

THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH RAJ IN SHAPING MODERN PAKISTAN: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

History would not be incomplete without discussing the ambivalent legacies of the British Raj and how it shaped the political, economic, and socio-cultural framework of South Asia in the year 1947 leading to the accession of Pakistan. This paper presents the view that colonial policies, disregarding their main intention to benefit the imperialist powers, actually gave birth to the incorporation of Pakistan both structural, through institutionalization of administration, encouragement of communal identities, and re-organization of the economy and system of education. It uses an approach of history to follow the emergence of modern bureaucracy, codification of legal systems and consolidation of power under the Raj which was passed on to Pakistan after independence. In addition, it discusses the approaches of the British economic policies that absorbed and alienated the subcontinent, which acted into regional inequalities to harden the apprehensions of marginalization in the minds of Muslims. The coming in of Western education and political reforms, which were first intentions to cement the colonies hold, also led to the awakening of the Muslim political consciousness and hence a true avenue through which the Muslim League demanded a people of their own. Through the examination of these related changes, this paper has illuminated the paradox of colonialism, that is, in the very same way that it created an oppressive system in South Asians, it furnished them with the means and structures of identity that they needed to imagine and demand Pakistan. The methodological approach that the given paper adopts is historical-analytical as the sources of primary data (governmental reports, constitutions, works by the contemporary leaders) and secondary scholarly papers are used to evaluate how the undisputable impact of the British Raj on the formation of modern Pakistan can be observed.

Key Words:

British Raj, Colonial Legacy, Pakistan Movement, Partition of India, Modern South Asia

1. Introduction

The history of modern Pakistan is deeply intertwined with the legacy of the British Raj, whose colonial policies shaped the subcontinent's political, social, and economic structures in ways that directly contributed to the emergence of a separate Muslim homeland. From the mid-nineteenth century until 1947, British colonial governance not only transformed the Indian subcontinent but also institutionalized new systems of administration, law, and identity that endured long after independence. In the case of Pakistan, the colonial experience played a dual role: it entrenched divisions within Indian society while simultaneously providing the tools of modern statehood that the Muslim League would later mobilize for Pakistan's creation (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012).

British administrative strategies were critical in reshaping the governance of South Asia. The Raj introduced centralized bureaucracy, codified law, and modern policing, which became the backbone of governance in the successor states, including Pakistan. This administrative machinery, though designed for imperial control, ensured continuity in governance after independence. The civil service, courts, and revenue systems inherited from the Raj remain pillars of Pakistan's institutional framework today, underscoring how colonialism's structural legacy outlived its rulers (Talbot, 2009).

The economic imprint of British rule was equally profound. Colonial economic policies transformed agriculture into a cash-crop economy, integrated India into global trade networks, and introduced railways and telegraphs. Yet, this modernization was uneven and exploitative, concentrating development in certain regions while fostering deep economic inequalities. In

Punjab and Sindh, canal colonization and land reforms altered agrarian relations, producing both prosperity and new elites who later became influential in Pakistan's politics (Ali, 1988). These economic disparities heightened Muslim anxieties of marginalization, feeding into separatist demands.

Education was another sphere through which the British Raj reshaped South Asian society. The introduction of English education and Western curricula, particularly after Macaulay's Minute of 1835, created a new class of Western-educated elites who later spearheaded political movements. For Muslims, institutions like the Aligarh College under Sir Syed Ahmad Khan became crucial for redefining community identity in modern terms. This educational transformation not only bridged Muslims to colonial governance but also provided them with the intellectual foundation to articulate the Two-Nation Theory (Lelyveld, 1996).

The Raj's political reforms were also pivotal in reshaping the trajectory of Indian Muslims. The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 institutionalized separate electorates for Muslims, thereby embedding communal politics into the colonial constitutional framework. While these reforms were intended to accommodate minority demands within the empire, they inadvertently reinforced religious identities as the basis of political mobilization. By the time of the Government of India Act of 1935, Muslim separatism had gained momentum, culminating in the Lahore Resolution of 1940 (Brass, 1994).

Colonial governance also redefined social and cultural relations in the subcontinent. The census, legal categorization, and community-based representation heightened Hindu-Muslim differences, which had previously been more fluid. British policies of divide and rule deepened these divides, particularly as Hindu-majority dominance in Congress politics began to alarm Muslim leaders. This increasing sense of marginalization laid the foundation for Muslim political separatism and strengthened the Muslim League's claim for Pakistan (Pandey, 1990). At the same time, the British Raj inadvertently equipped Indian Muslims with the political vocabulary and organizational tools to resist subordination. Through exposure to Western legal and political traditions, Muslim leaders learned to frame their demands in constitutional and democratic terms. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, once a staunch advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity, later invoked these colonial traditions to argue for Pakistan as a legitimate constitutional solution to communal tensions (Jalal, 1985).

The British economic exploitation of Indian industries also played a part in shaping Muslim consciousness. The decline of traditional Muslim artisan industries, such as textiles in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, created a sense of economic dispossession among Muslims. This economic anxiety, coupled with Hindu dominance in commerce and professions, made Muslim separatism not just a political demand but also an economic necessity in the eyes of many (Roy, 2013).

Religious identity, while historically intertwined with cultural and regional affiliations, was crystallized under colonial rule. British categorization of communities and their policies of communal representation gave new salience to religious boundaries. Movements like the Aligarh Movement and the Deoband seminary responded to these shifts by redefining Muslim identity in both modernist and revivalist directions. These movements, while differing ideologically, ultimately reinforced the idea of a distinct Muslim political and cultural identity that fed into the demand for Pakistan (Qureshi, 1999).

Infrastructure and communication networks under the Raj also reshaped the political landscape. Railways, telegraphs, and postal services facilitated the spread of political ideas, enabled mass mobilization, and connected Muslims across distant regions. The All-India Muslim League used these technologies effectively to spread its message, which would have been far more difficult in pre-colonial conditions (Headrick, 1988).

The Raj also set in motion regional dynamics that later influenced Pakistan's formation. Punjab, with its agricultural prosperity and recruitment in the British Indian Army, emerged as a Muslim-majority province of strategic importance. Similarly, Sindh's separation from Bombay in 1936 created conditions for its alignment with Muslim League politics. These regional developments, shaped by colonial policies, directly fed into the political geography of Pakistan (Talbot, 1996).

The role of the British in constitutional negotiations further cemented their influence on Pakistan's creation. From the Round Table Conferences of the 1930s to the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946, British policymakers continually engaged with Muslim political demands. While seeking to preserve imperial interests, their decisions inadvertently legitimized Muslim claims to nationhood by recognizing them as a distinct political entity (Moore, 1983).

Communal violence during the late colonial period also underscored the fragility of coexistence. The partition riots of 1946–47, though rooted in political failures, were exacerbated by colonial withdrawal and hasty decolonization. This violence made partition appear not only inevitable but also urgent, further validating the Muslim League's argument for Pakistan as a safeguard against Hindu majoritarianism (Gilmartin, 1998).

Thus, the British Raj left a paradoxical legacy for Pakistan: while it was an exploitative colonial system, it simultaneously provided the institutional, political, and cultural tools that enabled the Muslim community to imagine and demand a separate nation. Pakistan inherited not only the boundaries drawn under colonial rule but also the very systems of governance, law, and identity formation that the Raj had imposed. The foundations of modern Pakistan were therefore laid under British rule, long before independence was achieved.

This historical perspective demonstrates that the role of the British Raj in shaping modern Pakistan was not incidental but fundamental. Without the administrative structures, economic changes, political reforms, and communal divisions institutionalized by colonialism, the emergence of Pakistan in 1947 would be difficult to imagine. Understanding this colonial legacy is therefore essential for comprehending both Pakistan's creation and its subsequent challenges as a postcolonial state (Ansari, 2010).

2. Literature Review

Historiography about the legacy of the British Raj in the development of contemporary Pakistan has elicited various interpretations, among them being institutional continuity, and socio-religious change. Another mainstream of literature focuses on the administrative legacy of the Raj and its claims that the colonial forms of bureaucracy directly influenced the state constructs in Pakistan. According to Metcalf and Metcalf (2012), the centralized civil service, judiciary and police institution developed by the British were so institutionalized that they were embraced without much adaptation in Pakistan. Likewise, Talbot (2009) also highlights the role played by this dependence on inherited bureaucratic systems building up the politics of strong central authority in Pakistan, leading to the ongoing tensions between democratic desires and bureaucratic-military prevalence.

Historians of economics have presented a third view with an emphasis and focus upon the exploitative and transformational nature of colonial economic policies. Tom Roy (2013) shows that British assimilation of India into global capitalism produced uneven development to the disadvantage of the areas that are majorities of Muslims and especially Bengal and some areas of Punjab. Ali (1988) demonstrates that the canal settlement in Punjab established a group of faithful Muslim landed farmers whose political superiority post-1947 can be understood as evidence of the agrarian society built absolutely in line with colonialist design. Such documents shed more light on how colonial economic restructuring not only resulted in inequalities, but

also instigated new pieces of controlling power to remain at the center of the Pakistani initial political economy.

Education has been brought out with a lot of focus by the scholars of the formation of Muslim identity. Lelyveld (1996) attributes the Aligarh Movement to be a turning point in which the colonial education policy came into confrontation with Muslim reformist aspirations. The British led to the creation of an elite group of Muslims with the ability to navigate the politics of the modern world through introduction of western knowledge systems. Qureshi (1999) builds on this by revealing how such institutions as Aligarh and Deoband helped generate rival yet complementary visions of Muslim identity: modernist and revivalist. All these developments armed the Muslims to present their demands towards gaining political recognition which culminated into the Pakistan Movement.

Associated concepts of constitutional reforms and unintended consequences of the same have been covered by literature in political science. Brass (1994) maintains that distinct electorates entrenched communal politics threatening to change the direction of Hindu-Muslim relations forever. Jalal (1985) goes a step further and argues that the constitutional architecture left by the British not only gave legitimacy to the Muslim separatism but also gave structural stimulus to it. The Framework of political rights in communal terms made the Raj to unintentionally establish the Two-Nation Theory which was to become the ideological centerpiece upon which the Pakistani nation would be founded.

Colonial sociologists have pointed out how the identity of the Jews in their constitution was shaped by the Raj with classification and listing. As indicated by Pandey (1990), colonial census practices hardened the division of religions and created the sense of a Hindus and Muslims being separate and conflicting communities. Cohn (1996) supports this point of view, arguing that the production of colonial knowledge itself, in the form of the survey, ethnography, or statistics, is what created so-called communities, which in turn had pushed to enter the political arena. To Pakistan, the same implied that not only was the Muslim identity maintained but also refined under the colonial epistemology.

Nationalism historians have also discussed the issues as to whether the Pakistan demand was a natural extension of the colonial policies or a product of particular political actions. The controversial argument which has been put forward by Jalal (1994) is that the aspect of Jinnah to seek Pakistan as a nation was merely a bargain and not a set target. In comparison, Ansari (2010) emphasizes that the separatism of the Muslim had very long historical backgrounds, which however, was compressed and speeded up by the colonial gatherings. This discussion shows that the constitutional concessions that the Raj made produced a double effect and both emboldened the Muslim leadership as well as limited their options and propelled these toward separatism.

The thinking and practice of communalism and violence adds to that of colonialism. Gilmartin (1998) highlights the fact that the rushed British exit and incorrect gambit to partition were among the factors that increased Hindu-Muslim violence, which confirmed the importance of partition in the minds of the Muslims. Likewise, according to Brass (2003), colonial policies of divide and rule, and the paralysis of the administration in its later years, had created the conditions of large-scale violence. According to these works, the idea that partition was merely a collective request was simply untrue and also a result of some colonial mismanagement.

Postcolonial scholars have discussed the imperial ruins that work outward in the structures that Pakistan inherited as legacies of the colonial regime. Jalal (1995) maintains that institutions of the state were overbuilt with the Raj and hence there were no space or room to foster democratic traditions which has resulted in the cyclic periods of authoritarian rule in Pakistan. Talbot (1998) concurs and illustrates how the power of bureaucracy and the military that had so far dominated the colonial experience also seamlessly went through the political path of Pakistan.

According to the literature then, the problems facing post-colonial Pakistan cannot be divested of its colonial legacy.

Other texts adopt a comparative context to place the establishment of the Pakistani state within the greater trends of colonial state building. Using this example, Moore (1983) compares partition with other colonial exit situations, whereby colonialists preferred to disengage at a jolting pace as compared to planning. The formation of Pakistan in this respect was a part of an international trend of accelerated decolonization, which abandoned unsettled territorial and ethno-communal issues. Such an approach places the experience of Pakistan in a global colonial context in place of looking at it as a unique entity.

A different literary area criticizes the impact of nationalist historiography because of insensitivity to the structural influence of the Raj. According to such scholars as Chatterjee (1993), Indian nationalist discourses and Pakistani nationalist discourses both underrate the impact of colonial knowledge and control over postcolonial nations. Recapturing the colonial aspect, these scholars put Pakistan in a different (or rather new) position as a country as the byproduct of Muslim nationalism but as a result of a rigorously colonial engagement. This opening statement is important as it highlights that the issue of modernity in Pakistan cannot exist outside its colonial history.

Lastly, there is a constant conflict described in the literature between the continuity of colonialism and postcolonial disruption. Whereas continuity of administrative structures has been emphasized by some historians, some focus on the creative role of Muslim leaders who transformed colonial structures to become instruments of separatism. The agreement goes, however, that their conclusions would have been different, particularly without the Raj being allowed to intervene in matters of the administration, the economy, education, and identity formation in the country. This culminates the British Raj not as a marginal situation but has been the driving force in forming the borders of Pakistani country today.

3. Research Methodology

This research is based on historical-analytical research strategy in exploring how the British Raj has a role in modern Pakistan. The method is the critical work on primary and secondary sources that place events, policies and ideas in historical contexts. The major sources are reports conducted by the colonial government, legislative act like the Indian Councils Act of 1909, the Government of India Act of 1935, reports of Round Table Conferences, and the writings of such people as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Ali Jinnah during that time. The papers shedding some light on the societal formations in political representation, community identification and governance of the areas was the colonial policies. Secondary sources consist in scholarly monographs, peer-reviewed articles, and historical syntheses by such leading historians as: Ayesha Jalal; Ian Talbot; Francis Robinson and Barbara Metcalf; which provide frames of interpretation within which the colonial legacy should be understood. The work uses thematic analysis, which emphasizes on administrative institutions, economic changes, identity formation as well as communal politics in an attempt to trace continuities and discontinuities between colonial rule and post-colonial Pakistan. Also, the methodology has employed a comparative angle and placed the rise of Pakistan in larger trends of British withdrawal and decolonization in Asia and Africa. Various sources and viewpoints make the research triangulated, thus ensuring validity and reliability; at the same time, taking a critical approach to the problem, it recognizes not only the exploitative aspects of the colonialism but also how it gave Indian Muslims the instruments of modern statehood, in which it was not originally intended to enable them (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2012; Jalal, 1985; Talbot, 2009).

4. Discussion

4.1 Colonial Administrative Legacy

The British Raj essentially transformed how South Asia was governed by establishing a centralized administrative system which remains in defining the political nature of the South Asian countries today, especially modern Pakistan. The formation of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) known as the steel frame of British India gave the colonial government a disciplined bureaucracy that could sustain the majority ruled by a large and diverse territory. The responsibilities of this bureaucracy included collection of taxes, law and order and enforcement of colonial laws across provinces. This was one of the administrative frameworks inherited in full at independence in 1947 by Pakistan, which provided it with instant institutional continuity. According to Metcalf and Metcalf (2012), this bureaucratic legacy is the reason why, with such critical shortages of trained staff and political chaos in its establishment, Pakistan nevertheless had functioning governance structures in its inception. But the continuity also implied that the new state was inherited under imperial models of controlling formations during times of democratic responsibility.

The legal system codified in the British was one of the most persistent characteristics of the given administrative legacy. With the establishment of the Indian Penal code (1860) and the criminal Procedure code (1898) and other laws, they were able to develop a standardized legal system that governed civil and criminal affairs. This codification gave Pakistan a ready-to-navigate system of laws at independence which made state formation less difficult. Nevertheless, as could be noted by Talbot (2009), these laws were directly influenced by the colonial interests, which included the ability to suppress opposition of dissatisfaction and defense of the executive, but not safeguarding personal liberty. This meant that the postcolonial legal culture in Pakistan had a coercive aspect to it with laws being frequently understood as a means of state power as opposed to one that enforced democratic rights. This dynamic is relevant to the fact that Pakistan has long had a problem with the problems of civil liberties and judicial autonomy.

The other important aspect of the administrative legacy was colonial police institutions. A modern police force was brought to stamp out unrest to control political activities in order to protect the interests of the colonies, which were brought to Britain by the British. They were greatly centralized forces as well, and were accountable not just to local communities, but to the state. This policing system was passed to Pakistan, and, helpful in the state of affairs, tended to give priority to the security of the state in contrast to the trust that people have. Jalal (1995) observes that this helped fuel the continuity of a security-centered state apparatus in Pakistan whereby internal dissent was often subjected to national instability. This colonial way of policing still reflects in the security policies of Pakistan and its consistent use of coercion as a response to both political and social issues.

British established a good culture of centralized authority as well. The power stood in the hands of the viceroy and provincial governors and the local populations were poorly represented. This system of government dictated the initial political path of Pakistan as the central government continued to hold power usually at the cost of provincial autonomy. The imbalance between the center and the provinces most notably between East and West Pakistan was a direct inheritance of colonial administrative centralization (Talbot, 1996). This centralized control heritage was instrumental in the continuous arguments of the federal structure of Pakistan to the extent that in 1971 East Pakistan seceded.

Lastly, the administrative legacy left a significant real contribution to politics in the regions. The British had returned a proportional investment in infrastructure and administration to Punjab as a reward, because of its allegiance to the British during the Revolt of 1857, and as a source of most recruits into the British Indian Army. This brought about the rise of Punjab as a

politically strong power in Pakistan in 1947 and other provinces facilitated as mostly being marginalized. On the same note, the Sindh secession to Bombay Presidency in 1936 was an administrative move that enhanced their own political identity as well as a move that led to their subsequent affiliation with Muslim League (Ali, 1988). These local imbalances that are buttressed by colonial decisions on administration still predetermine the internal politics of Pakistan. The administrative apparatuses and spatial assemblies crafted by the Raj, therefore, facilitated Pakistan in its first stage of state-building as well as anchoring the Holes of authoritarianism and provincial inequality which have become stagnant till now.

4.2 Economic Impact

The British Raj economic policies left a very transform but exploitative effect on Indian subcontinent and their legacies are still felt to date in political economy of Pakistan. Colonial powers reorganized agriculture into imperial uses, where people were encouraged to produce cash crops like cotton, indigo and wheat to export them to the British factories. The change had destabilized subsistence production and linked local economies to international markets in a highly vulnerable manner that exceeded to changes in demand. The British had engaged in colossal canal colonization activities in Punjab which transformed the arid land into flourishing agrarian colonies resulting in a surging agrarian production (Ali, 1988). These projects produced a new landed elite that a most significant number were Muslims and became powerful, political people in colonial and postcolonial politics. Therefore, although the colonial economic politics continued to imbibe the effects of exploiting others, it simultaneously gave rise to the emergence of the Muslim rural elite which on the other hand was significant in future Pakistan politics.

The other characteristic of colonial economic policy was income through infrastructure development, but had the major purpose of extracting resources. The presence of railway, telegraphs and roads facilitated the British to export raw materials in rural hinterlands efficiently to the ports. Headrick (1988) observes that the British technological innovations, however, had a political backfire even though they formulated them as the used instruments of empire. Raileries helped unite its disparate parts and even political movements like All-India Muslim league could count on more than merely in-province mobilization. The transmissions of nationalistic ideas were also enhanced through the improved communications which allowed the Muslim leaders to project their demands nationally on an all-India scale. In this sense, colonial infrastructure programs ironically strengthened the separatist and nationalist forms of politics that would rise to complicate the hold of the imperialism.

Colonial industrial policy was, however, quite harmful to the Muslim economic interests. The competitive pressure of machine-produced British imports forced traditional industries in which the Muslims had been popularly strong (textiles, handicrafts, small-scale manufacturing) into decline. Roy (2013) states that this deindustrialization had a disproportional impact among Muslims with Bengal and Uttar Pradesh being the more negatively affected areas where they experienced economic marginalization. Meanwhile, more community members became involved in business and careers in Hindu societies, which produced a sense of an unequal economy between the two groups. This increasing economic inequality reinforced the Muslim anxieties of inferiority in a Hindu-majority India, and made the idea of a special homeland, in which Muslim interests would be protected, easier to accept.

It was also the rural economies that were made colonial land revenue systems. The zamindari and the Ryotwari of other areas levied very high rates of taxes on the peasants, and they found themselves left with debts, having become poor. But in Punjab the British had carefully retained peasant ownership and they invested in irrigation canals where they encouraged relative prosperity. According to the report by Talbot (1996), such regionalization meant that there were

uneven developmental patterns and that Punjab turned out to be a very well-established economically resilient and politically faithful province. This colonial economic engineering, which favored some regions over others and lagged others, can be traced in the prominence of Punjab in the later political-military set up of Pakistan. In this manner, the unequal regionalism established through the colonial economic policies was inherited by the postcolonial state.

The general effect of the British economic policy was the assimilation of South Asia into a world economy so designed as to profit the empire. This habit of exporting raw indigenous industrialization by depending on exporting raw materials and importing manufactured goods which were produced in Britain. But there were also the new social and political classes emerging in this system of exploitation, especially among Muslims in Punjab and Sindh, who took an advantage with the colonial agricultural policies. According to Ansari (2010), the external support that Pakistan needed to establish itself is adulated by these elites who subsequently joined the Muslim league when it was advanced to form the rural assistance base needed in the formation of Pakistan. In this definition, colonial economic policies were hypocritical: as much as they enriched many Muslims and secured the economic vulnerability, they also created new elites and infrastructures that enabled the flourishing of Muslim separatism. A residual trace of these colonial economic changes persists in Pakistan in the form of centuries of rural-elite domination and asymmetrical regional development.

4.3 Education and Identity Formation

British Raj education had a decisive role in coming up with Muslim identity and a catalyst to demand Pakistan. With the advent of western education emerged a new breed of English-informed Muslims who came out to play in the political arena. Although colleges like Aligarh Muslim University, which was established by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, had reinforced the idea of loyalty to the British, and the pursuit of modern education, they also made the students conscious of their difference as Muslims (Lelyveld, 1996). Such duality implied that western education became a middle between colonial institutions and Muslim nationalism. In privileging some of their institutions and communities, the British led to Muslim possession of the intellectual means necessary to define their politics separatism.

Not all educational access was, however, equal and Muslims commonly lagged in colonial opportunity than Hindus themselves. New prospects offered by British stress on meritocracy in education and English language, via new the English language became new sources of work, and Hindu communities, especially Bengali, sessionists, took up these new sources earlier and more energetically. This lack led to even greater uneasiness by the Muslims who feared on their part to be sidelined economically and politically in a Hindu dominated India (Robinson, 2000). Education therefore, became not only a means of intergenerational movement, but also an indicator of community inequality, which reinforced the need to protect and subsequently partition.

Meanwhile colonial educational derangements gave rise to a discussion among Muslim society concerning the right effects of traditions and modernity. There were reformist movements as the Deoband School where religious education was identified to maintain the Islamic identity and the Aligarh movement, which favored the Western education. According to Metcalf (1982), this contradiction between the reformist and the modernist strands brought about a plural intelligent tradition of Muslims that contributed to the wider discourse in politics. Finally, the British educational policies which were aimed at supporting the administration of the empire triggered a process of identity-making that further delimits the scope of the Hindu and Muslim communities and the cultural background of Pakistan.

4.4 Political Developments

British Raj affected in a significant way political institutes in India and provided a foundation to Muslims league and eventually Pakistan. Limited types of representation were also introduced by constitutional changes, e.g. the Indian Councils Act (1909) or the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919) but also institutionalized communal divisions by providing separate electorates of Muslims (Hardy, 1972). Although these reforms were not real democracy, they provided Muslims with a political base and strengthened the perception of Muslims as unique political community that deserved special attention. This was an important pivotal point of the course toward partition.

The establishment of provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act (1935) further intensified political mobilization. This was the first instance when Muslims would be allowed to contribute to provincial rule and hence the expansion of the influence of Muslim league over especially Muslim majoritarian like Punjab and Bengal (Talbot, 2009). Despite the British attempt to strike a balance between competing communal needs to maintain the imperial stability, the reforms reinforced Muslim political awareness and institutionalized the idea of having minority rights. These actions not only provided Muslims with a voice through which they could be able to express their political requests, but also led to the legitimization of the concept of separate political representation.

In addition, communal tensions were entrenched in the political environment as a result of the colonial policy of divide and rule. The British system that promoted the Hindu-Muslim rivalry over labor, education and parliamentary seats led to the establishment of a tradition in which unity was usually sacrificed to group interests (Jalal, 1985). This would be passed on during the last decades of the empire as the Muslim league became the only faction representing the interests of the Muslims. Colonial political structure therefore was a direct influence of organization and ideological foundation of the creation of Pakistan.

4.5 Socio-Religious Dimensions

The socio-religious structure of South Asia also changed with the British Raj and this affected the Pakistan Movement. The process of census that categorized groups of people in terms of religion, made communal identities more rigid making the interaction between different faiths in India less fluid as in the past (Cohn, 1987). When the British divided people into fixed religious groupings, they also set divisions in place, which nationalist leaders exploited by mobilizing them. This system of administration offered statistical rationalization of political claims on grounds of religious minorities and majorities.

Colonial reforms combined with missionary activity increased the concerns of the Muslims even more. Any attempt or effort of advocating Christian education and conversion was seen as threats in relation to Islamic identity and this gave rise to a revival of Islamic reform movements (Metcalf, 1982). Deobandis organizations and the Bareilvis alongside the others like the Aligarh modernists appeared to defend the Islamic traditions, whilst others managed to find solutions with the structures of the colonial regime. Though of different orientation, these movements supported each other in a sense of awareness of Muslim separateness. The British therefore accidentally had a religiously charged atmosphere that made the identity political.

Also, inter-religious antagonism was aggravated by the politics of community promoted by colonial policies. Politics became religious as initiatives like separate electorates, combined with political competition in the context of British reform, put politics in religious context. Instead, Ansari (2010) begins by accusing these divisions of making religion the major axis of politics which held more weight than class or regional identity. The socio-religious policies of the Raj not just only solidified communal divisions but also formed the backbone to the Two-Nation Theory upon which the establishment of Pakistan was based on.

4.6 The Road to Partition

By the early twentieth century, the net effect of the colonial policies had put India on an irreversible course towards partition. The Muslim League, the originally all-loyalist Muslim League (opposed to the 1947 partition) which once acted as a supporting body in 1906, slowly morphed into the container used to channel Muslim separatism, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The British political structure has conditioned this conversion, as it afforded a lot of power to the League unintentionally as it focused on communal representation (Jalal, 1985). The insistence on that characteristic, ratified by the colonialists of the need to frame politics in terms of community implied that the concept of a distinct Muslim nation came to be useful both politically and popularly speaking.

The Second World War quickened the procedure of the decolonization process and made the tensions among the community members visible. The demands of independence were increased by British reliance on Indian supplies and troops in the war, and crossed by Hindu and Muslim conception of the future that made concession hard. The unsuccessfulness of negotiations e.g. the Cripps Mission (1942) and the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946) indicated the distrust to the utmost between the communities (Moore, 1983). This need to contain these differences by the British led the partition to being more than what it could have been as a possibility.

Finally, the British move at haste to hand over power and failure to control the communal violence soon enough was the death sentence of the subcontinent. The hasty division of 1947 was at once a product of the pressure of the British Empire, and a commitment to the tradition of provincial policies which had fixed religious identities and antagonisms. According to Talbot and Singh (2009), partition was the logical end of decades of colonial domination as well as a violent fragmentation that reorganized South Asia. The birth of Pakistan was the immediate result of a historical path that has been entrenched and entwined in British Raj structures, policies and legacies.

5. Conclusion

There was a complex legacy of the British Raj that influenced the development of Pakistan a lot. The colonial state exercised a policy through its administrative policies, educational reforms and political arrangement to institutionalize communal identities and establish structures that both limited and gave power to the South Asian Muslims. Although the British mainly aimed to preserve the stability within the empire, their governing policies of separate electorates, the system of census and selective treatment of educational patronage further polarized Hindus and Muslims. Such developments did not only strengthen the fears that the people in Islam had towards their sidelining, but also gave them the political and intellectual apparatus to communicate their alienation, which eventually contributed to the demand of Pakistan.

Simultaneously, the road to partition cannot be explained only through the lens of British organization, it was also the participation of the role of Indian leaders, reformist movements, and even the socio-political changes that occurred in the 19th and 20th century. However, the colonial system gave them the space where these forces were acted out and, in many cases, increased political and institutional religious and communal divisions. Pakistan therefore was created not only as a result of native level of political mobilization, but also as a result of the indigenous Britons language policies which inadvertently fostered the same fragmentation they fought once created. Pakistan was a product of colonial contradictions in its location in the sense that the two institutions out of modernism in addition to communal politics informed the creation of a new nation.

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