The Provincial Council, headed by the Viceroy, and a Government of ministers, who were answerable to the council. The latter took control of certain matters, which were mentioned in the transferred list, while the Provincial Council looked after all other matters, which were embodied in the 'reserved list'. This again, wasn't a true reform, as the Governor-General's assent was

¹⁸ The Making of India: A Historical Survey, Ranbir Vohra, 2001, 2nd Ed. Armonk, New-York: M.E. Sharpe. ISBN 0- 7656-0711-5. p. 126.

¹⁹ History of Modern India, Bipin Chandra, Blackswan publishing.

required for the passing of any legislation and the new government of ministers was subsidiary to the Provincial Councils, who would keep them in check. Moreover, the reforms called for the establishment of a statutory committee, which after a period of ten years, would inquire into the working of the Government and suggest further changes.²⁰

The Indians, with their sentiments at a boiling high due to the recent slaughter of innocents at the hands of the British, rejected the concessions they proposed in the Act. Leaders like Jinnah resigned from the Councils in protest, the Congress opposed the Act in the 1920 session and decided to follow Gandhi's suggestion of swaraj or self-rule instead and they also refused to field any candidates in the 1921 elections, called for by the Act²¹. Yet what is to be noted is that the British were starting to feel the heat of the Indian opposition, and were slowly taking a stance where they had to begin providing, or claim to provide reforms to keep the Indians at bay.

Between 1920 and 1922, Gandhi led the Indians against the British through the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements, which laid the groundwork for future mass movements in the country. Gandhi had to call off his movement in 1922 after a group of protesters set a police station on fire, after an incident of police brutality against the protesters. Gandhi, who had been adamant on keeping all forms of demonstration non-violent, decided to call off the movement. Although the movement was called off, in 1922 the British government repealed the Rowlatt Act, the Indian Press Act 1910 and twenty one other such repressive laws.²²

As called for in the Government of India Act 1919, a statutory commission was sent to India in 1927, to review it and propose further constitutional reform. This was called the Simon Commission and was met with heavy opposition by the Indians, who staged demonstrations and yelled in protest against it, for they were appalled by the absence of an Indian in it. The British, in turn, challenged the Indians to draft a constitution of their own constitution. Thus, in the Madras Session of Congress in 1927 the leaders decided to boycott the Simon Commission and establish the All-Parties Conference, to draft the constitution.²³ In this conference, Motilal Nehru, a lawyer and freedom fighter drafted the Nehru Report, to meet the challenge put forth by the British. The report called for Self-Government for the Indians, but failed to make much impact as it was rejected by the Muslim League. On the 23rd of November 1928, Gandhi issued a declaration which came to be known as the Delhi Statement, wherein he made demands to the Commission. He stated:

²⁰ India and the Simon Report, C.F Andrews, 2017, Routledge reprint of 1930 first edition. p. 11. ISBN 9781315444987

²¹ A criticism of Montagu-Chelmsford proposals of Indian constitutional reform, Madan Mohan Malaviya 2009. Chintamani. Columbia University Libraries Collection. pp. 1-8

²² The history of British India: a chronology, John F. Riddick, 2006

²³ The Nehru Report 1928, Motilal Nehru. Retrieved from <http://cadindia.clpr.org>. on 24th June 2019.

1. The coming Round Table Conference should be dedicated to discussing the features of the Dominion Status that was to be provided to India.
2. The presence of a majority of Congress delegates in the conference.
3. Issues of General Amnesty and Conciliation must be discussed.

These demands were rejected by the Viceroy Lord Irwin in 1928, but Gandhi and Vallabhai Patel had organized a demonstration in Badroli, Gujarat which had proven to successfully defy the British. Under pressure, the British, through Lord Irwin made a declaration that the question of Dominion Status would be discussed in the coming Round Table Conference.²⁴ However due to backlash back at home, Lord Irwin had to go back on his statement and when Gandhi met him to seek clarification, he hinted that Dominion Status would not be up for discussion. Thus Gandhi took the decision to boycott the First Round Table Conference. The Lahore Session of Congress, which was held after the retracting of the British's grant of discussing the question of Dominion Status, proved to be a historical one, as it was here where it was decided that the Congress' end objective would be to attain 'Poorna Swaraj' or 'Total Self-Government'. As such, the Congress placed with Gandhi, the responsibility to organize the first act of Civil Disobedience, and thus set the Civil Disobedience Movement in motion. Gandhi obliged, by organizing a march from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, which would last twenty-four days and end with Gandhi picking up salt on the beaches of Gujarat and violate the salt laws imposed by the British which were seen as unjust by the Indians. The movement also encouraged Indians to violate other British laws and stop paying taxes to the British government.

The pressure brought on by the Civil Disobedience Movement and the inefficient functioning of the First Round Table Conference, due to the absence of the Indian National Congress, forced the British to reach out to the Indians and arrive at some form of compromise. This came in the form of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, which was signed in 1931. It entailed a number of concessions the British were willing to make, if Gandhi would suspend the Civil Disobedience Movement and agree to attend the Second Round Table Conference. These included permission for free collection or manufacture of salt by persons near the sea-coast, the release of all political prisoners except those guilty of violence, restoration of all confiscated property of the Congressmen and permission for the peaceful picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops.

Gandhi obligingly suspended the movement and attended the Second Round Table Conference, which proved to be a failure. The conference was dedicated to the discussion of only the issues of minorities and Dominion Status receded in the background. While the Congress made claims with the view of the entire nation in mind, many minority leaders emphasized on their own interests. This led to disagreements and the conference proved to be a failure. In 1932, the Prime

²⁴ Peter Ruhe. Gandhi. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2001. 75.

Minister of Britain introduced the ‘Communal Award’, where he decided to provide separate electorates for minorities. There is speculation behind the cause for the introduction of this award, with one possible reason being the intention to divide the Hindu population. The award was well received by the minorities. Another important outcome of the deliberations made in the Second Round Table Conference was that it led to the creation of the Government of India Act, 1935.

The Government of India Act, 1935 removed the Diarchy proposed in the Act of 1919, and called for India to be turned into a federation. The Act called for the creation of both federal states, where direct election would be held to elect the representatives of each state and gave the power of forming governments and ministries to the Indians, and the princely states, which had their own monarchies in place. However, along with the elected representatives, or ministers of each state, there were provincial governors appointed by the Viceroy, who retained certain powers, which included the right to suspend the responsible government. Moreover, Defence, the British Indian Army, foreign affairs, finance, railways and the important appointments to the Reserve Bank of India were reserved for the British. These terms and provisions were criticized by some Indian leaders, while others were pleased with the Act, for it did make important, unprecedented concessions. The long term goal of this Act would also lead to Dominion Status, which had been the crux of the demands put forth by the Indians, for the Westminster statute of 1931 stated that the provision of Dominion Status would imply virtual independence. It also conceded with many of Jinnah’s 14 points, winning over Muslims as well. In 1937, the Congress and League participated in the elections called for by the Act. In two years, the British found itself at war with the Germans. By 1940, the Indian leadership had made up their mind regarding complete freedom from British rule. In 1940, the British extended the August Offer which called for Dominion Status after the war and that a representative body would be set up to frame the new Constitution, but at this stage the Indian leaders had pretty much decided on complete riddance of British rule and influence in the country, thereby rejecting the proposal.

From here, I will attempt to prove two things:

1. A transition in policy, from an uncompromising and hardline one to a reformative and appeasement-driven one, did in fact take place, in India.
2. If this change did occur, then the pivotal factor responsible for it, directly or indirectly, was the First World War.

However, what we must address first is the impact of the Revolt of 1857 and why that, instead of the First World War, cannot be termed as the trigger point for this shift in policy. While it is true that the British, through the Queen’s proclamation, introduced a series of concessions and made promises to the Indians appeased, they were only introduced to prevent any immediate violence

from breaking out. Another possible reason for the introduction of the concessions was to exhibit the new administration, which would take over from the company, in a positive light to ensure that their seizure of power in India went unhinged, and to achieve approval and support from the Indians, as the new power-holders.

But what is most important to consider is the fact that the Revolt of 1857 was far less detrimental on Britain than the First World War, both economically and in terms of loss of life. This means that the British were less affected by the revolt than the war and thereby weren't driven to a state of insecurity after it. This could hold true for the war, as the introduction of the Defence of India Act of 1915 and its subsequent extension through the Rowlatt Act are strong indicators of insecurity in the British government in India.

I will now try to prove the first condition.

From the period right after the assumption of power by the crown, till the outbreak of the War and its impacts taking shape in the country, we can identify a pattern in the kind of laws, decisions and declarations extended by the British. In this study itself, we can see that the legislation introduced by the British initially, was uncompromisingly driven towards the securing of their own interests. But moreover, most of these laws were encroaching upon the freedoms of the Indians and making their functioning in the empire difficult. Another very important point to note is that concessions, in this period, came only once, in the form of the Morley-Minto reforms in 1909; but other than that the British did not deem it necessary to give due consideration to the Indians. There are many examples that have been mentioned in this study, which support this claim. We can take a look at the Vernacular Press Act 1878 and the Press Act 1910, where the British could exercise their own discretion and ban any publication that they deemed seditious.

Subsequently, they curtailed many vernacular papers and other forms of the press which most of the Indian intelligentsia were economically dependent on, but more importantly were means the Indians used to express themselves, which the British infringed upon. Another example that saw Indian freedom of expression inhibited was the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act, 1907; which empowered the provincial government to regulate public meetings in certain areas. As the discretion lay with the provincial governments of these regions, through the Act the British could easily prevent public meetings, which usually were hubs for discussion and discourse for the common man. While such an Act was centered to prevent 'seditious' meetings, it could very easily be used as a tool to curtail free speech and discussion, which could excite disaffection towards the British government. Even up until the war broke out and soon after it, the British policy towards India continued to display these hardline characteristics. We saw the British, weary over a possible revolt breaking out during the War, introduce the Defence of India Act, giving them the liberty to arbitrarily arrest anyone they deemed a terrorist along with the power

to preventively detain individuals and banning publications and press during the war. What is worse is that the British used this to target even non-revolutionaries, clearly proving that the British were capable of misusing the Act and they lied about what the Act was intended for, as it was stated that this Act would be limited to combat revolutionary activities only. Soon after the war ended, the British went a step ahead and introduced the Rowlatt Act, which prevented the accused from knowing their accusers or even the evidence used in the trial.

Even though the British took actions that fell in line with their hardline and ruthless policy even after the war; the transition in policy began before, with the Montague or August Declaration, made in 1917, in reaction to the Lucknow Pact and the demands put forth by the Congress and League; where the British for the first time the British conceded to begin the installment, or look into the installment of self-governing institutions. The Montague Declaration found itself embodied in the Government of India Act 1919, which intended to be reformative in nature.

Although the real intentions of the British were certainly questionable, from here we saw that a pattern emerged where the British legislation was aimed at reform or appeasement, rather than securing of their own interests uncompromisingly, for the most part, finally ending in the grant of dominion status in the August Offer of 1940. The examples lie in the Government of India Act of 1919, granting power to Indian ministers in some fields, The Gandhi-Irwin Pact, where the British made concessions regarding the production of salt, The Government of India Act, 1935, which called for elections all over the country, with Indians having the power to form ministries. It must be said again, the point made here is not to show the genuineness of the British concessions, but the fact that they were driven to a state that they needed to make, or show the Indians that they were making concessions. All these evidences and examples support the claim that there was in fact a transition in the nature of policy of the British with regard to India.

While we can conclude that the policy did shift; we must now see if the First World War caused it.

Firstly, the Montague Declaration, which was the earliest of the British concessions to the Indians and which we have identified as the starting point in this shift of policy; arose out of the joint demands put forth by the League and the Congress, as compensation for the heavy participation of Indians in the war. Hence, we can see that there lies a direct link between the declaration and the war.

Secondly, one of the war's major consequences was the introduction of the Rowlatt Act, which subsequently caused the Jalianwala Bagh massacre, due to the heavy protesting towards the Act. These two events resulted in the eventual launch of the first mass movement in the country, the Non-Cooperation movement. Gandhi, the leader of the movement, protested against the Rowlatt

Act himself and when the British took brutal actions like the events in Amritsar, Gandhi mobilized the people on a larger scale. The impact of these movements, which were sparked by the war, albeit indirectly, had a pronounced impact on the British policy. The widespread support of this movement prompted the British to repeal the Rowlatt Act, the Press Act of 1910 and other such exploitative laws (instruments that we have identified as representative of their former policy). Again major impact of the movement was that it indicated that the Indians were capable of protesting through such mass movements, and set the foundation for future movements.

Thirdly, a direct result of the Montague Declaration was the Government of India Act 1919, which called for the Simon Commission to be sent in India after ten years. This, in turn, resulted in heavy Indian protesting and finally culminated into the second mass movement in the country, the Civil Disobedience Movement, which ended with the British making many concessions. This sequence of events finds its roots in the Montague Declaration, which arose directly out of the First World War. The assertion of this argument is that the First World War started a chain of events, mass movements and protests which saw the British change their policy and stance in India.

In conclusion, I would like to make the claim that there did exist a shift in the nature of British policy after the onset and impact of the Great War, which acted as catalyst to this shift. Whether or not the British reforms and concessions were genuine and whether the First World War acted as the key reason for the eventual exit of the British from India, is still up for debate.

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