

THE ROYAL INDIAN ARMY, EVOLUTION & ORGANISATION: AN APPRAISAL

Amna Mahmood Sandhu

Abstract

The military power was the major source of British supremacy as a colonial power. But in India a different pattern was emerged when an indigenous force officered by the British was used to colonise its own motherland and then its role was extended as the guarantor of the Imperial rule. As it was predominantly an army of natives officered by the British, therefore a special pattern of recruitment was followed to use the warrior potential of some of the classes and to ensure uninterrupted supply of the loyal manpower. This force started as the presidency armies of East India Company and was developed into a modern, well organised and well equipped army in the course of evolution as the Royal Indian Army. It passed through a complex process of evolution, organisation and re-organisation motivated by challenges confronted by the British Raj in India. The revolt of 1857 made them scared of imparting such a training which could endanger their rule therefore they did not equip it with sophisticated arms and training equivalent to that of their British counterparts. It was only due to expediency of the World War I and II that they had to review their policy to meet the challenges to the Imperial rule all over the world. This paper studies the importance of the Indian Army to the British rule, the process of formation, evolution, organisation and Indianisation of the Royal Indian Army under the British rule. It also studies that how British structured a unique recruitment policy to channelize the warrior potential of the people and especially of the Northern India to ensure supply of manpower and earn their loyalty to advance their Imperial interests till 1947.¹

Introduction

The Indian Army performed dual functions for the British Raj: one was the security of the Empire on the Indian borders as well as on the international fronts; the other as the instrument to help the civil administration to maintain law and order and to deal with communal and political violence. The emergence of the Indian political parties in the late 19th century demanded more representation in government. The rising level of political awareness among the educated people, trained under the western education system, aggravated the feelings that the state institutions including both the military and bureaucracy should have more Indians in the decision making positions. The British were aware of the need of a sophisticated force but it was difficult for them to absorb the idea of a well equipped Indian Army controlled by the Indians themselves. It would have been a direct threat to their rule in India. Therefore the Indian Army was reorganised again and again but the process of Indianisation remained awfully slow.

Evolution

The force which proved itself a strong instrument in colonisation process later launched by the East India Company (EIC) was the Bengal Presidency Army of the EIC. It won the first landmark victory when it unexpectedly defeated Nawab Sarajudaullah, the Viceroy of Bengal in the Battle of Plassy in 1757. After 1857, when British Crown took over India as a colony, it worked as the custodian of the British Raj inside and outside India. In fact India proved a source of cheap manpower to fight for the Imperial designs at the cost of the Indian revenues.²

The EIC employed watchmen and armed guards to protect its trading posts. The number of post increased with the increasing number of trade facilities, which required reorganisation of these armed guards into companies and battalions. The presence of the British armies in Europe was imperative therefore the only alternative was to raise native units and train them on European lines. Raising local armies

was originally a French idea³ which was taken up by Lord Clive, an Englishman who first raised a regular army battalion in India. This first battalion was consisted of the soldiers recruited from various factions of the Indian society together with the old company guards. Due to the non-availability of the British officers initially those battalions were commanded by the Indians who were later replaced by the British officers.⁴ The Indians were then reduced to the lower ranks only. The name of *Sepohy* armies was actually the anglicised version of the local word *Sepohy* used for soldier. The *Sepohy* armies were trained, well equipped and organised. They basically served the two purposes; one was the strengthening of the EIC's three main fortified trading posts in India; and secondly they dealt with the unorganized and poorly trained armies of the local rulers and provided solid grounds to the establishment of EIC's rule in India.⁵

Each of the EIC post had to maintain its own independent force due to the distant location from each other. As each trading post was called a Presidency, therefore its army was known to be the Presidency army. The Bengal Presidency⁶ Army covered the area from the Bay of Bengal to the northern borders of India up to Afghanistan. The Madras Presidency⁷ Army covered the main trading facility in St. George (Madras), Hyderabad and central provinces. Burma was also included in its area after its annexation with British India. The Bombay Presidency army⁸ included Bombay, Sindh, Rajputana and Aden. Eden commission also recommended the amalgamation of these presidency armies but it could not be implemented and despite heavy criticism they maintained the separate existence. It was not before 1895 when they were combined together.⁹ Before 1848, all armies were having separate commands till the time when General Stinger Lawrence was designated as the first Commander-in-Chief to these armies. He organised, trained and armed these '*Sepohy*' armies officered by the Europeans and earned the well deserved title of the Father of British Indian Army.¹⁰ However he was not having any defecto control over the two armies other than the Bengal Army was due to the distance involved.

Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema wrote that the *Sepo*hy armies were small in number but superior in training, discipline and arms as compared to the large, indiscipline and corrupt armies of the local rulers. They were trained on regular basis for using arms and fighting in formations. They were also looked after, while the soldiers of native armies were under paid and poorly manned. The British officers were trained in British Military academies while the officers of the native armies used to be the members of the local royal family and their close associates. In most of the cases the Commander-in-Chief used to be the ruler himself or the Crown Prince of the state. There were no arrangement of any comprehensive training for both officers and ranks compatible to that received by the British officers and even the *Sepo*hy armies. The outstanding performances by some local rulers were owed to their personal traits and not the outcome of discipline or training.¹¹ However it was not true for Hayder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan.¹² Both were outstanding generals and trained their army on the professional lines. Marathas¹³ and Nizam¹⁴ also established well trained armies with the help of the French.

Colonisation by the EIC

Weakening authority of the Mughals and the consequent autonomy of different provinces of their empire, anarchy, mismanagement, palace intrigue, poor administration and weakness of local armies soon tempted the EIC to take advantages of the local situation and extend its rule beyond their trading facilities. The defeat of Nawab Sarajudaula in Plassy was the first outstanding success attributed to the shrewdness of Robert Clive¹⁵ as well as strength of Bengal Presidency army. This victory was followed by the conclusive battle between the EIC and the French which ended in the French eviction from India. After that the EIC troops, which were consisted of the Royal troops, Company's European troops and Indian troops, were reorganised into a regular army. It was sizably grown to 46,000 personnel.¹⁶

The dawn of 19th Century saw a much expanded territorial control of the EIC in India. It was the result of political manoeuvring, manipulation and active military campaigns were kindled by discontentment in the army in one form or the other. These feelings were due to EIC's trade oriented policies which generated grievances among the Indians serving as ranks in the EIC army. There were four small scale eruptions in the army during the period of 1844-1857 which were handled easily by the authorities. The first large scale uprising which transferred India into a Crown Colony was the War of Independence in 1857. It was the proclamation of a new era of authority and conciliation.¹⁷

Having confidence, sense of superiority and some fear of local revolt again, the British decided not to provoke the religious sentiments of the Indians. They took certain measures to create a class of vested interest as their collaborators. One move was the confirmation of the land settlements of Lord Cornwallis¹⁸ and other was to give due recognition to more than 500 princely states, which were scattered all over India, to use them as breakwaters against any possible attempt of revolt in future. The rest of the country was controlled through a very professional civil service which was mainly consisted of the Englishmen and the subordinate posts were filled with the locals.¹⁹ Despite all these arrangements, the British realised that India could not be administered without an organised military again officered by Englishmen with sub-ordinate native force. Thus the first task they took after 1857 was the reorganisation of the armies.

The armies of the EIC had to pass through a major organisational change in the post-War of Independence period with the transformation of India into a Crown Colony. First in 1859 Peel Commission and then in 1879 Eden Commission was established to provide guideline to conduct those changes. These commissions laid a stress on the need of maintaining a professional and loyal army to rule over India. As the Bengal Army was largely involved in 1857's uprising, therefore, it had to face major organisational changes. The distinction between European and British troops ended

gradually. These armies were maintained separately but the position of the Commander-in-Chief was strengthened. Since the presence of large number of Indians proved to be a threat for the British rule, therefore it was also recommended to raise the strength of the British troops and giving them full control over fighting arms specially the artillery.²⁰ Prior to 1857, the ethnic composition of the army was five Indians to one European. On the recommendation of Peel Commission this proportion was readjusted to about two to one. Therefore the Royal Indian Army was adjusted with slightly over 60,000 British as compared to 120,000 Indians.²¹ The War of Independence 1857, generally regarded as a *Sepoahy* Mutiny in military slang, transformed all the company's European regiments to the service of the Crown. The decision was resisted by both officers and ranks against the transfer of their services without being consulted before taking decision. These protests were called as white mutiny.²²

In addition to these residency armies the EIC also raised two frontier forces to defend some of the problematic areas of India. To deal with Baloch tribesmen, the Sindh Frontier Force was set up in 1846 as a part of the Bombay army for the control and command purposes.²³ North-western border was the most sensitive area of the empire. The Punjab Frontier Force was established in 1849 to deal with the situation in that area. Initially it was controlled by the Foreign Department of India through the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab.²⁴ Later in 1886, it was included in the Bengal Army. Its separate status was ended in 1903, when it was merged into the Indian Army.²⁵

The joint army was divided into four commands, each headed by a Lieutenant General with a strong control of Commander-in-Chief. The areas of Bombay and Madras armies were maintained under the Bombay and Madras command respectively while the Bengal army was divided into two: Punjab command and Bengal command. The three staff corps were abolished and the title Indian Army was officially adopted from 1st January, 1903.²⁶ The *Sepoahy* and officers

were also re-designated as the officers and ranks of the Indian army.²⁷

Recruitment Policy

Initially the recruitment in EIC army was not restricted to any particular class or religion. The Madras and Bombay armies were recruited mostly from their presidency areas. The Bengal army also followed the same pattern until the 2nd half of the 18th century when the recruitment policy was shifted from the territorial to the class composition. There was a major shift in recruitment policy in the post-War of Independence period. The previous centres of recruitment like Bengal, Bombay and Madras were discarded and North-Western region of India became the new source of recruitment. This pattern continued during the last three decades of the 19th century and later in the early decades of the 20th century. The selection of a few classes and the rejection of the previous stock for recruitment shaped the Martial Race Theory²⁸ which was consciously popularised and publicised by Lord Roberts (1885-1893), then the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army.²⁹ It is one of the most debated theories in India, abandoned by the British themselves in the World War I and the World War II, but restored again after the end of wars.³⁰

The new pattern facilitated the recruitment of the high caste Hindus both Brahmins and Rajputs from Agra, Oudh and Bihar. Later the Punjabi and Ghurkhas also served as the major sources of strength for the Bengal army making caste and religion biases quite prominent in this army.³¹ The Indian society was already divided in the castes and classes. The division was based on their functions and status in the society. The caste consciousness was more in Northern India as compared to Southern India. The Brahmans were the ruling class and Khashtriya were considered to be the warriors. Both belonged to the landed elite, much before the start of the imperial rule.³² Noor-ul-Haq contended that this policy was adopted “to ignore the politically conscious Indians and favour some selected lower status groups, such as Jats, by

taking them into the army.”³³ However, it was designed to get rid of those classes who remained involved in uprising in 1857 and replaced them with the more loyal classes. The intention was to use their potential as a warrior maintaining a dependable army for the defence of the Northern borders against Russia and served the imperial goals without questioning the British authority.

The argument that some of the classes were exhausted their warrior potential and required to be replaced by the other one was also not acceptable because history is evident that after the battle of Plassy ,the EIC continued to be in a constant state of war in India in its conquest of territory. Though their successes were not fully attributed to its powerful military only but fact remained there that it served as a major source that was why it was called as the sword of British Raj. Therefore how the warrior potential of their soldiers could be exhausted.

Tan Tai Young gives another explanation of the motives to emphasise the Martial Race Theory. He argues that it was introduced to maintain a social base and permanent supply of manpower for the army in India, since it was a native army performing duties for a foreign rule. The soldiers in uniform were not motivated by the sense of patriotism and sacrifices but their services were hired against material gains, therefore it was crucial to maintain a social base for such mercenary force. Therefore they established a political economy to integrate military men with his home as a source of strength for his services in the army. It was not only to ensure flow of the recruitment but also to protect the interests of the military population as a whole including recruits, soldiers, pensioners and their families.³⁴ This is true for the Punjab especially because it was having a central position in the security policy of the Raj to face the threat from Russia. Though the list of martial races included those from central India also but since the Punjab was the front line state in the Imperial security designs, its society was more integrated as a source of recruitment for the Indian Army. The special economic treatment and administrative structure was also followed to

ensure the recruitment and loyalty of the soldiers through a special culture of pride which came through military services generation after generation. The province was already militarised being on the major route from Central Asia to the India but the assurance of loyalty and permanent supply of the man power for mercenary services was actually a crucial task successfully done by the British.

Indianisation

The term Indianisation as defined by Lieutenant General G. MacMunn referred to that of giving command positions to the Indians and enabling them to share the higher ranks hitherto held by the British officers.³⁵ Those positions were with the Indians at the time of irregular troops of the EIC. They were successful against the Indian forces but when they had to fight with the great Maratha forces trained by the French; there was a need to have more Europeans to command. The British government continued the pattern after suppression of the rebels of mutiny in the form of irregular frontier force when old Sikh officers and their sons were serving in a brilliant manner. The sharing border with Russia posed a serious challenge demanding a modern and scientifically trained army led by the British officers. Indo-Afghan war 1878-80, further enhanced the realisation of Russian threat. But now the enemy was not internal. Therefore British did not dare to take any risk as far as the Indian defence on northern border was concerned.³⁶

Indianisation of the Royal Indian army was a long awaited goal which could partially be materialised till the end of the British rule in India. A complete Indian force accountable to the Indian legislature was not the idea absorbable to the British rulers sitting in London. They were hardly convinced to accept that the Indians could effectively command the army. The Report of the Political and Military Committee of the Council of India stated that the Indians should be commanded by the British officers.³⁷ It was due to the fact that the Royal Indian Army was used to advance the imperial policy goals at the cost of Indian revenues and they were sent

for military campaigns outside India even during the period of the EIC. Before the World War I they fought in Abyssinia, Afghanistan, Burma, China, Egypt and East Africa.³⁸ While in the World War I the Indian army performed duties in Egypt, Palestine, Persia, France and East Africa. The same pattern continued in the World War II and Indian troops were sent to Burma, Malaysia, Iraq, Abyssinia, Syria, North Africa, Hong Kong and Italy.³⁹ Though the Government of India under Lord Dufferin,⁴⁰ Lord Elgin⁴¹ and Lord Curzon⁴² raised objections repeatedly but the reason was not to raise any voice against that worse form of imperialism or demand for decolonisation. It was merely due to financial considerations on the part of the Government of India about the military expenditures.⁴³ British had this realisation that a more Indianised force responsible to the Indian legislature would pose more resistance against its use as an imperial force.

Lord Curzon, a strong supporter of colonialism, defined three functions of the army:

- To Preserve internal peace;
- The defence of Indian borders; and
- To get ready for imperial services round the globe.

Curzon's efforts to consolidate the military for serving the imperial power and recruitment of nobility through the Imperial Cadet Corps proved to be the first step towards the Indianisation of the officers corps of the Royal Indian Army. He and General Viscount Kitchener took the task of reorganisation of the army to enable it to meet the perceived Russian threat from the western border. He introduced many reforms which could be categorised first move towards the Indianisation, though not motivated by any sympathy with Indians but purely in the interests of the British imperialism. An important step was the unification of the four commands and the Indian soldiers were rearmed and allowed to use 303 Magazine rifle. The artillery consisted of locals was reorganised into four battalions having two companies each. For internal administration local officers continued to be the

in-charge but in war and parade the British officers were the commanders.⁴⁴

Almost all the departments of the army were reformed including departments like the Remount Horse Breeding, the Army Medical Corps, the Army Bearer Corps, the Field Artillery and the Infantry. Lord Curzon also organised an imperial cadet corps in 1901⁴⁵ to build up a portion of Indian officers coming from the previous ruling class and nobility of India. These members of nobility who were educated in chief collages were inducted through a special form of Kings Commission in His Majesty's Native Indian Land Forces and were entitled to command the Indian troops only. Knowing the importance of education for the army officers, Lord Kitchener also established a Staff College on the pattern of Camberley Staff College and it was shifted to Quetta next year. They also recommended Rupees Seven Carors for expansion of the Indian Ordnance Factories.⁴⁶

Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener were working with harmony and they had done a lot in the limited time but later a disagreement developed over the issue of the unification of the army administration under the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Kitchener was of the opinion that the dual system in which departments of the Supply, Transport, Remount and Ordnance was under one command while fighting arms under another command would be a failure. He strongly supported the abolition of the dual system and combining all the military administration under one person who had to serve as the Commander-in-Chief and the War Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.⁴⁷ Since Curzon was against concentration of powers in one hand, he resigned in 1905 after a tussle which was settled against his will by the British authorities in London.⁴⁸ That incident established the supremacy of the Commander-in-Chief in the internal matters of the military, a practice which continued in the Pakistan army after 1947 as a legacy of the Royal Indian Army.

Lord Kitchener continued the process of reorganisation of the army by changing the army's four commands into the army corps command, each comprising of two or more divisions. He also reorganised the army headquarters under the direct control of the Commander-in-Chief and divided it into 5 sections. Every section was headed by a Principal Staff Officer, a Quarters Master General, an Adjutant General, a Principal Medical Officer and a Military Secretary. In fact these reforms transformed the Royal Indian Army into a modern military and also enabled it to fight in the World War I in Europe.⁴⁹

The World War I gave Indians confidence to demand more concessions from the British government towards more self-government which the latter accepted under the War pressures. They announced to increase more Indian participation in the self-governing institutions which would be progressively developed in India as a part of British Empire.⁵⁰ The Indians were inducted in the services of India in civil sector but amazingly they were kept out of the Indian Army's officer corps till 1917. This announcement sanctioned the induction of more Indians in administration.⁵¹

The British were so much sensitive for the Indian Army that they did not want even to empower the Viceroy of India to appoint the Commander-in-Chief of India despite the fact that the office was reserved for the British only. He was appointed by the His Majesty Government on the recommendation of the Chief of General Staff of the Imperial Forces.⁵² While the Indian members of the Legislative Council wanted to transfer this control from the Indian government to the Indian Legislature.⁵³ The Montagu-Chelmsford Report recommended that keeping the expanded size of the Indian Army in the post-World War I position, it was imperative to grant commission to a considerable number of Indians. As a result of these recommendations a cadet school was established at Indore for Indian cadets and ten vacancies were also allotted to Indians at Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.⁵⁴ But this spirit eroded at the end of war and the cadet school at Indore was closed.⁵⁵ Later the Eisher Committee rejected the broad-

based recruitment policy while totally ignoring the question of Indianisation.⁵⁶ This report practically placed the process of the Indianisation into cold storage.

The second wave of reorganisation was undertaken after the World War I when transport corps, medical corps, territorial and auxiliary forces were reformed. By amalgamation of existing units of cavalry, the number of regiments was reduced from 39 to 21. Infantry was also reorganised. In 1930 there was a controversy among the British officers for the mechanisation of the Indian Army. Around half of the officers were in favour and the others were against, not considering Indian soldiers competent enough for that purpose. The Chatfield Commission gave positive recommendations to resolve the controversy proposing mechanisation of the army. The army was reverted to the pre-war strength in that reorganisation. They also proposed that much of the cost of mechanisation would be paid by the British government.⁵⁷ But this report could not be implemented because of the World War II.

The Indian Legislative Assembly passed a resolution in 1921 that at least 25 per cent of the King's commission should be granted to the Indians.⁵⁸ In another resolution they demanded the establishment of a military college in India at par with Sandhurst.⁵⁹ The Indian political parties demanded more Indians in the officer cadre.⁶⁰ In response to these demands, Lord Rawlinson, the then Commander-in-Chief, established a committee in 1923 for this purpose in his headship. Rawlinson Report presented an idea of Indigenisation of 08 units within a period of 30 years, an early formulation of the Indian Military College (IMC) and a gradual decrease of the British officers and the Viceroy Commission officers. If the Indian officers would be recommended commission equivalent to dominion commission, they would be trained in the IMC. This report was rejected by the British Prime Minister Lloyd George when Sir Claude Jacob (Military Member of the Council of India) explained that Government of India's proposals were based on the assumption that India should be ultimately handed over to

the Indians.⁶¹ The Prime Minister clearly assigned that duty to Sir Jacob to convey to everyone in India that “It was the irrevocable intention of the HMG to see the British ascendancy and British rule in India are maintained.”⁶² Lord Robinson also justified his support for the territorial Indian Army instead of early indigenisation of the Royal Indian Army.⁶³

The British Prime Minister hastily responded by taking it against the imperial interests in India. This plan was practical but awfully slow since the scheme covered just eight units to be indigenised over a period of three decades.⁶⁴ Nonetheless it was ballpark almost a century’s period to Indianise the whole army. According to this plan, all junior officers would be the Indians and through the course of promotion all the officers would be Indians with the passage of time.⁶⁵ Though it practically started the indigenisation of officer cadre of the army but the Indian political parties did not consider the pace of the process satisfactory. The policy of creating an Indian territorial force as European auxiliary force also created a serious controversy.

Esher committee was formed to improve the situation but its report totally ignored the question of the Indianisation of the officer corps and recommended to facilitate the sons of officers having Viceroy’s Commission at the Prince of Wales College at Dera Dun before selection at Sandhurst, to reward their loyalty. By September 1920, the auxiliary force was established through law as it was considered inevitable for the maintenance of British authority in India.⁶⁶

The Simon Commission, its response by the Indian political parties and Nehru Report caused second wave of local pressure for Indianisation of the institutions. Nehru Report demanded self governing, dominion status and transfer of the Indian Army under the control of the Indian Defence Minister.⁶⁷ Rejecting Nehru Report on the account of anti-Muslim clauses, Jinnah advocated the Muslim cause in the form of his Fourteen Points and demanded adequate share for the Indian Muslims in all the services of the state.⁶⁸ The

British government also rejected Nehru report, so as the demand to hand over the military under the control of civilian Defence Minister.

To investigate the problems of Indianisation of the military, Skeen committee was appointed under the chair of Sir Andrew Skeen. The report was unanimous this time (in contrast to that of Esher Committee where both Indian members were maintaining opposite views) because its sub-committee consisted of the Indian legislators M. A. Jinnah, Moti Lal Nehru and three others who wanted to work for the Indianisation of the army and not let the opportunity go in vain. The Skeen Committee submitted its report with radical recommendations including the abandonment of the eight unit scheme, increasing vacancies for the Indians at Sandhurst from 20 to 38, the grant of King's commission to the Indians, formation of an Indian military college by the end of 1933, scholarships provided for expansion of the Indian Officers Corps and provided the chances of upward mobility for the rural classes which were the source of soldiery for the Royal Indian Army. It also recommended 08 vacancies for the Indians at the Royal College of Artillery at Woolwich and 25 for Cranwell to create an Indianise artillery and air force.⁶⁹ The Council of India and the Government of India were already committed to 20 seats for the Indians in Sandhurst and some seats at Cranwell and Woolwich. What made them alarmed was the demanded principle of the racial equality.⁷⁰ Therefore most of the recommendations of Skeen Committee were ignored by the Government of India and even the Indian Military Academy could not be established before October 1932 in Dera Dun, that too on the recommendation of the Defence sub-committee of the Indian Roundtable Conference. The graduates of Indian Military Academy were designated as Indian Commissioned Officers and that commission was valid only in India carrying low salary and allowances as compared to the Indian Officers with King's commission passed out from Sandhurst.⁷¹

The outbreak of the World War II was a crisis for British. The Japanese advances in Asia, Subahsh Chander Boss's

Indian National Army (INA), Gandhi's Quit India Movement and Muslim League's 'Divide and Quit' were all challenges on the internal front at the time when the British government needed desperately the Indian cooperation on the external front. Therefore the HMG offered concessions to the Indian political parties by sending Cripps Mission to India. But its proposals were rejected by both the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League. One of the positive outcomes of Cripps Mission was the new Defence Department of India.⁷² Though Lord Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief, was showing distrust on the issue of handing over the defence department to an Indian, Sir Feroz Khan Noon was appointed its first minister.⁷³ But this department was virtually having no control over the army, its operational capacity and strategic planning. It was merely concerned with the areas which were laid in the periphery of defence like military land, garrison, printing, distribution of medals, civil defence and air raid precautions etc.⁷⁴

In June 1943, Sir Claude Auchinleck and then after a few months Lord Wavell took over the offices of the Commander-in-Chief and the Viceroy of India respectively. Sir Auchinleck accelerated the pace of dreadfully slow process of Indianisation of the military. He also pointed out that the HMG had already announced the independence of India after the World War II, then what was depicted by giving the British officers permanent commission in the Indian Army. In place of permanent commission to the British officers he proposed a system of secondment to them as an alternate. He proposed to sustain limited number of the Indian officers who were granted emergency commission during the World War II as permanent commissioned officers. The British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wanted to reduce the Indian army around at least half a million and was cautious about the quality and loyalty of the military personal. Nonetheless he wanted to revert to the Martial Race Theory which was abandoned under the expediencies of the World War II.⁷⁵ Lord Attlee, the Prime Minister of the Labour government in London approved the Auchinleck proposals immediately which enabled Auchinleck to accelerate Indianisation process and the reorganisation that

could facilitate in case of the liberation of India. The division of the Indian Army into two successor states was beyond vision of Auchinleck. All the efforts of Auchinleck and the senior British command could not stop the division of the Indian Army into the armies of the two successor states India and Pakistan as an ostensible part of partition plan of India in 1947.⁷⁶

Conclusion

The formation and development of an army as an imperial force was inevitable to establish and maintain colonial rule in India. This Army played an important role in establishment of British rule in India and then acted as the custodian of *Raj*. It also played as a supporter of the civil administration from time to time.

The process of evolution of the Royal Indian Army was long, complex and motivated by defence requirements of the British Imperial rule in India and around. The ultimate product was a strong force which not only guaranteed the British rule in India but also served its interests all over the world. The process of the reorganisation continued in the 20th century to enhance the fighting potential of the organisation which facilitated the process of indigenisation of the army in a limited way as a by-product. The World War I and the World War II were the testimony of the British power and without the Indian Army it was not possible for them to claim a victory.

The British wanted to maintain their strategic interests in the Indian Ocean and also keep their borders secure against any threat from Russia. They wanted to use Afghanistan as a buffer zone between India and Russia. After proclamation of the former USSR, it became more important as it shared almost direct borders separated by a narrow strip of the Afghan territory with a Communist Empire which had already exhibited its expansionist designs. The agreement of peace with Russian and Afghanistan did not reduce the need for a strong military to protect the borders. Moreover the role of the military to curb the law and order problems in India in the

wake of rising political activity, ethnic and religious polarisation between Hindu and Muslims, demand for self-government and uprising of tribes on northern border became highly significant for maintenance of the Imperial rule in India.

The British established a unique type of civil-military relations in which principally the military was subordinated to the civilian government but at the same time they were supporter of their policies and acted as an instrument of policy. In the absence of sovereignty the military was accountable to the HMG in London while operating in India as almost the equal partner of the civil government. Though the Commander-in-Chief was responsible to the Governor General but as a member of the Indian legislative member and sole administrator of the Indian Army, he was all powerful in the military affairs. As the Indian legislature could exercise no control over the military strategic planning and expenditures, the military affairs were virtually out of bounds for the Indians, leaving the Governor General and the Commander-in-Chief all in all in the military affairs. Even the Government of India Act 1935, which provided a semi-self government in the centre and provinces, kept defence department under the Viceroy's control directly along with the foreign affairs.

The peculiar feature of the British Imperial Rule in India was the evolution of an Indian force which not only colonise India but later helped to maintain the imperial rule in their motherland. It was hard to maintain the supply of manpower for an army service which was not motivated by the patriotism, defence of cast, clan and region. But the British raised a social base for the recruitment of this army and ensured the permanent supply of loyal man power through Martial Race Theory. The Royal Indian Army as a professional organisation served successfully till 1947 as the sword of British rule.

Authors

Amna Mahmood, is an Assistant Professor of Political Science, in International Islamic University, Islamabad. She

did her M.Phil from Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad and submitted her Ph.D dissertation to Pakistan Studies Centre, University of the Punjab, Lahore. She has published many research papers in national and International Journal. She is author of book, *Emerging Interdependence between China and U.S.: Trade & Technology Transfers*, LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, Germany, 2011.

Notes

¹ Since India was given dominion status on 14/15 August 1947, dividing into two successor states India and Pakistan, therefore like bureaucracy the military was also divided.

² Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Power, Politics and The People* (London: Anthem Press, 2002), pp. 22-23.

³ Duma was the first French who employed local Indians as “Sepohy.” See Major General Sir Dashwood Strellell, “The Indian Army before and after 1947,” *The Journal of Royal Central Asian Society* Vol. 35, 1948, p. 121.

⁴ Sir Wolesley Haig, “Armies of East Indian Company” in H.H Dodwell, *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol.6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), pp. 153-66.

⁵ Hassan Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Politics in Pakistan* (Lahore Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2003), p. 35.

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

⁷ Ibid, PRO 30/12/30/11, NAL. See also Patrick Robert Cadell, *History of the Bombay Army* (Longmans, Green and Company, London, 1938).

⁸ Ibid, PRO 30/9/4/47, NAL. See also Byron Farewell, *Armies of the Raj: From the Mutiny to Independence, 1858-1947* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1989), p. 2.

⁹ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990), pp. 13-14.

¹⁰ Colonel J. Biddulph, *Stringer Lawrence: The Father of Indian Army* (London: John Murray 1901).

¹¹ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990), p. 12.

¹² Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan remained the King of Mysore, a state covering present day's central and southern Karnataka and even beyond. Tipu was defeated by the combined forces of the British and the **Nizam of Hyderabad in 1799**. They were excellent military generals and the defeat was not due to the military supremacy of the rival forces but due to the backdoor conspiracies of his generals and shrewdness of EIC's

leadership. For detailed study see Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 18-19, 67-8.

¹³Marathas emerged as a strong military power in 1674 in Deccan Peninsula and they kept engaged Aurangzeb Alamgir, the last of the great Mughals for twenty seven years. They were having strong military along with considerable navel power to defend its strong coastal line. They fought three major wars with the EIC and lost the third one in 1818. It extended British rule to a vast territory in South India.

¹⁴Nizam was the title of the ruler of the princely state of Hyderabad that emerged in 1724 as the breakaway of the Mughal Empire. It was the richest state in India and Nizam had maintained a well equipped army with the help of the French officers.

¹⁵He was the person who established the political and military supremacy of the EIC in India and defeated Nawab Sarajudulla, the Viceroy of Bengal in 1757. He along with Warren Hasting established the British Empire in India.

¹⁶S. T. Das, *Indian Military: Its History and Development* (New Delhi; Sager Publications, 1969), pp. 81, 159-160.

¹⁷Authority in a sense that the India officially was taken over by the British Crown and conciliation in a sense that the British Crown in order to maintain peace and order in the new colony, started policy of some accommodation of the sentiments of the local people.

¹⁸[Lord Cornwallis](#) was the first Governor-General under the new Act who held office between 1786 and 1793 as a representative of the British government. He was answerable to the Board of Control. He defied the mercenary interests of the EIC when they conflicted with the British state policy. He reorganized the whole administrative structure of EIC, introduced British law system and Europeanise the Civil services in India.

¹⁹Dr. Noor-ul-Haq, *Making of Pakistan: The Military Perspective* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical & Cultural Research, 1993).

²⁰Report of the Peel Commission, as submitted by the commissioners appointed to acquire into the organisation of the Indian Army together with the minutes of evidence and appendix, London: His Majesty's office, 1859, IOR:L/Mil/17/5/1622.

²¹Lord Lawrence to Lord Cranborne, January 4, 1867, IOR: Lawrence Papers, Letters to the Secretary of the State (1867), no. 2. Available in printed form in C. H. Philips, ed., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858 to 1947: Selected Documents*, London reprint, 1964, 509.

²²Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990), 12.

²³S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty-first Century* (New Delhi: Viking, 1993), p. 22.

²⁴T.A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822-1922* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1974), pp. 27-29.

²⁵Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: The military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab 1849-1849* (Pakistan: Vanguard Books, 2005), pp. 45-49.

²⁶ See also T.A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army*, pp. 27-29.

²⁷Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State*, pp. 45-49.

²⁸Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and authoritarian in South Asia* (Lahore: Sang-a-meel Publications, 1995), 203-209. The martial race phenomenon was already there in the Punjab and it was observed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The British structured it formally and declared some of the factions of the society as the warriors and used their loyalty and potential for the advancement of their imperial designs. In this way they excluded the politically conscious classes from the military to avoid politicization of the forces. This theory affected the social structure and produced a class of the beneficiaries of the British rule. These classes which were declared the martial races acquired a sense of superiority and strengthened the culture of exploitation established by the British through distribution of land to these and some other classes and deprived of some others on the assumption of this theory. In the Potohar region, these castes served as the main recruitment source for the Royal Indian Army since there were less economic opportunities in the region. In central Punjab these castes also joined army especially in the two World Wars. But generally they continued with the culture of violence instead of refining themselves through education and civility. By virtue of being the martial races these classes despite some of the good traits are still lagging behind and just staying proud on their status as a martial race. Those who had come out of the villages and settled in the urban areas have become enlightened by virtue of their education and exposure to the other factions of the society.

²⁹ Lord Frederick S Roberts, *Forty-one Years in India*, vol. II (London, 1897), p. 383.

³⁰Tan Tai Young, *the Garrison State*, p. 64.

³¹Lieutenant Colonel J. M. Wideley (ed.) *Hand Books for the Indian Army: Punjabi Mussalmans* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1915), p. 125 and Major R. T. Ridgway (ed.), *Hand Books for the Indian Army: Pathans* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1915), p. 125.

³²Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and authoritarian in South Asia*, pp. 203-209.

³³Dr Noor-ul-Haq, *Making of Pakistan: the Military Perspective*, p. 7.

³⁴Tan Tai Young, *The Garrison State*, pp. 25-26.

³⁵Lieutenant General G. MacMunn, *Martial Races of India* (London: Sampson Low & Co, 1933), p. 231.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 232.

³⁷Report of the Political and Military Committee of the Council of India, 30 June 1859, IOR: L/Mil/17/5/1625, pp. 7-8.

³⁸ Douglas M. press, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and Garrison state in India, 1819-1835* (London: I.B Taris, 1995), p. 1.

- ³⁹Hassan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan: 1947-1997* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2000), p. 31.
- ⁴⁰He remained Governor General of India from December 1884 to December 1988.
- ⁴¹He served as viceroy of India March 1862 to November 1863.
- ⁴²He served as the Governor General of India from January 1899 to November 1905.
- ⁴³Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Power, Politics and the People*, p. 219.
- ⁴⁴V. D. Mahajan, *Constitutional History of India* (India: S. Chand Publishers, 1971), p. 238.
- ⁴⁵This scheme was started to reward the princely states' rulers and the nobility of India for their loyalty to British rule. This commission was valid for India only. V. Longor, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army 1600-1974* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1974), p. 135.
- ⁴⁶Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, p. 14.
- ⁴⁷V. D. Mahajan, *Constitutional History of India*, p. 239.
- ⁴⁸Stephen. P. Cohen, "Issues, Role and Personality, Kitchener Curzon Dispute," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10 (April 1968): pp. 20-29.
- ⁴⁹Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, pp. 14 -15.
- ⁵⁰E. S. Montague, Secretary of State for India's announcement, 20 August, 1917, Hansard, Commons, 5th Series, vol. 97/1917, pp. 1695-6.
- ⁵¹Ibid.
- ⁵²Political and Military Committee's report.
- ⁵³Resolution no. 3, 29 March 1921 by Sir Shivaswamy Aiyar, India, *Legislative Assembly Debate*, 1921, vol. I, part II, p. 1687.
- ⁵⁴*Montague-Chelmsford Report*, 1918, Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, Cmd, p. 9109.
- ⁵⁵Dr Noor-ul-Haq, *Making of Pakistan: the Military Perspective*, p. 18.
- ⁵⁶Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army*, p. 77.
- ⁵⁷Sir Dashwood Strellell, "The Indian Army before and after 1947," p. 125.
- ⁵⁸Resolution no. 7, 28 March 1921, India Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol. I, p. 1753.
- ⁵⁹Resolution no. 8, 28 March 1921, India Legislative Assembly Debates, 1921, vol. I, p. 1753.
- ⁶⁰Dr. Noor-ul-Haq, *Making of Pakistan: the Military Perspective*, pp. 18-19.
- ⁶¹Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Power, Politics and the People*, p. 224.
- ⁶²Ibid.
- ⁶³Chief of Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson's Comments on 12 January 1922 at a meeting of Indian Military requirements sub-committee of the committee of Imperial defence (Cab 16/38 PRO.)
- ⁶⁴Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army* (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), p. 107.

- ⁶⁵Lieutenant General G. MacMunn, *Martial Races of India* (London: Sampson Low & Co, 1933), p. 346.
- ⁶⁶Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Power, Politics and the People*, p. 222.
- ⁶⁷Nehru Report: All Parties conference, report of the committee appointed by the conference to determine the principles of the constitution of India (Allahabad: All India Congress committee, 1928), pp. 13-14.
- ⁶⁸Chaudhri Mohammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 22-23. Point. 11.
- ⁶⁹*Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee*, 14 November 1926, IOR: L/Mil/17/5/1784, p. 5.
- ⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 227.
- ⁷¹R. C Majumdar, H.C Ray Chaudri and Kilikindar Datta (London: Macmillan, 1953), p. 938.
- ⁷²*New York Times*, 2 April 1942.
- ⁷³Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Power, Politics and The People*, p. 243.
- ⁷⁴Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, p. 17.
- ⁷⁵Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Power, Politics and the People*, p. 294.
- ⁷⁶A note by Auchinleck on the strategic implications of the inclusion of Pakistan in the British Commonwealth (with attached map) dated 11 May 1946, Auchinleck papers MUL/1152.