

movements and change at the level of the peasant masses much more than older writing, and recent studies such as that by Sarkar (1989) and the series of 'subaltern' (non-élite) studies by Guha and his associates do adopt this wider perspective. It is also possible to quote the outsider, Deakin, observing the British not just as irrigation engineers, but as imperialist administrators

'Finally, then, the British government of India is a compound of contradictions, for, while practically absolute in authority and vested in two or three men entirely, it is supposed by many to be controlled by a popular assembly; military in spirit, it is bureaucratic in method, and pacific in end; conservative in practice, it adopts many radical principles; and, committed wholly at first, and often still, to the energy, judgement and initiative of individuals, it has created for them a complete system of written regulations embracing the whole field of possible activity. No public service is so constrained by the pen, and yet even the civil members of it may be said to live in the shadow of the sword. Separated by immense distances which forbid frequent personal association, all business is conducted by correspondence; the affairs of the country from the most momentous foreign relations to the pettiest details, being set out upon papers which are passed from hand to hand. It is a Government of minutes based upon memos' (Deakin, 1893:28)

'British India, in short, is British neither in race, religion, language, policy, sentiment, nor aspiration. Garrisoned by a few Britons, and governed by still fewer, it not only retains its Asiatic complexion but impresses its character to a large extent upon its conquerors. The British in India have themselves ceased to be British in many respects. They have developed castes and curious creeds, walk with troops of retainers, live like Persian satraps or Roman proconsuls, coming at last to think and speak in the phrase of the Orient, and with its vivid colouring. It is they who have adapted themselves to the Hindu, and not the Hindu who has taken their imprint. It was not to strengthen her hold upon her British subjects that the time-honoured title of the Queen was altered to that of Empress of India. Bearing in mind how few are the whites in proportion to the hordes of varied hue who swarm from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, and the extent to which they have required to stoop to the conditions of life in the tropics in order to conquer, it is not too much to say that the first fact requiring to be fixed in the mind of the inquirer is that India today is altogether Asiatic in the spirit and form of its life and institutions, and British only in flag, in fame, and in name' (Deakin, 1893:29)

The New Nationalisms and the Politics of Reaction

7.1 Contesting Dynamics

The new geography of India also had a new cultural dimension, in particular there now existed a new lingua franca that enabled educated people to communicate with one another from furthest north to the deepest south. It is possible to exaggerate the importance of this – it is said that in the 1930's less than half of 1% spoke English. But equally one should not underestimate the significance of that 0.5%, the new intelligentsia and middle class, nor forget that it was the language of the courts, of much of business and commerce, and it was also the most important access to the new institutions of higher learning. And in addition, the railways and the posts conveyed the speakers and the pamphlets, newspapers and private messages from one region to another.

Here were the means to promote new senses of identity across India.

The new communications also connected India increasingly with political ideas derived from other parts of the world (initially mostly from parliamentary Britain) and also led to an increasing awareness of the great events elsewhere – such as early in the twentieth century the defeat of great imperialist Russia at the hands of the Japanese. That was followed by the First World War, in which omnipotent Europe was exposed as a divided and destructive civilisation, and in which Britain in particular came perilously close to defeat. Out of the ashes emerged the post-isolationist anti-colonialist democratic America and the anti-imperialist revolutionary Russia of the masses.

Here were new models of power and independence.

But there was an unevenness with which the two largest communities of India – the Hindus and the Muslims – took up the new ideas and the new opportunities. After the Mutiny the Muslims were to an extent kept out by the British (Persian was no longer the language of Government), but also to at least as great an extent, opted out. They had their traditional patterns of Islamic education, and had during their time of imperial ascendancy largely left commerce in the hands of the Hindu merchant groups. It was mostly, therefore, the Hindus who filled the ranks of the emerging urban middle classes, and who accepted much of the higher education that was becoming available. In 1878 there were 3,200 graduates from the new universities – nearly 3,150 were Hindu. Of course, this is only a generalisation; but even the exceptions to it demonstrated the way in which thoughtful Muslims perceived the trend in history. There were indeed great Muslim families who accepted much that the West had to offer, and some, for example, became eminent barristers.

One of the greatest of these was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the founder in 1875 of the Muslim University at Aligarh, in the heartland of the former Mughal Empire. He was concerned that when the British arbiters left, the Muslims' interests would be subservient to the Hindus'

Here was the anxiety of minority groups wondering what a future majority rule would mean.

The British knew that they would not rule India for ever. Lord Hastings wrote in India in 1818:

'a time not very remote will arrive when England will, on sound principles of policy, wish to relinquish the domination which she has gradually and unintentionally assumed over this country and from which she cannot at present recede' (cited in Coupland, 1942 Pt1:18)

In 1844 Henry Lawrence wrote:

'We cannot expect to hold India for ever. Let us so conduct ourselves... as, when the connexion ceases, it may do so not with convulsions but with mutual esteem and affection, and that England may then have in India a noble ally enlightened and brought into the scale of nations under her guidance and fostering care.' (cited in Coupland, 1942 Pt1:18)

There seemed in these dimly perceived futures the tacit acceptance that the India left behind would be a single India, because that was what the British had to some degree created, and were both intentionally and unintentionally cementing. But the policy by which such a goal could be achieved was not seen, and indeed the goal seemed so remote that there seemed little point in trying to define prematurely the form or forms of the successor state. The parliamentarian John Bright in 1877 mused in prescient form:

'Thus, if the time should come – and it will come ... – when the power of England, from some cause or other, is withdrawn from India, then each one of those States would be able to sustain itself as a compact, as a self-governing community. You would have five or six great States there, as you have five or six great States in Europe: but that would be a thousand times better than our being withdrawn from it now when there is no coherence amongst those twenty nations, and when we should find the whole country, in all probability, lapse into chaos and anarchy and into sanguinary and interminable warfare.' (Cited in Coupland, 1942 Pt1:50-51)

The British had founded an Empire and seen most of it become a Commonwealth, an imperial grouping of states that evolved through a 'colonial model' to (in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) Dominion Status, that is to say self-governing Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, all linked to the crown, and all contributors to a global defence network. India, of course, was different – a thing unto itself, *sui generis* – by accident part of this Empire, but not settled by white English-speaking people and with such an ancient and strong culture

of its own, and yet such a valuable part of the Empire, particularly in terms of global defence strategies, to say nothing of its economic and psychological value.

Here was the parent with a wayward adopted child, anxious that he should grow up to be a partner in the family firm.

Looked at with hindsight it is almost as if from the moment that British power was consolidated the race was on to determine the form of the successor state(s) and the division of the spoils between the inheritors. Why, given the ineluctable progress of neutral time, call this a race? Because, the different forces we have just outlined developed at different speeds; but all had a bearing on the outcome, while they were developing with momenta that sometimes rebounded off each other, sometimes developed their own internal dynamic, and sometimes were randomly spurred by the emergence of new charismatic leaders.

When Lord Stockton was asked what had been the greatest difficulties with which his government had had to contend when, as Harold MacMillan, he was Prime Minister in the U.K. in the 1960s, he replied 'Events.' Perhaps above all it was the events that happened outside of the forces I have named that determined the outcome of the race, for these would change the backdrop against which the players played, and would indeed change the personalities of the players too. Above all it was the British who failed to see that 'Events' would not provide them with the time to give ground inch by inch until a Dominion of brown Englishmen became a fully-fledged partner of the family firm. 'Events' could shake the sands of time a little faster through the hour glass.

7.2 The Structure of Government in British India and the Problem of an Evolutionary Transfer of Power

At the time of the Mutiny two thirds of India was directly governed by the British, the other third being governed by the Princes of the Native States, who were internally autocrats, but externally bound by treaty as vassals of the British. There were 562 of these, 100 or so being of major significance or some degree of importance, another 100 of some note, and the remainder minor estates, sometimes not much more than a village or two altogether. Virtually none of the significant states, with the possible exception of Travancore (in modern Kerala), approximated any geographical or cultural homogeneity, and very often not only did they comprise a mixture of races and languages, but quite often the ruler was of a different religion from the majority of his subjects – a Muslim Nizam in Hyderabad ruling over Hindus, or a Hindu Maharaja in Kashmir ruling over Muslims.

It could be argued in hindsight that these anachronisms should have been tidied up, and that, as the paramount power, the British could have forced new treaties on the Princes. And, indeed, independent India and Pakistan have basically done just that, and finally eliminated them (except there is no agreed solution on Kashmir). But the British were aware, in post-Mutiny India, that not only was their annexation of the State of Oudh (modern Awadh) one of the many resentments that

had fuelled it, they had also only survived it with the help of States that had remained loyal. There was also the profound British reverence for heredity and aristocracy. The Viceroys were drawn from the aristocracy (or recruited to it). British democracy's Upper Chamber was filled with hereditary peers – 'a stabilising influence' – and both houses acted in the name of the Monarch. The princes not only saw themselves as stabilising influences in India, the British accepted too that they had that role. With Durbars and twenty-one gun salutes (or less, depending on keenly contested status), both sides could use each other as excuses for mutually satisfying displays of pomp, privilege and power. One way to have incorporated the princes totally within the British establishment would have been to establish a British peerage system for them, and Lord Lytton (Viceroy 1876-80) even contemplated just such a move.

British India was entirely different. Its Government was a unitary executive – that is to say a single executive structure with responsibility for all of the British Provinces, with the Governor-General/Viceroy at the apex. Although responsible for the governance of British India, the Governor-General was responsible, by Act of Parliament, to the Secretary of State for India, a Cabinet Minister, who acted with the assistance of the India Council in London. The Council's membership was appointed by the Secretary, and usually comprised senior British India hands. As a Cabinet Minister the Secretary of State was obviously finally accountable to Parliament. Thus, we have the Government of India ultimately being accountable to the elected members and unelected peers of the British Houses of Parliament. Mostly by historical accident, the British had assumed extra-territorial power. The East India Company had been granted the governance of Bengal by the Mughal Emperor, but the British Parliament had exerted closer control over the Company as its power grew. When, finally, the last pretence and symbol of Mughal power had been abolished, and the Company wound up too, the only power in British India was of this extra-territorial kind. In what ways could power be repatriated? In what ways could responsibility be repatriated? And how would the repatriation of the two rebound on each other?

Government operates through institutions, is staffed by personnel, has responsibilities it defines for itself, and applies them to the given territory. It needs money to finance its own establishment, and to discharge the other functions it has defined. We can examine the problems posed by each of these in turn.

Put simply, it was impossible for the Secretary of State in London to take day-to-day decisions of government and, therefore, much of his actual power was vested in the Governor-General in India. He too could not assimilate all functions to himself – indeed could do so less than the Mughal Emperors had done, because each Governor-General served for a much shorter period of time, and because the complexity of the modernising economy was greater. He, therefore, like the Secretary of State in London also had an Executive Council, to which he appointed members, known as official members, who guided his conduct of government. In many spheres he needed their majority consent for action: but the principle of accountability was not violated, since the members were appointed by him, and there were also emergency provisions. There was nothing to prevent the appointment of Indians

to the Council, and after the Act of 1861 indeed Indians were appointed; but, as one might imagine, these were senior and conservative supporters of the British Government, whose criticisms were circumspect.

The staff of the Indian Civil Service were also ultimately appointed by the Secretary of State, were salaried by him, and he was responsible for the terms and conditions of their appointment. There was nothing to prevent the Secretary appointing as many Indians as he felt fit; but in practice since the examinations for recruitment were held in Britain, the senior ranks were in the majority British. In fact, one of the bones of contention of the new nationalists in India in the late nineteenth century was that at a time when it was hoped the service would be Indianised, and when Indians were prepared to travel to England for the examinations, the age of candidates was lowered to a point which effectively precluded all but those who were schooled in Britain.

The functions which the Government had assumed for itself pre-eminently included defence and internal law and order, but also of necessity a growing number of 'development' fields such as communications, large-scale irrigation, and the regulation of commerce from the local scale (through regulated markets and official weights and measures) to the international scale (through the determination of tariffs etc.).

In the same way that the complexity of Government meant in practice that the Secretary of State in London had to operate through the Governor-General in India, so he in his turn could not administratively cope with the whole of British India as a single unit, and hence the Province again duplicated the same institutional ideas. They had Governors (some lesser ones had only Lieutenant-Governors etc) who also in the main operated with their Executive Councils, to whom again they appointed members. In their day the Mughals had also had their provinces, but in those days required more because of the difficulties in communication than the complexity of government, whereas in the 19th Century although the complexity of government increased, the growing communications meant that the Secretary of State in London became more closely involved, and the government in Calcutta more strongly felt in the Provinces.

The principle of responsibility which led to such centralisation was obviously reflected in the financial structure as well. The finances raised in the Provinces were all part and parcel of the 'Revenues of the Government of India'. It would not have been easily possible for the Governor-General to discharge his responsibility to the Secretary of State, if the Provincial Governors could raise and disburse money as they felt fit.

What Indian national sentiment would want in due time, of course, was for their government to be *responsible* to them; in the broadest sense simply to be Indian. It was apparently impossible for a government to be responsible simultaneously to two different polities, one British and the other Indian, and hence the obvious demand would be for the immediate transfer of all powers to a native government. This immediately raised the question of what sort of government, and there was a broad consensus that it would be in some manner *representative*. But here

was a catch-22 situation. Until such time as the mechanisms and institutions for representation existed, the only possibility would have been to transfer power arbitrarily to some autocratic person or institution. Before such a transfer of power, representative institutions could be created, but to whom the government would not be responsible. This was not a scenario for a friction-free evolutionary process: and indeed during the heat of the friction of the next decades Congress and Gandhi in the 1930s did demand that the British simply go, and leave Congress as the sole authority in India, to devise whatever constitution it thought best.

7.3 The Process of Constitutional Concession

The British did attempt over the decades from 1857 to 1947 to guide and constrain the different forces at work within a changing constitutional framework. They made changes in 1861, 1892 and 1909, all of which increased Indian representation but without conceding self-government as a long term goal. In 1917 that goal was conceded, and followed by the Act of 1919 which made some degree of responsibility possible, and the Act of 1935 which continued to work towards self-government in a Federal framework, and which remained in force during the Second World War and to Independence in 1947. It remained the Constitution for India until 1950 and for Pakistan until 1956. The success of these constitutional changes in constraining the forces at work was limited but important. The Indian National Congress basically refused to cooperate except between 1934 and 1939, and thereby provoked some of the tension for change: the Muslim League in the end refused to cooperate, and demanded Partition with Independence. Perhaps, no matter what the constitutional changes, the end result would have been very nearly the same: but there is no denying that the expectations of the outcome of the dialogues were greatly influenced by these institutional developments.

In 1861 the Indian Councils Act provided for the expansion of the Executive Councils to become Legislative Councils: and at the same time new members were added in a 'Non-official Capacity' – at least half of whom had to be from outside the civil service, and were in practice senior figures in Indian life (as perceived by the British). But the official members of the Councils outnumbered them – if they had not done so it might have been possible for the 'unofficial members' to thwart the concept of responsibility to the British Parliament. In 1883 Lord Ripon instituted the principle of elected membership of local Municipal Councils and Rural District Boards, although not with the intention that it represented any abdication of the powers of central government. But, ominously, the leader of the Muslim community, Syed Ahmad Khan observed:

... in borrowing from England the system of representative institutions, it is of the greatest importance to remember those socio-political matters in which India is distinguishable from England. The system of representation by election means the representation of the views and interests of the majority of the population, and, in countries where the population is composed of one race and one creed, it is no doubt

the best system that can be adopted. But ... in a country such as India I am convinced that the introduction of the principle of election, pure and simple, for representation of various interests on the local boards and district councils, would be attended with evils of greater significance than purely economic considerations ... Government, in reserving to itself the power of appointing one third of the members of the local boards and district councils, is adopting the only measure which can be adopted to guarantee the success of local self-government, by securing and maintaining that due balance in the representation of the various sections of the Indian population which the system of election, pure and simple, would fail to achieve.' (Cited in Coupland, 1942 Pt1:155)

In 1885 the Indian National Congress held its inaugural meeting in Bombay, attended by 72 delegates from most parts of India. Its foundation was accepted with some mild degree of enthusiasm by the Viceroy Lord Dufferin, who felt that here would be a useful body of expression of the feelings of the subjects. The delegates hoped that its foundation would prove the germ of a native parliament, but nevertheless avowed their loyalty to the King Emperor. The membership included retired British officials from the Civil Service as well as the majority of Indian delegates. Naturally, the body wished not only to express opinions, but to push for more representative government, and shortly after its foundation had asked for the principle of election to be conceded for the Provincial and Central Councils. The Act of 1892 compromised over the issue: recommendations were sought for some of the non-official members – and, in effect, those who were recommended were chosen by unofficial election.

Congress had Muslim members from the beginning – and always has had. Several times Muslims were elected to the party Presidency. But they were not many – in fact at all times proportionately less than their share of the population. Some Muslim leaders were not slow to realise that the Act of 1892 might well be followed by others widening the extent of representative government and, therefore, began a campaign to urge the government to protect the rights of minority groups. In 1906, as the next move came closer, they held the inaugural meeting of the All-India Muslim League in Dacca (now Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh).

The tempo of change did not satisfy the growing body of nationalist opinion, who became increasingly concerned to exercise some influence over, for example, the budget, which was as closely controlled by the Governors as ever. Much of the strongest sentiment was felt in Bengal, where extremists, although not with a wide popular base, began terrorist attacks on government officials. The new nationalism was in fact pushing not just against the principle of accountability, but also against the conservatism and rigidity of mind of the bureaucracy which the British had created. In the end it was bound to lay bare the essential imperialism that gripped the highest levels of the administration, exemplified at its apogee by Lord Curzon (Viceroy 1899-1905), noted for his establishment of the North-West Frontier Province, his enthusiastic founding of the Archaeological Survey, some beneficial measures in land reform and rural debt, scientific progress in agriculture, but also a

number of arrogant follies culminating in the partition of Bengal in 1905. This was a significant stimulus to the foundation of the Muslim League.

Representation had a territorial basis. Provincial Councils were Councils of Provinces with defined borders, which of course defined the persons affected by those councils, and the arena within which debate over provincial issues would occur. The Bengal that Curzon inherited was huge, far too big for effective administration, and clearly it had to be subdivided. Later, a 'sensible' solution was derived – to

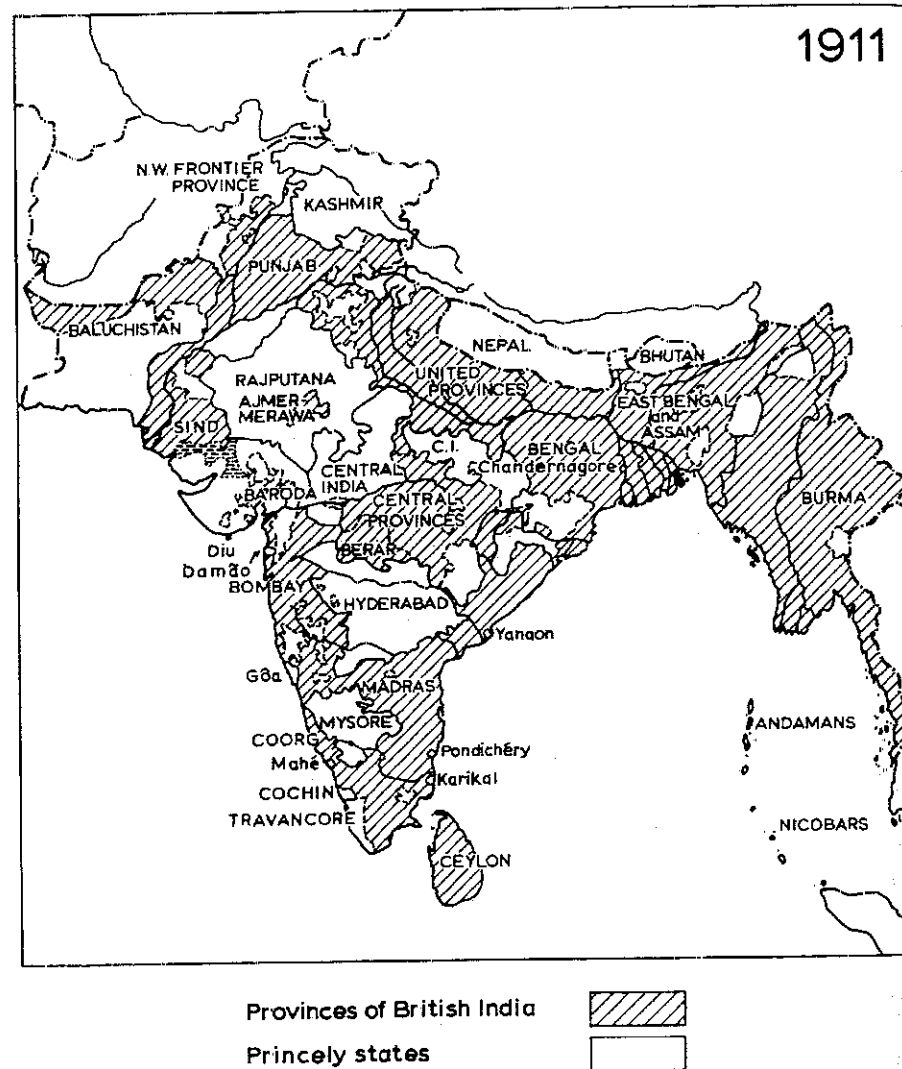


Figure 7.1 The Indian Empire 1911

divide it into three (Bihar with Orissa, Bengal, and Assam) – but Curzon's solution lacked such sensitivity. With scant consultation and apparent august impulse he divided it into two – Bengal, encompassing modern Bihar and Orissa, and East Bengal, approximating modern Bangladesh and Assam (Figure 7.1). In the western part, the Bengalis felt outnumbered by the Biharis. The eastern part was predominantly Muslim, though with a Hindu landlord class, many of whom were absentees living in Calcutta. The outburst of agitation against the evisceration of



Figure 7.2 The Indian Empire 1921

the identity of Bengal was widespread and deeply felt – and culminated in more terrorism and a boycott against British goods. Violence was now a real part of the political agenda, and it would not be monopolised by one side alone. In 1909 one of the leaders of Congress, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, was sentenced to 6 years imprisonment for incitement to violence. The Partition of Bengal was repealed in 1911, but by then Congress had become a less emollient organisation, but still meeting and debating legally and openly.

In 1909 constitutional reform took another momentous step forward, that is to say momentous in its consequences, even if from the Indian viewpoint the advance seemed no more than a minimal concession. Lord Minto, who had assumed the Viceroyalty in 1905, agreed with the Secretary of State Morley the measures which became known as the Morley-Minto Reforms. These were a considered attempt to win back moderate Indian nationalist opinion, by providing for the election of Indian members to the Legislative Council at the Centre, although power still rested with the British since officially appointed members were still in a majority, and because the Executive Council still remained the Governor-General's own preserve. The momentous part of this grass-hopper's leap in the jungle was that the principle of Separate Electorates was accepted – that is to say, in order to preserve the rights of the minority, Muslims and non-Muslims were registered on separate lists each of which was associated with a block of reserved seats. The numbers of these reserved seats were also given weightage; those representing the minority were more than proportional to the fraction of the minority in the population at large in the different Provinces. The number of Indians in the Provincial Legislative Councils was also increased, and in Bengal it was now theoretically possible for the elected members to form a majority over the official members. This did not quite violate the principle of responsibility to London – since the Executive Councils still had greater power, and the Centre in any case had a veto over the Provinces. In other words, Government was still not responsible to these electorates, even though there was this wider degree of representation.

In retrospect, it can be seen that these were the opening moves in the process that would lead South Asia to representative and responsible government – in two parts: but, precisely because at the time they were not seen as that, the different players were not so careful about the consequences of their attitudes and demands towards each other. The British averred privately, and to some extent publicly, that these were not the first moves towards parliamentary government: India simply was not ready for that. Indeed, at this very time at the Delhi Durbar of 1911, the King Emperor himself announced the move of the Capital from Calcutta to Delhi (this was the beginning of the New Delhi of today). The move was highly symbolic as well as perhaps having a practical element. The pre-British empires and urban structures were all land-based – stretching from the upper Ganges plains down into the central Deccan. The British had added the new coastal super-port cities to this pattern. Now the maritime power had assumed the role of land power, and proclaimed itself as such in the heartland of the Mughals.

The Indian National Congress in 1910 minimised the Muslim-Hindu differences, and claimed that separate electorates were unnecessary and that the Muslim-Hindu differences would subside when the British had gone – but to all participants the power of the state must have seemed such that they would take a long time agoing. In fact, except for the brief period following the Lucknow Pact of 1916 (discussed below), Congress always opposed separate electorates, as writing a constitutional division and barrier into the Indian public.

Muslim notables accepted the changes precisely because they were only an improved and more favourable form of representation, and not an advance towards responsibility – something which they feared because no matter what weightage was given to them, they could never be a majority. Yet, these fears were only the articulations of these senior men: they did not necessarily reflect a widespread mass political anxiety. By and large the masses were politically apathetic and uninvolved.

Then the 'Event' of the First World War shook the Empire to its foundations. The British attitude to the Indian nationalists during the First, as during the Second, World War, can be summarised: 'please do not cause any trouble while this Great Event passes. Let us freeze matters where they are, and resume negotiation afterwards'. The initial, and to some extent the main, response of India throughout the long ordeal, was to close ranks behind the British and fight German militarism. Public donations for the war effort flooded in, and many of the Princes contributed troops from their own armies. 500,000 Indian troops took an active part in the Middle East and Europe, and suffered 96,000 casualties. But as the war dragged on without victory, British power and credibility waned. As economic shortages made themselves felt, murmuring of discontent increased. The nationalists became less inclined to wait – this was after all an opportunity while their masters had one hand twisted behind their backs. And sensing that they would have more power if undivided, they concluded a pact at Lucknow in 1916 between the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim league. This required major concessions on both sides, but perhaps the greatest were by Congress, which accepted the principle of Separate Electorates – although it was not a concession it could make binding on all future policy resolutions. The Pact also proposed much greater devolution to the Provinces – something which was also acceptable to the Muslims, since although in a minority overall, and therefore in a minority in centre government, they would be more powerful in their own majority areas. The other declared policy objectives of the Pact included the power after an interval of a year to reject a Governor's veto, and the repatriation to India of the power to direct foreign affairs and defence. The former was a beginning to make the Executive responsible to the Legislature, but it was sufficiently muted that the Muslims acquiesced.

To the British, who could always claim that they must remain as arbiters between conflicting groups, the Pact might have taken some of the wind from their sails. It was, at least, a small part of the events of those years which finally led to the policy declaration in 1917 in the House of Commons by Secretary of State Montagu, that the policy of the British Government was that of 'the increasing association

of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire'. The statement was the first major public admission by the British that responsible government was the aim of policy: but it was simultaneously contradictory because this was to be circumscribed by imperial constraint. What would happen if the new responsible government wanted complete independence? This was an issue to be faced at a future stage – since the declaration contained caveats about 'successive stages' and 'the British Government and the Government of India ... must be the judges of the time and measure of each advance'.

Montagu followed this announcement by his visit to India and the production with the Viceroy Chelmsford of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918 and the subsequent new constitution of 1919 which came into force in 1921, with the explicit intention that its working should be reviewed after 10 years. The Report noted the Lucknow Pact as a sign of the growing national feeling in India, stated plainly that separate electorates were a hindrance to the growth of national consciousness, but agreed with the pact in retaining the principle of separate electorates, in its view for the time being. In other ways it was a complicated document: it had to show that the first of the 'successive stages' was being achieved, while ultimate responsibility still rested in the UK. It achieved this firstly by devolving most power at the Provincial not the Central level, and secondly by distinguishing between the functions of government transferred to a representative Legislative Council, and those retained by the Governor's Executive Council. This idea survives in the present Indian Constitution, in which responsibilities are divided between the States List, the Central List and the Concurrent List. As it was conceived in 1918 it was known as 'dyarchy' – the duality being between the untransferred powers of the executive and the transferred powers of the legislature. But the power of veto by a Governor was still very strong, and in particular with regard to finance.

There was another way in which the Constitution seemed far from representative and responsible government. Because the franchise was so hedged by property and other qualifications, the electorate was actually very small – in 1920 7.4 millions out of a population in British India of 240 millions.

The subjects of the Princes were of course almost all completely disenfranchised by their autocracies – but the Report was aware that they could not stand aloof from external change forever. The year 1921 therefore also saw a major development in the conduct of their affairs too. The Princes hitherto had had bilateral relationships with the Government of India. Now it was proposed that a Council of Princes be established, so that they could take part in future dialogue with each other and jointly with British India, clearly with the idea of accommodating them in some way to the changes taking place around them.

The framing of government was one thing. The actions it took were another. In 1919, as a result of a committee of enquiry chaired by Justice Rowlatt into terrorist violence, mostly in Bengal, Bills were passed which allowed trial before two judges without jury, and also internment. Public resentment was acute. In the same year a

protest rally at Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar, Punjab, was brutally terminated by police firing. On the orders of General Dyer, they fired 303 rifles into the crowd in a confined urban park. Some 379 people were killed, and 1,208 injured, women and children being amongst both groups. It was the kind of incident which, like Sharpeville years later in South Africa, or Tiananmen Square in Beijing, simultaneously demonstrated the power of the State and yet demolished its legitimacy.

7.4 Gandhi and the Nationalist Response

The new Constitution did not come near making the kinds of concessions which the nationalists had hoped for. The Congress leadership became more strident in its demands, and also in 1921 adopted a new party constitution of its own, which demanded Swaraj (self rule) and which no longer made reference to continued membership of the Empire. But the independence movement had a quality to it which would now seem unlikely – it was committed to the attainment of independence by peaceful and legitimate means. The effective leader of Congress was now Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – known as the Mahatma (the Great Soul) – who was almost a one-man Great Event of the kind which the British would have preferred to have wished away. Gandhi launched a non-cooperation movement which, amongst other things, enjoined people not to pay their taxes. This was legitimate in his view, since the British Government in India was illegitimate. The struggle revealed two things – firstly that Congress was not yet sufficiently grounded in mass, as opposed to middle class, support that it could really threaten the State and, secondly, that such campaigns could easily get out of hand and degenerate into violence, something which Gandhi abhorred, because the ends could never justify the means, and could themselves become distorted. Twenty policemen were murdered in a violent riot in the United Provinces. If it happened that Hindus murdered Muslim policemen, such acts would precipitate communal violence; and so Gandhi called the movement off.

Gandhi's leadership of Congress (often officially uninvolved, but in fact always the spiritual and main strategic mastermind) has been described as a 'peculiar blend of bold advances followed by sudden and capricious halts, challenges succeeded by unwarranted compromises ...' (Desai, 1966: 372). His subtle complexity at times seemed more like perplexity. But there are very strong and consistent threads in the pattern he was trying to weave for India, but which in the end failed in one signal respect. He attempted more than ever was realistically possible, yet, perhaps because of that, achieved much more than otherwise would have been achieved. He was a profound revolutionary – yet would be prepared to stop his revolutions in their tracks if he felt they were going astray. He wanted immediate independence from the British, but was prepared to wait indefinitely if in his view Indians had not yet proved worthy of his trust in them. Gandhi rejected the new industrialism and materialism of the West, and wanted a return to village self-sufficiency. His spinning wheel, at which he toiled each day, and which is seen on the Congress flag today, represented this. He abhorred the injustices of the caste system, and championed the

cause of the polluted untouchables, giving them a new name – Harijans, the people of God. He was devout, but in the tradition of many synthesising Hindu reformers over the centuries, he was theologically eclectic and non-dogmatic. He had his favourite passages in the Koran and the Bible as much as in the Mahabharata. He gave Congress the contact they needed with the masses of India. But he also asked of the masses and the leaders what they were unable in the end to give: the eradication of communal distrust and discord. He knew his rapid strides must be slow because he was flying not just in the face of the British, but also in the face of Hindu orthodoxy and Muslim dogma.

Not all the Congress high command agreed with the total rejection of the 1921 Constitution, and some who were dissatisfied with the concessions made, but who nevertheless felt that an evolutionary approach might work best, left the Congress and founded the Liberal Party – in a sense the Conservative Part of Congress. They contested the 1920 elections which the rest of Congress boycotted. In the 1923 Elections the Swarajists of Congress contested the elections in order to paralyse dyarchy from within, and in Bengal and Central Provinces they managed to block the payment of Ministers salaries, with the result that the Governors had to suspend expenditure on the transferred subjects.

At the end of the 1st World War one of the concluding treaties, signed at Sèvres, redounded on all sides of the Indian struggle in an unexpected manner. Turkey's Ottoman Empire had been defeated, and the Treaty stripped the Caliph of Istanbul of any remaining political power. Muslim opinion in India was mobilised in the Khilafat (Khalifat, Caliphate) Movement, which led to general unrest and disturbance. Gandhi welcomed it and tried to use it as a common cause between Hindus and the Muslims against the British; but its peculiar involvement with non-Indian affairs was not attractive to many Hindus, and the disturbances were partly implicated in violence by an extreme Muslim group in South India, the Moplahs (Mopillas), which turned in 1921 from resentment against the government to the wholesale butchery of Hindus. Indeed, while the Muslim League and the Congress appeared to be making common cause, the level of communal violence escalated throughout the 1920s. Much of this was of the spontaneous discord noted in Chapter 3 above – the result of clashes on religious feast days, the playing of music during processions which passed mosques at prayer time, or local anger against some alleged beef-eaters. The new Constitution did not necessarily cause many such riots: but certainly the realisation that there was, in fact, a small but tangible devolution of power to provincial politicians did nothing to extinguish them. Instead it forced home the realisation that the use of that power in the India of the future could not be guaranteed to be 'neutral'. Here in fact was one of Gandhi's threads which, sustained in a different form in Nehru, ultimately led to catastrophe. Since Hindu and Muslim must sink their differences, Congress had to be the sole representative of Indian nationalism. It would embrace Hindu and Muslim alike, and need make no further concessions to leaders of Muslim parties. It was a noble if arrogant dream.

Table 7.1 The Act of 1919: Government Functions

Central subjects

Defence, foreign affairs, relations with the Indian States, communications, customs, commerce and banking, criminal law, census and surveys. All-India services (e.g. PTT, railways)

Provincial Subjects

A) Untransferred

Justice, police, jails, land revenue, forests (in all but one Province)

B) Transferred

education, agriculture, public health, local government

As the Constitution creaked through the 1920s, the promised review was brought forward, but in a move of crass stupidity reminiscent of some of Curzon's greater insensitivities, the Simon Commission of 1927, nominated by Baldwin's Government, included two British peers and four members of the House of Commons,¹ but no Indians. When the Commission went to India to take evidence from Provincial Committees formed for the purpose, Congress boycotted them. Congress had by now adopted a demand for total independence (*purna swaraj*), meaning complete severance with Britain and the Commonwealth.

Nor was the reaction of the nationalists solely negative and destructive. In 1928 an all-party conference was called in Delhi, to discuss the next steps to be taken as the nationalists saw them, independently of British manoeuvrings. The hard wings of the two communities, that is to say the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, obstructed progress, with the result that a committee was formed with representatives of the different communities charged with determining the principles of a new constitution. It produced the bones and in some parts the flesh of a constitution. The committee was chaired by Motilal Nehru, General Secretary of Congress (father of Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of independent India). The Nehru Report it drafted was not binding on any of the political parties, and certainly not on the Muslim League, which was not formally represented on the committee. It spent much of its effort on the communal problem. It resolved that the future constitution might have aspects of federalism in it, but basically the legacy of a strong centre and unitary government remained. The whiff of federalism was really an inducement aimed at the Princes, although it was clear they would have to allow representative government in their states too. The Report also opposed the retention of separate electorates, but was not completely immune to the need to assuage communalism.

There were two ways in which communal anxieties were accommodated. Firstly, it suggested some improvements in the territorial division of India. Sind, a Muslim area, should be elevated as a Province in its own right, separate from

¹ One of these was Clement Attlee, who, as Prime Minister after World War II would grant India its independence.

Bombay, and Orissa should be separated from Bihar. Secondly, it proposed that reserved seats be instituted at the Centre. This needs a brief explanation, since it sounds akin to separate electorates, but is in fact different.

With separate electorates, Muslims on one register were alone allowed to vote for candidates for the Muslim seats. The effect of this was to make Muslim politicians responsible to the Muslim electorate alone, and, naturally, led to a narrow communal viewpoint. In the alternative system there may be reserved seats to ensure that there were Muslims in the Assemblies, but all voters could vote for candidates both for Muslim seats, and also for the general seats. Then the elected Muslims would know they were responsible to the whole electorate, and the representatives in the general seats would be too. The policies they would campaign on could not then be sectarian. The Nehru committee expressed the view that debate in free India would in fact create political parties around economic and social groups, but not around cultural and religious groups.

The Report was never ratified by Congress, although neither was it rejected. The more radical wing, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, opposed acquiescence to Dominion Status, and favoured total independence. The Muslim League noted that separate electorates were the law, and should be retained. The nationalists' independent attempt to close the communal schism had failed.

The report of the Simon Commission duly appeared in 1930, and incorporated recommendations for the promotion of Sind and Orissa to provincehood. It transpired that this was not completely a dialogue of the deaf. The government proposed a series of Round Table Conferences at which representatives of the British Parliament debated the issues with representatives of Indian opinion. Although the Simon Report provided a background to these meetings, it did not constrain the agenda or the discussions. They were constrained from the British side mostly by the declared intention of giving India Dominion Status – but not 'purna swaraj', or the total independence that the radicals of Congress wanted.

A large number of Congress members might have been happy with just such a conference, one that was close to all they had demanded. The issue over whether to attend or not, could have split Congress. To Gandhi its unity mattered most – because in that alone did he see hope for the unity of India. So he demanded immediate, complete and total independence (1930) by transferring power to Congress, and he backed this with a civil disobedience campaign and a boycott of the conference. The campaign of Civil Disobedience and non-payment of taxes included Gandhi's celebrated march to the sea from his ashram in Gujarat. He declared his intention was to make some salt, an act which was illegal since the government had a revenue-raising monopoly on the salt trade. It took Gandhi 24 days to walk through the villages to the sea, pursued by the world's press. When there he both humbled and crumbled the British Raj as he picked a grain of salt from the sand.

Gandhi was persuaded to attend the Second Round Table Conference as the sole representative of Congress, and claiming simultaneously that Congress was the sole representative of India. He resolutely objected to some of the common ground that had been agreed thus far – in particular he objected vehemently to

separate electorates, not only for the Muslims, but as now had been proposed, for the untouchables too. Here was division being written in, not just between Muslim and Hindu, but, as Gandhi saw it, within Hinduism too, for he saw the Hindu manifold as one, and the incorporation of the Harijans, as one of his life's goals. He was not averse to reserved seats – but the electorate had to be general to avoid sectarian campaigning.

Since the Round Table Conferences failed to find agreement with Congress, civil disobedience intensified, and a boycott of British goods was also organised. Riots and instability followed: the Congress leadership was imprisoned. The riots fizzled out, and the British imposed their new constitution in 1935, which retained and indeed strengthened separate electorates. It also widened the franchise, from 7 million to 30 million voters.

As noted earlier, the Act of 1935 remained the basic framework for the Government of India until Independence in 1947, and the basis of the constitution of India until it adopted its new constitution in 1950 and of Pakistan until 1956. Broadly, the Act transferred more power to the Provinces where dyarchy waned as few powers were left reserved to the Governors, and now introduced dyarchy at the centre, reserving to the Governor-General/Viceroy several responsibilities, including, importantly, defence and foreign affairs. It also drew up the framework for a federal government for India, in which the members of the upper chamber the Federal Assembly would be elected indirectly by the provinces (or be appointed by federated princely states), and the lower chamber the Federal Legislature by direct elections, but on the basis of separate electorates in the provinces. The Federation would only come into being when a sufficient number (approximately one half) of the princely states had signed deeds of accession. The Federal part was never enacted, because the Event of the Second World War changed the backcloth against which the final denouement would be resolved. Until such time as it was enacted, the central government continued in its 1919 form – that is to say with an elected Legislative Assembly, but a Viceroy's Executive Council ultimately responsible to Parliament in London. There was therefore no cabinet of elected ministers at the centre for the time being.

At this time the Muslim League was not strong. It was given most support by the Muslim community where that community was small – in the United Provinces and Bihar – but it was not strong where the Muslims were in a clear majority, as in Punjab and Sind. The elections of 1936-37, therefore, produced some impressive gains for Congress – they had majorities in all the Provinces (including the Muslim North-West Frontier Province) except Sind, Punjab and Bengal, and in those latter three the non-Congress administrations were coalitions and not Muslim League parties on their own. Congress, after a few necessary objections and bridlings, accepted the power given to it, and used it. It used it in a way that the constitution makers had not really expected. The party organisation remained strong nationally, and kept the provincial governments under the control of the party high command. Here was the antithesis of federalism, one of the routes by which minority fears could be allayed. In the provinces where Congress held strong majorities, nevertheless the

Muslim League hoped that it would offer coalition governments, and incorporate League Ministers. But why should it? Congress had Muslims within its ranks, claimed to represent all India, and saw no need to share. Indeed, in a mass contacts movement it even strove to recruit more and more Muslim peasants since politics were secular and not matters of religion, something promptly repudiated by local mullahs who saw (and see) the Islamic way of life as incorporating and defining permissible politics. These two moves and many others began to alarm Muslim opinion. Congress underestimated the strength of Muslim feeling, almost flew in the face of Muslim sensitivities, and far from using strength to be generous, used strength in an attempt to destroy separate Muslim politics for good. Nor were the princes encouraged by the attitude of Congress, and their enthusiasm for federation began to wane.

At the outbreak of the Second World War the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, declared war on behalf of India against Germany and its ally, Italy. He did so, as he was constitutionally able to do, without consultation with Indian opinion – something which was difficult to some extent because the centre did not have that kind of responsible government. But the manner of doing so did not go down well. In protest against the lack of consultation Congress ordered the resignation of all Congress ministries. The Muslim League reacted with a day of thanksgiving for deliverance, and set about the strengthening of mass Muslim participation in their aims. In 1940 at Lahore, capital of Punjab, Mohammed Ali Jinnah proclaimed the independent homeland of Pakistan the object of Muslim League policy. The Viceroy hoped to freeze all political development during the war, promising Dominion status and constituent assemblies at the end. He put negotiations with the princes on ice – and thereby killed for ever the proposed federation. Congress responded by demanding immediate, total, independence.

The war did not go well for Britain in the early years. France fell, the U-boat war started, Egypt nearly fell, and above all from the Indian point of view, the Japanese seemed clearly in the ascendant. Malaya fell, Singapore followed, and then after that Burma. The Japanese stood at the gates of India. In 1942 Sir Stafford Cripps was despatched to India and gave a guaranteed offer, so he thought, of Dominion status and a constituent assembly at the end of the war, and incorporation there and then of Indian party political leaders in what would effectively be a central war-time cabinet, although not formally established as such under the 1935 Act. The Congress leadership almost accepted this; but Gandhi held on to the demands for an unconditional British withdrawal. This had a huge air of unreality about it, stemming in part from his pacifism. He might have been gambling that if the British gave so much now, what would they do when the Japanese were even stronger? But he did not realistically calculate how a suddenly independent India would resist the Japanese, other than to speculate that the British presence was a provocation to the Japanese, with the implication that they would withdraw if the British did as well. Indeed Gandhi not only characterised the offer as a 'post-dated cheque drawn on a failing bank', he also instigated another round of civil disobedience, the Quit India movement, which resulted in sabotage, arson and riots in many parts of the Ganges

Valley. For some months this did disrupt the war effort, particularly communications, but the leadership was again imprisoned, and the Government used force to quell the disturbances. The Cripps offer had incorporated what seemed to be an admission of the right of the Muslims to self-determination in some form – perhaps that was partly why Gandhi rejected the offer. The Muslims therefore reacted in their turn to 'Quit India' with 'Divide and Quit'. As the war began to turn more favourably for the British and their allies, political stagnation seemed to grip the confrontation within India – stagnant that is, except for the continued and dramatic growth of the Muslim League, which seized the opportunity to campaign while the Congress leaders remained interned.

By the end of the war the genie of communal separatism was well and truly out of the bottle and could not be wished away. And the British were by now as anxious to withdraw themselves as the Indians had been desperate for them to go. Churchill, the arch imperialist and great war leader, lost the general election in Britain to a Labour Government committed to building a welfare state in Britain, anxious to shed international responsibilities, and committed to leave India. On February 20th 1947 Britain declared it would leave India no later than June 1948. Now, instead of dragging its feet, it was imposing a deadline on all the negotiating parties. The independence of the two successor states, India and Pakistan, was achieved in fact by August 1947 – with a rapidity the effects of which are still the cause of endless speculation.

7.5 The Two Nations

An American political geographer writing in the early 1920s identified Hindu-Muslim relationships as the most pressing issue facing the government of India, and there is a hint in his analysis of the partition to come.

'Mohamedanism ... is growing with terrific speed ... (it) represents a fanatical religion whose political power will try the tact, and it may be the military strength, of the Western Powers' (Bowman, 1921:54)

'Disorder in India is a particularly grave matter since it affects not only the control of the country but also the distribution of food and the whole modern system of trade that has become established there. India now has 112,000 square miles of irrigated land, and irrigation works require cooperative control and an orderly government. Were the railroads and the irrigation works, the ports, and the whole machinery of commercial life to be disorganised, India would be ripe for a great disaster' (Bowman, 1921:45)

But this kind of foresight is an exception. The majority of observers, including the Congress leadership, did not take Muslim separatism as a real and dangerous possibility until far too late: indeed, in the 1920s and 1930s the League itself did not publicly proclaim Pakistan as its goal. That waited until Jinnah's proclamation

at Lahore in 1940. But it was not originally his or the League's idea. The League in general and Jinnah in particular had been sold the idea by its most fervent proponent, at a time when Jinnah's dismay at Congress' high-handedness had persuaded him that there was no other realistic option.

C. Rahmat Ali, Founder President of the Pakistan National Movement, had been promoting his ideas by publishing pamphlets from his base at 16 Humberstone Road, Cambridge, England. The first edition of his short pamphlet entitled *What does the Pakistan National Movement stand for?* was published in 1933. The following quotes are taken from the 3rd edition, 1942. They include some analysis which is persuasive, and which is far from nullified by the weight of polemical assault.

'When in the current period of the history of South Asia, "Indianism" under the auspices of British Imperialism ... established in 1881 its first political institution, it cleverly called this institution the All-India National Congress. I say cleverly, because

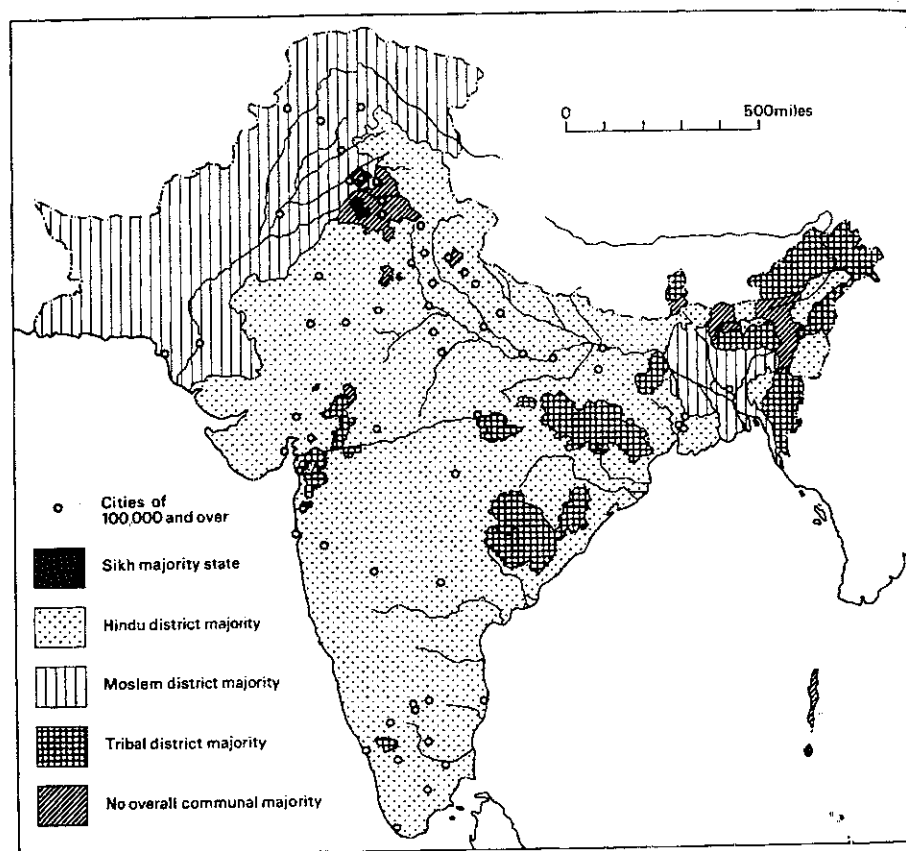


Figure 7.3 The Distribution of Religions 1947

Source: Spate and Learmonth (1967)

by the subtle, but nonetheless unmistakable, implications of this nomenclature, it first designated as India all the lands of South Asia incorporated into the British Empire; secondly it denied the right of the non-Indian nations therein to distinct nationhoods of their own; and, thirdly, asserted its pretentious claim to stamping Indian nationality on the peoples living in those lands which, through such dubious devices, it has made known to the world as the Sub-continent of India.

Indubitably, therefore, this nomenclature was a trap cunningly set by "Indianism" for non-Indians – a trap which ... they should have avoided. But blindly enough they all fell into it. For in the course of time, when even the great historic peoples like the Muslims, the Sikhs, and the Rajpoots started their own organisations, they apishly called them the All-India Muslim League, All-India Muslim Conference, All-India Sikh Conference, and All-India Rajpoot Conference, etc.' (Rahmat Ali, 1942:3)

Further below he writes:

"Indianism" ... has debased the Saracenic civilisation of the Muslims, the chivalrous code of the Rajpoots, the knightly creed of the Sikhs, the martial tradition of the Mahrattas, and in the end attempted to "Indianise" them all, body, mind, and soul. ... only if and when an impregnable defence is created against it, can they revert to their original conception of life and regenerate their respective cultures in their national strongholds.' (Rahmat Ali, 1942:5)

The talk of regeneration is of course backward-looking: he wanted to disentangle history. It was reactionary conservatism: but it was also forward looking – preferring 'South Asia' to describe what he refused to call 'the Indian subcontinent'.

Ali understood 'Indianism' as the forces of the caste Hinduism of north India. His appeal was that all the nations of South Asia should claim their independence from this yoke. The map (Figure 7.4) on the front of his pamphlet made the same point: Pakistan was only one of the nations that should be freed. In the south was Dravidia, in the northeast Bang-i-Islam, in the west Rajistan, Maharashtar, and Guruistan – the latter being his name for a Sikh state.

Examining these nationalities in more detail revealed that few other than the Muslims of Pakistan were in a majority in their own area, so that few had realistic hopes of a homeland of their own.

'Pakistan National Movement has ... made it a principle to admit the birthright of each and every nation to [its own territory] ... to support by all legitimate means the realisation of this right by all such nations; furthermore to acknowledge this right even in the case of the Sikhs, of the Christians, of the Dravidians and of the Depressed Classes [Untouchables: Harijans], who, though morally and numerically qualified to form distinct nations of their own, cannot at present do that because they are so scattered that they can neither possess a majority in any province nor claim a part of a province as exclusively their own ... The Movement ... concedes their right to as much of the area of the land of their birth as may correspond to the numerical ratio of their people to the total population of the province concerned ... even if the birthright may have to be satisfied, as in the case of the Sikhs, at the expense of Pakistan itself.' (Rahmat Ali, 1942: 7)

The principle of the homelands for the scattered nations clearly seems fanciful: it would have entailed differentiation and mass cross-migration, as the communities adjusted to the lands they were given. Yet, precisely that did happen for many people in North India in 1947, continuing in Bengal until the early 1970's when a modified Bang-i-Islam became a reality. And it is still happening even now for some Sikhs who want Guruistan by another name, Khalistan. There remain a few Tamils, too, who also have their dream of a separate South.

The name Pakistan itself was an artifice, using P for Punjab, A for the Afghan Province (meaning the Northwest Frontier Province), K for Kashmir and S for Sind and taking the -stan from Baluchistan. This was the land it claimed.²

The interest in all of this is that the Pakistan Movement clearly saw that the issue was one of nationalities and homelands, not necessarily communities. There was no suggestion here that Bengal be shackled with Pakistan, though Bengal could claim its own inheritance.

The problem in explaining the Partition of 1947 is, therefore, the problem of explaining how Pakistan became the cause of the whole community of Muslims both West and East. The leaders of the two communal groups, the Congress and the League, held power in proportion to the mass support they could generate, and the threat of strikes, riots and disturbances which they could instigate. To sell themselves to the masses, they had promised and were trying to deliver swa-raj – self-rule, self-determination. The leaders were nationalistic. To Gandhi and the Congress, swaraj meant All-Indians ruling all Indians. To the masses, self-determination meant 'we people' rule ourselves, where the definition of 'we people' would vary from province to province. A Tamil peasant knew himself as a Tamil peasant, not as an Indian. A peasant in Bengal knew himself to be Bengali, not Indian. Even more than that, a Bengali Muslim knew himself to be a Muslim rather than a Hindu like his neighbour might be, without questioning the basis that both were indeed Bengali. He distinguished himself within Bengal, not within India – whatever that might have been. In short, while the leaders may have been nationalistic, the masses were communalistic. Therefore, to mobilise mass support the leadership had to harness this communalism. Then, the Muslim League might find an enthusiastic ally in East Bengal, fighting for its own determination, not remotely guessing what federation within Pakistan would bring in the future.

In the triangular struggle between Congress, the Muslim League and the British, the different sides of the triangle needed different approaches, which were not simultaneously reconcilable. Between the Congress and the League there needed to be accommodation and mutual tolerance. But there equally needed to be mass resistance to the British – if there wasn't, there was no need for the British to go. It was necessary for Congress to stress the identity of the masses, which was different from the British. Now, the élites may have been nationalistic, and have developed some indigenous sense of what it meant to be 'Indian', to feel the All-Indianness which C. Rahmat Ali had disparaged. But since to the masses swa-raj – self rule – required first and foremost an understanding of what the 'self' meant, so to

² Another claim is that Pak means 'pure'.

stress the difference from the British was to stress the difference between the communities.

The Indians may blame the British who divided to rule, keeping princely states apart, and devising separate electorates for the Muslims. But the Muslims blamed Congress – for not in truth being secular at local levels. Casting blame to one side, it is clear now that to expect this sub-continent of creeds and castes, still largely illiterate, and a veritable linguistic Tower of Babel, to have formed a national identity at that time in history was to expect the impossible. Congress might have wanted the Empire the British had created, but it was committed to democratic representative government, not autocratic military power and, therefore, could not achieve its objective.

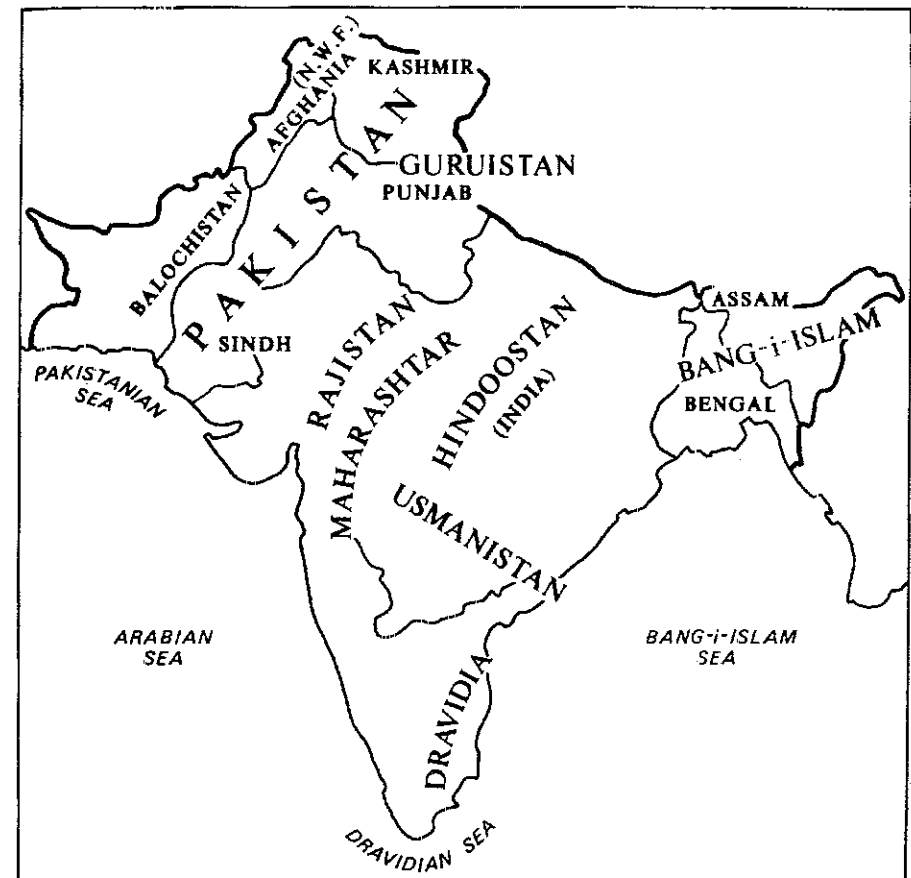


Figure 7.4 C. Rahmat Ali's Proposals for Pakistan and Other New Indian Nation-States

Source: Rahmat Ali (1942)

PART III
THE SUCCESSOR STATES

Divide and Quit

8.1 Pride and Prejudice: The Search for Unity in Western Europe

A contemporary European reader may perhaps be best able to put into perspective the events in South Asia since 1945 if she first reflects on the events of her own sub-continent. At the end of the First World War older empires in Europe disintegrated, and were replaced by many small nation states. This could have been a retrograde step economically, but it was inevitable in the search for self-determination. After Hitler's failed attempt at the coercive re-integration of Europe within the German Reich, some of the previously sovereign states of Europe regained their sovereignty, whereas others found the Soviet yoke replacing the German. The confrontation between the two super-powers during the Cold War years was nowhere more evident than in the Iron Curtain of barbed-wire and mine-fields that rendered Europe asunder.

In 1945 Britain was the dominant West European military power, but not the dominant Western military power in Europe – a role which the USA had assumed. During the war Churchill had worried about the future of Europe and had assumed that Britain would play a leading role in developing new institutions and new democratic forces; but, by the democratic will of the British, he lost power and office when peace was declared. The new Labour administration was more concerned with building the welfare state at home and disengaging from some of the imperial baggage abroad. During 50 years of often weak leadership, this post-war Europe has made slow and faltering steps towards closer integration, a project which now seems confused by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the evident result that much of the other part of Europe no longer wishes to be 'East' (Comecon) Europe, but the eastern part of an inclusive European enterprise.

In 1948 Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg founded a mutual defence group, the Brussels Treaty Organisation. In 1949 15 states formed the Council of Europe, which included most of West Europe plus Iceland, Greece and Turkey. Most of the states of West Europe also joined the new NATO in 1949, a defence association with the USA and Canada to protect West Europe against the perceived Soviet threat. France had and still has an equivocal relationship with the military command structure; and, out of the difficulty of accommodating French anxiety, the Brussels Treaty Organisation was expanded and reformed in 1954 as the Western European Union. In 1952 six states (The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, West Germany and Italy) formed the European Coal, Iron and Steel Community – an example of economic (utilitarian) integration. In 1957 the same states formed Euratom, and signed the Treaty of Rome which formed the six into a Common Market in 1958. This market meant that the six states eliminated by 1968 all customs dues between them, and they agreed a common external tariff.

Seven other states in Europe, initially including Britain, formed the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1961. This reduced internal barriers between members but allowed them the sovereign flexibility of different external tariffs. The movement of goods internally was more difficult than in the EEC, monitoring being necessary to prevent foreign goods entering through the lowest tariff member state to be transmitted to other members. In the 1970s most of the members of EFTA either joined or formed close associations with the EEC, and one group within the EEC formed a monetary union, the EMS (European Monetary System), popularly known as the snake. This kept their currencies within tight reins of each other, although floating as a group against other currencies, including those of EEC states which were not members of EMS (the British pound sterling for example). The EMS was followed by the ERM – the Exchange Rate Mechanism – which again tied currencies within narrow bands as a prelude to attempts at full monetary integration. For a while the British joined the ERM, only to be forced out by speculators and devaluation two years later. As a result of the Maastricht Treaty, on November 1st 1993 the EC became the European Union, with provision for an ever closer political and economic union, a promise or a threat, depending on one's point of view, that has traumatised both major political parties in Britain. In 1999 eleven out of the fifteen members of the union established a new currency – the Euro – which finally replaced the coins and notes in circulation in 2002. The Euro area has a population of 290 million and an economy approaching the size of that of the USA. New principles have been debated in Europe – a new word has entered the vocabulary of the lay person, even if not their understanding. This is the word 'subsidiarity' – a principle which broadly means that power should not be surrendered to an ever-stronger Centre in Brussels, but that decisions should be taken at the closest level to local concerns and local people as is practicable and appropriate. The application of this principle is much harder than defining it.

Culturally, the chauvinistic states of West Europe are not significantly closer than they were 50 years ago. Certainly the chances of establishing a single official language for Europe are significantly less than the chances of persuading the Dravidian south to accept Hindi as the only lingua franca of India. 'Local' differences in Northern Ireland¹ and the Basque country of Spain are still strong enough to sustain sophisticated terrorist movements which the states concerned have not been able to eradicate. In former Eastern Europe nationalism and xenophobia has spawned the vicious Balkan wars of 1990-1999.

8.2 Pride and Prejudice: Recrimination and Divorce in South Asia

The end of the Second World War therefore marked a moment in history when Europe began yet again to seek a history of integration, the construction of a stable regional system of governance that simultaneously allowed representation without

¹ At the time of going to press the IRA have upheld a ceasefire in Northern Ireland and have decommissioned some of their weapons.

confrontation. By the end of the Second World War in South Asia a very similar set of questions was posed. It was clear that there would have to be some drastic redrawing of the map, with some complex federal or quasi-federal structure, if all interests were to be satisfied. In a sense, what the British had to do was find the kind of solution overnight which Europe has only slowly moved towards in the last fifty years. This is, of course, to exaggerate: the British had indeed seen a future for the Federation in the 1935 Act, but clearly then, before the Second World War, they thought they would have more time on their side. And certainly they had done little to resolve the problem of the princely states.

Lord Wavell, formerly Commander-in-Chief in India, was appointed Viceroy in 1943. He was an able man experienced in the ways of the country, but perhaps not enough of a politician for the dexterities and complexities of an agitated India. In 1945, at the conclusion of the war, he wished to form an interim government (i.e. an Indian Government to which most power would be transferred while negotiations for new constitutions and final independence proceeded) with the co-operation of all parties, and called a conference at Simla in which he acted as mediator between the rival leaders. Jinnah wanted not only parity for Muslim representation in the interim government, but also a policy commitment to the right of the Muslims for self-determination. Wavell rejected the demands, and accepted himself the responsibility for the failure of the conference, although the Congress was sure where the blame lay. But Wavell had also lost, not the respect for his integrity, but the confidence of the communal leaders and of the British Prime Minister Attlee that he was actually achieving any progress. And this time it was progress that the British wanted. The riots and civil disturbances during and after the war had persuaded them that inaction now was a dangerous policy and, besides, too many hopes had been raised about 'after the war' for them to be postponed as easily as they had been after the First World War. The possibility of uncontrollable public disorder was a spectre that began to haunt all the major actors, and which some were from time to time prepared to provoke.

The strategy, but not the tactics, were worked out: there would be fresh elections at the provincial and central level in India, and an attempt would be made to form an interim government. The elections held late in 1945 revealed that the Muslim League did now have strong support at the central level, but at the Provincial level the support was not so clear. In Bengal the League won sufficient seats to form a Government, though with some help of the smaller communities. In Sind the League formed a government again with coalition support. In Punjab the League won nearly all the reserved Muslim seats, but it was frustrated and kept out of power by a Unionist-Congress-Sikh coalition. The Unionists were led by a Muslim, Sir Khizar Hyat Khan, who had been the previous premier of the Province, and who became premier again. In retrospect this may have been unfortunate: the coalition with the Congress and the Sikhs weakened the appeal of the Unionist Party to those Muslims who might otherwise have been opposed to partition.

To Jinnah, now called the Qaid-i-Azam (Great Leader) the results were not in the least discouraging. The bandwagon had begun to shift his way, and with time

and the right confrontations, no doubt more could be persuaded to climb on board. What Congress needed to do was to conciliate, and not threaten – which was the one sure way of committing moderate Muslims to Jinnah's cause. Jinnah's personality and tactics have been examined many times by many authors, fascinated that in the end he could achieve so much from such an unpromising start. After all, he appeared not to have very strong cards: the Muslims were not completely behind him, the (British) Government of India wanted to leave a unitary state of some sort, and Congress, by far the largest political organisation of India, was implacably opposed to him. There was always the possibility that the latter two might in the end impose a solution which denied Pakistan its nationhood. They could tire of offering Jinnah concessions, and, instead of offering him half a loaf, offer him none. But he was a master of brinkmanship, and at the last moment would accept a half loaf, simultaneously demanding more of the rest. The only real card he held was the threat of civil war and chaos: if he could not have what he wanted, then both parties would inherit a smashed heirloom.

From the beginning it seemed an impossible dream that he could get what he wanted – a sovereign state which included not just the predominantly Muslim areas of Sind, Northwest Frontier and Baluchistan, but also the whole of Punjab and the whole of Bengal, even if in the latter two the Muslim majority was not overwhelming. And Bengal included Calcutta, ex-Imperial Capital, still the industrial centre of India and its most important port. But Jinnah wanted it all, and with good regional economic sense. He observed that East Bengal without Calcutta would be a rural slum – not really a workable proposition.

Congress was not immune to some suggestions for enhanced Provincial autonomy, and as the negotiations dragged on they were prepared to see greater or lesser powers given to a lesser or greater Muslim group – that is to say, the more it seemed that power might be devolved under a particular plan, the more they were sure that territorially the Muslim group should be as small as possible, thus extricating Hindus from Muslim domination (which was of course exactly the mirror image of what Jinnah was trying to do for Muslims). If fewer powers were to be devolved, then the Muslim Majority Provinces could be bigger, since the centre could protect the rights of the minorities. But although there were these concessionary ideas in the air, Congress quite clearly felt that it should decide the nature and kind of concessions to be made. What it consistently strove for was for the British to go, and leave them to negotiate after Independence the terms of the deal. Jinnah, of course, knew that he had to achieve what he wanted before the British left – the guarantees of later negotiation were not synonymous with guarantees of later concessions.

A wry comment was made about 'the transfer of power in Burma' in 1948, that there was in fact none: because by the time they left, the British had no power left to transfer, no matter whether the map on the wall was coloured pink or not. This prospect was rapidly drawing in on them in India in 1945-47. The civil and other services at the end of the thirties and after the war had failed to attract many men of calibre, and an overburdened, underfunded and demoralised administration was

tottering to a halt. The squabbles of communalism were beginning even to affect army units as well. As civil riots and disturbances increased, the capacity of the state to deal with them diminished. Since the British knew they were going to go, they were increasingly prepared to abdicate the responsibility of finding an agreement, if one were to be found, to the Indians themselves. The more they withdrew, the greater the need of Jinnah to say no to Congress' half-promises, and the greater the power of his negation.

In the months of April, May and June 1946, while the weather on the plains got hotter and hotter, a Cabinet Mission from London toiling with the Viceroy and Congress and the League came very close to an agreed Plan, which we will consider in more detail in the next section. A complex three-tiered quasi-federal structure seemed close to satisfying all concerned: following agreement, the next steps would be the formation of the Interim Government, giving most central powers to Indian Ministers, and the simultaneous calling of a Constituent Assembly, which would frame the new constitution in detail within the terms of the broad accord. The Muslim League accepted the Plan, believing it gave them almost-sovereignty in the Muslim Group of Provinces, and Congress appeared to accept it. But Nehru also publicly declared that India would look after minority interests, and that the Constituent Assembly would modify even the broad outlines of the Plan if necessary. This latter observation was tactless – almost a provocation playing on the worst of the Muslim's fears. Jinnah then rejected the plans for the Interim Government, and decided to increase extra-constitutional agitation.

He proclaimed August 16th to be a day of Direct Action. It is not clear exactly what kind of demonstration he expected: meetings in halls, petitions, marches, protests – surely all of these, but surely not what happened. The Chief Minister of Bengal saw a chance of enhancing the size of Action in Bengal by pronouncing the day a public holiday. Large crowds gathered at the Maidan in Calcutta, and were harangued about Hindu overlordship. Since the Commission of Enquiry into the Great Killings that followed was disbanded before it reported, no-one is sure about the extent to which trouble-makers deliberately started the killings. But Muslims turned on Hindus, and in turn the Hindus and the Sikhs, in greater numbers and better organised, turned on Muslims. For three days Calcutta was gripped in a frenzy: half-burnt bodies lying in burnt-out buildings, by the gutter where they had been decapitated, or drifting in the Hooghly river into which they had been thrown. The Governor waited for the Chief Minister to ask for assistance, and when at noon on the second day the request came, General Bucher GOC Eastern Command, refused to allow his troops in small parties into the little alley-ways to stop individual acts of violence, because they would have been overwhelmed. Instead, by manning the main thoroughfares in large groups and quelling the movement of gangs, the trouble was quelled by the fourth day. The estimates of the dead range from 5,000 to 20,000 – and the number of surviving casualties was a corresponding multiple.

The Hindu assault in Calcutta was revenged by Muslims in East Bengal murdering Hindu males, sometimes also raping the surviving wives and forcibly converting them to Islam, and forcing them to eat beef. The riots spread to Bihar,

where the Hindus turned on Muslim minorities. And so the killing went on, following the route that at other seasons the monsoon storms take, up the Ganges valley and into Punjab.

The politicians at the centre were clearly dealing with dangerous communal differences that not even Congress could any longer deny or minimise: but if they had thought they were in command of the tiger cubs they now found themselves riding full-grown beasts, and they must by now have been wondering whether the beasts would not throw and consume the riders.

With political stagnation and stalemate, and civil collapse imminent, the Cabinet Mission withdrew. Little had in the end been achieved, although one important ground rule had been changed. Britain had declared that when Independence came, British paramountcy over the princely states would lapse. It would not be handed to the successor government of India (or Pakistan). It would therefore be for the princely states themselves to resolve their future in negotiation with interim or successor government(s). This short-sighted decision muddled further waters which were already extremely murky.

8.3 Territorial Options

If it should be the case that India was to be redefined territorially to give a homeland to the Muslims, how was this to be done? The simple answer to this problem might have been to say, divide India to minimise the minorities remaining in the two new nations. But the simple answer did not work. Firstly, even if the religious persuasion of the populace were indeed the only criterion, there was no line that could be drawn, producing even three states or provinces, which did not leave large minorities on the wrong sides of the lines, so rather negating the object of the exercise. The success achieved would depend on the fineness of spatial scale at which the lines were drawn. Partition could occur at the Provincial level, or presumably at any of the lower levels of administration, which were:- at the level of the Division, at the level of the District, at the level of the sub-division, at the level of the Taluk, Tahsil, Thana, or perhaps even at the Village.

Secondly, the kind of division acceptable would depend on the kinds of powers allocated at Central or Provincial level. If the Centre remained strong and could intervene in the Provinces, then the Provinces could be larger, and retain large minority groups; for example, Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab, whose rights could be protected by the Centre. Conversely, the more fundamental the rights of the Provinces, the more there should be territorial readjustment to minimise the remaining minorities.

Thirdly, and often running counter to the last point, the more independent the Provinces would be, the larger should be their size to make them economically viable – to avoid the Bengal-minus-Calcutta syndrome which would give political freedom to Muslim Bengalis in return for economic serfdom.

Fourthly, quite simply there were some places where boundary lines could

do great damage. Everyone suspected that the division of the irrigation systems of the Punjab could prove economically damaging, even if on other counts Pakistan would be big enough to be viable. The same was true for communications and water resources in Bengal.

It is therefore no surprise to realise that the many schemes that were discussed over the last decades to Independence should represent a span of solutions, of varying degrees of plausibility, and varying degrees of complexity, each trying to find a cocktail which simultaneously satisfied these varying and contrary demands, each one laying emphasis more on one point than another.

Coupland in 1943 wondered whether The Problem might not in fact be as much a Regional Problem as a Religious/Communal one. A Pakistan based solely on religion would lead to wholesale mass migrations, he thought, but which ultimately would have little point, since that would transpose people into alien climates, economies and languages in the name of religion alone. It would be like transporting French Protestants to Norway. There must be many Biharis in Bengal who have learnt the hard way that Coupland had reason to make his observations. It may be remembered that John Bright saw a future for six or seven great states in India, though to my knowledge they were not demarcated on a map. Coupland reviewed two schemes for Regions, one based on an outline by Sir Sikander Khan published in 1939, but with a long history behind it, shown in Figure 8.1. The regions were based on the idea of a new tier of Federation, thus preserving the existing Provinces and States. The Regional Assemblies would have such powers vested in them as thought suitable by the Provinces, and there would be a new concurrent list of powers with the centre. Through this regionalism the different identity and culture of the Regions would remove the minorities from threat of domination by the Hindu Centre. The Centre itself would not have a directly elected assembly, thereby avoiding the monopolisation of power at that level too. The map is not wholly dissimilar to C Rahmat Ali's map, nor is the scheme so different from the Cabinet Mission Plan that very nearly succeeded in 1946, except for the fact that Indian India is not unified but also broken into the regions numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – and bearing in mind the increased power of the South in modern India. Even then, he was not so wide of an underlying truth.

An alternative scheme was based on river basins – bearing in mind that these were the basis of the economy, and that economics must play a part in moulding the success of any nation. Yeatts' scheme, discussed by Coupland, even foresaw a future in which hydro-electric power would be a prime concern of all the citizens of the great river systems. The River Basins scheme (Figure 8.2) produces a different Indian India, but again gives the same sort of result for the Northwest and the Northeast. Coupland's point was that regionalism could chime with Muslim demands for a homeland. But it would only do so if the logic of minimising the minorities in the 'wrong' regions was not pursued, if Hindu minorities were happy to live in Punjab and Bengal – which presumably would depend on the strength of the Centre. The 'chiming' of region with homeland would also have had happy consequences for the Sikhs. They had once been concentrated on the hill-plains rimland of Punjab,

and were still centred mostly around Amritsar, but after the development of the canal colonies in the southern arid parts of Punjab, they had spread far and wide, nearly always a dominant economic and social force, but not with the numerical majority that the new game of mass 'democracy' required. 'Their' Punjab would have remained intact under such a scheme.

These schemes were and are logical – but they had no mass basis. There had been no mass contacts campaign for Hindoostan or Bang-i-Islam or Dravidia. The Muslim league might have high-jacked some local sentiment in Bengal, but on the basis of religious fraternity, not economic self-interest. Nor was the regional scheme appealing to the Congress, who had aspired to a unitary India as the successor to the Raj.

The Cabinet Mission Plan of June 1946 was in effect a revised regional scheme, in which the central Hindu part were coalesced as one, thereby heightening its domineering appearance. The country was to be divided into three zones, 'A', 'B' and 'C', based on the existing Provincial and State boundaries. 'A' would be the

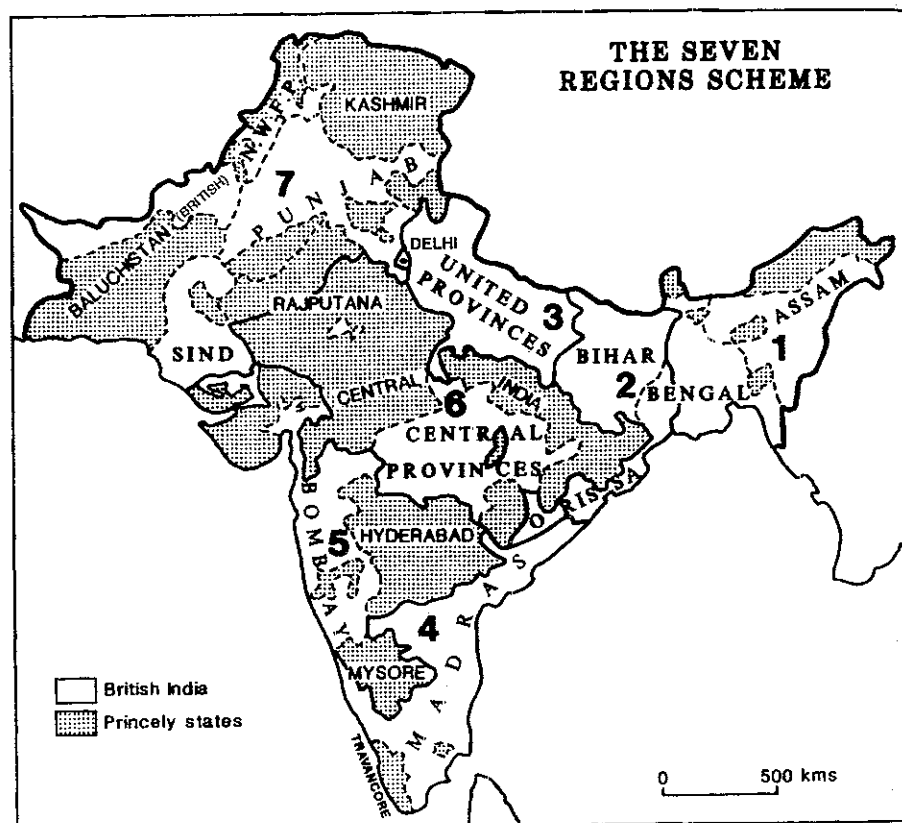


Figure 8.1 The Seven Regions Scheme for the Federation of India

Source: Coupland (1943 pt III)

majority areas of Hindu India, 'B' Punjab, Sind, NWFP, and Baluchistan, and 'C' Bengal and Assam. The Zones would have almost complete autonomy, and indeed 'B' became known for a while as the Federation of Pakistan. The Centre would retain Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Communications. The Centre, thought the League, would have no power of revenue-raising from the Provinces, being dependent on voted subventions. Congress thought otherwise. The League thought that the grouping of Provinces would be compulsory, though a group as a whole could at some future date secede. Congress thought that the grouping was voluntary, and at a future date a Province could change its group, but that secession and full sovereignty was impossible. Despite these varying expectations, despite contradictions in the clauses of the Plan itself, which sought simultaneously to calm fears on both sides, it did look for a while as though the Plan would be accepted by both sides. This was so because on the League's side it suspected that this was the best deal it might get, short of complete sovereignty, and because it feared the British might otherwise do a deal with Congress alone. For its part, Congress thought this to be a compromise which would, in the short term, allay the fears of the Muslims raised by imminent Independence, while preserving the long-term hope of a unified India. It is hardly surprising that in such an atmosphere the fragile and complex arrangement should have been shattered by Nehru's public affirmation that it was a temporary expedient, and by the wrangles over representation in the Interim Government, to which Congress wanted to appoint a Muslim member as well as Hindu members, despite the League's vehement objections.

The Great Calcutta Killings were the final death blows to any such plan or later variant succeeding. After them there was no hope of keeping Bengal united in any multi-tiered scheme, in which the Hindus would be a minority in a Region, Province, or Zone which included a tier between them and the presumed Hindu majority of the Centre. For anyone concerned with the maintenance of the rule of law, the potential of mass disruption and disintegration was all too evident, and the imperative had become more and more to keep the communities apart as much as possible – even though that could never be enough to prevent human catastrophe and migration, let alone the damage to the regional economies.

Looking at the figures for British India, just over a half of the population was Caste Hindu. If the Untouchables are added within the fold of Hinduism, the population was 64% Hindu, 24% Muslim, leaving 11% to Sikhs, Iribals, Christians, Buddhists and others. If the 24% Muslim population had been neatly concentrated, the partition would be no problem. In general terms it was of course more concentrated in the north-west and the north-east; but a brief consultation of Table 8.1 will show that Bengal was 45% non-Muslim and Punjab 43% non-Muslim. More detailed scrutiny will suggest no matter how it was done, there would still be significant minorities on either side of any conceivable line. Even a line which was devised solely to minimise the numbers of the remaining minority communities would leave 20 million of the 80 million Muslims in India.

The 'Pakistan Declaration' of Lahore had not mentioned the boundaries of the new state, but had acknowledged that some kind of territorial readjustments

might be necessary. Jinnah had been careful never publicly to concede less than the demand for full provinces, but it was widely thought that the League already knew that some parts of the provinces might be lost. The League knew that Punjab would be strengthened if the Ambala Division (very roughly coincident with modern Haryana) were to be conceded to India, which would raise the Muslims to 63% in the remaining Punjab. In such a case the Sikhs would be split down the middle, their concerns trampled beneath the arguments of their two larger quarrelling cousins. The League also obviously knew that if Bengal were divided, a Muslim state or province with far more than 55% Muslims could be created. If, for example the Burdwan Division, lying west of the Hooghly, were to be ceded to India, the proportion would rise to 65% – even though Calcutta would be within the Muslim part.

The calculations began. Dr S.P. Chatterjee published a Calcutta Geographical Society Monograph in 1947 showing that if Bengal were partitioned on a District Basis the rump of Muslim Bengal would be 70% Muslim, and Hindu Bengal 71% Hindu. By partitioning at the sub-division level he could not improve the percentage

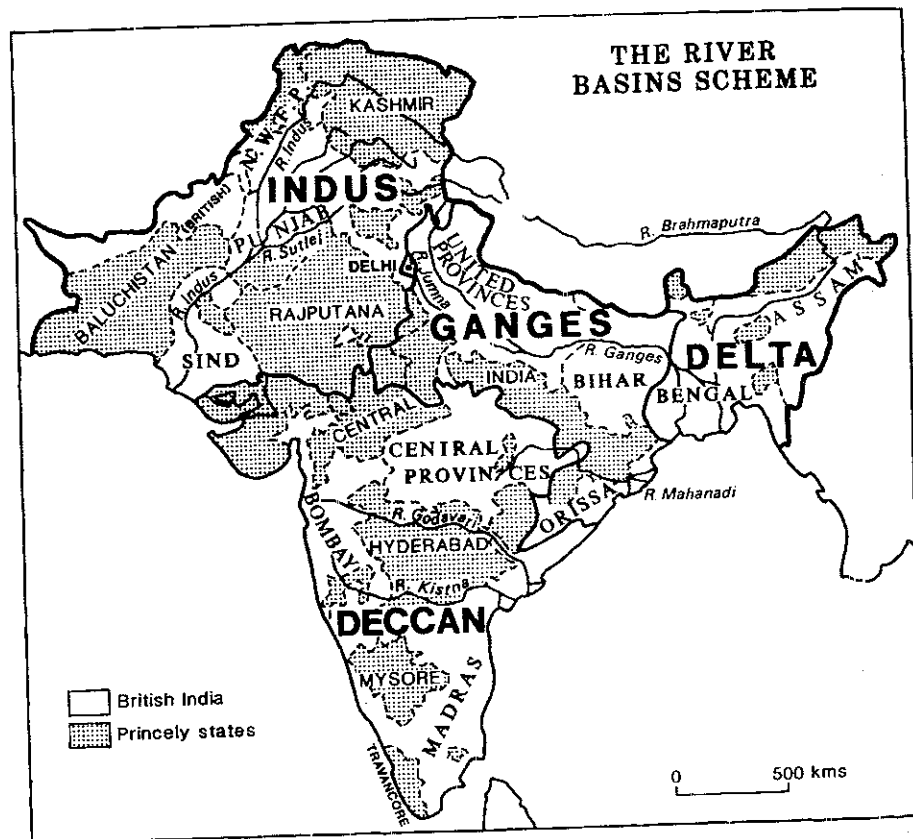


Figure 8.2 The River Basins Scheme for the Federation of India

Source: Coupland (1943, pt III)

Table 8.1 Percentage Distribution of Communities in India, 1941

British Provinces

| | Caste Hindu | Untouchable | Muslim | Sikhs | Other | Total |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Madras | 70.4 | 16.4 | 7.9 | nil | 5.3 | 100.0 |
| Bombay | 70.5 | 8.9 | 9.2 | nil | 11.4 | 100.0 |
| Bengal | 29.3 | 12.2 | 54.7 | nil | 3.8 | 100.0 |
| United Provinces | 62.0 | 21.3 | 15.3 | 0.4 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| Punjab | 22.2 | 4.4 | 57.1 | 13.2 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| Bihar | 61.0 | 11.9 | 13.0 | nil | 14.1 | 100.0 |
| Central Provinces | 58.8 | 18.1 | 4.7 | 0.1 | 18.3 | 100.0 |
| Assam | 34.7 | 6.6 | 33.7 | nil | 25.0 | 100.0 |
| N.W. Frontier P. | 5.9 | nil | 91.8 | 1.9 | 0.4 | 100.0 |
| Orissa | 64.1 | 14.2 | 1.7 | nil | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| Sind | 22.9 | 4.2 | 70.7 | 0.7 | 1.5 | 100.0 |

Princely States

| | | | | | | |
|------------|------|------|------|-----|------|-------|
| Hyderabad | 63.5 | 17.9 | 12.8 | nil | 5.8 | 100.0 |
| Mysore | 72.1 | 19.2 | 6.6 | nil | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| Travancore | 51.8 | 6.5 | 7.1 | nil | 34.6 | 100.0 |
| Kashmir | 17.3 | 2.8 | 76.4 | 1.6 | 1.9 | 100.0 |
| Gwalior | 86.4 | nil | 6.0 | nil | 7.6 | 100.0 |
| Baroda | 68.8 | 8.1 | 7.8 | nil | 15.3 | 100.0 |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|
| Total these and other States | 59.3 | 9.5 | 13.6 | 1.6 | 16.0 | 100.0 |
|------------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|

Empire Total 53.0 12.5 23.7 1.5 9.3 100.0

Source: Reworked from Coupland, 1943, Vol II p. 339

of Hindus in Hindu Bengal, but he could increase the area of Hindu Bengal and the total number of Bengali Hindus within it. The problem with either of these schemes was that it would have split Hindu Bengal into three blocks – one in the far east of Bengal (the princely state of Tripura to which he added the tribal area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts), and one in the north-west and one in the west, with Muslim Malda District splitting the latter two. To counter this, he proposed division at the Thana level, by which he managed to find a continuous strip of West Bengal that was Hindu dominated. It is significant that at the regional level it was the Hindus who were calculating how to avoid living under a Muslim majority.

It is also important to remember if one looks at Figure 7.2 that, while all the calculating and planning proceeded, the fate of the princely states, 40% of the area of the Indian Empire, was still completely unsettled.

8.4 The Decree Nisi

After the collapse of the Cabinet Mission Plan, Wavell was left a tired man with no clear sense of direction. On November 20th 1946 Wavell announced that the Constituent Assembly would convene on December 9th; but it was fairly certain that the League would boycott it, and that it could inflame the disturbances simmering throughout the country. On December 2nd Congress and League leaders went to London with the Viceroy, and after four days of discussions the communiqué simply said that the UK would not impose a constitution on unwilling parts of India. This was an open invitation to the League to boycott the imminent Constituent Assembly. Back in India, Wavell devised a plan of despair: that the British would withdraw province by province, leaving the provincial assemblies to negotiate with each other. One wonders whether, if that had happened, there would not have been, Angola-like, subsequent decades of civil war.

In Amritsar and Multan the civil war had started, and no-one was sure how long the army would last before it, too, split on communal lines (although when asked, the question was usually answered confidently at the time). Prime Minister Attlee knew that a settlement was a matter of urgency. He wanted a modern Alexander to cut the Gordian knot, and to all intents and purposes, that was exactly what he got. His choice fell on Lord Louis Mountbatten, a great-grandson of Empress Victoria and acceptable to the princes as the King Emperor's representative, a man as curiously out of his time as was Britain's Raj in India. He was a dashing and impulsive cavalier, but also a man of intelligence. He had made the Royal Navy his career, and had had some heroic failures pressing his destroyers against the odds. He loved tradition and uniforms – the dress of Viceroy would sit easily on him. He had also become increasingly proficient at running large-scale organisations, and had ended the war as Commander in Chief of Allied Forces in South East Asia. He had retaken Burma and was planning the push to retake Malaya when Japan fell to America's new atomic bombs.

He claimed not to have wanted the job, and to have put all sorts of demands on Attlee to make him withdraw the invitation, but Attlee agreed to them all, down to finding and recommissioning the Avro York which had been Mountbatten's transport as C. in C. South East Asia. But he also claimed later that his whole life had been a training for this moment. In February 1947 it was announced in London that Mountbatten would be appointed Viceroy, and that he was being so appointed with the specific task of transferring power – that is, it was announced that he would be the last Viceroy. The transfer was to be achieved by June 1st 1948. Mountbatten had essentially gained for himself plenipotentiary powers – i.e. he could make some agreements that would be binding on the British Government. He arrived in India in March 1947, and in fact the transfer was achieved on August 15th 1947, with a rapidity that has been the subject of debate ever since, particularly since some loose ends have remained to this day to sour relations between the successor states. But he and many authors have defended the speed as essential given the collapsing state of law and order.

Lord Louis had one great quality which he himself valued as much, if not more, than his admirers did. He could invariably understand another man's point of view, even if he did not agree with it. He could also communicate this understanding. In this he had a weapon with which he could persuade others to go along with his schemes. And to a large extent his powers of persuasion worked well with Gandhi and Nehru and others of the Congress High Command. But in Jinnah he found an austere aloofness which even he could not crack. He realised early on that Jinnah was implacably set on sovereignty for Pakistan.

He sent his first plan to London on May 2nd. It looked like a revision of Wavell's counsel of despair. It provided for the simultaneous transfer of power to the provinces, leaving them to establish the federal part of the constitution after independence. A revised version arrived back in India on May 10th, which Mountbatten promptly showed to Nehru. The latter was dismayed. Here written large was the Balkanization of India. Nehru knew that in the end the Muslims would probably go their own way, but he was adamant that Congress had to have a strong Centre in an unfragmented India.

Next, Mountbatten tried to outflank Jinnah by pursuing the logic of establishing 'this mad Pakistan' to the point where what was on offer for real would prove too little to be attractive to Jinnah. To do so he embraced the plan proposed by V.P. Menon, the central government's Reforms Commissioner, which explicitly provided for the Partition into two. This essentially followed the logic that said that, the greater the devolution of power, the smaller must Pakistan be. Punjab and Bengal would be partitioned too if either community in the provinces wished for it. Jinnah never agreed to anything: he just played for time, knowing that the tide was flowing in his favour. In such circumstances it was inevitable that Mountbatten should have his own priorities – which were that Congress should accept the Plan, that India and hopefully Pakistan should remain within the Commonwealth, that in defence and foreign affairs there should be a pact between Pakistan and India.

Gandhi set his face against any partitioning – vivisection – of Mother India, and on this he finally broke with Nehru, who saw no other option. Or, to put it another way, Nehru knew that any chance for a strong central government in what would become India would only be achieved by letting go of the Muslim areas, and achieving for India the kind of sovereignty that the Muslims were demanding for themselves. Any accommodation would mean a weak Centre, much as in many degrees Brussels is weak compared with sovereign governments in the European Union. As at the regional levels the Hindus now wanted to escape from Muslim domination, so now at the central level too the Congress could not have what it wanted without breaking from the Muslims. This was the extent to which Jinnah had finally turned the tables on the majority community.

On May 18th the new plan was taken to London, and on May 31st Mountbatten returned with the Cabinet's approval. He presented it as the only and final plan to Congress and the Sikhs, who accepted it, and to Jinnah, who said nothing. A formal meeting was called for June 3rd at which the principal leaders were present, but hardly allowed to say a word. Mountbatten spoke for them, fearing a row would

sabotage this last chance. The night before he had asked Jinnah not to say a word, but to nod his agreement when the time came. After an agonising silence, Jinnah nodded, and Pakistan, of an as yet uncertain size and shape, was agreed. Promptly a detailed document "The Administrative Consequences of Partition" was put before each delegate. The work to be done in so short a space of time left all present somewhat aghast.

That night the agreement was announced in London and Delhi, and the leaders each spoke by radio to their constituents. Independence would be achieved at midnight on August 15th, and power would be handed to the two sovereign states of Pakistan and India, who would determine their own constitutions. The provinces individually would vote for Union with either India or Pakistan, and, having decided, the representatives of the two communities in the Assemblies would then vote for partition or not of the provinces. Predictably, both Punjab and Bengal voted for Pakistan. Predictably, the non-Muslim groups of both Provinces also then voted for Partition. In the meantime, the League effectively became the interim government for Pakistan, and Congress for India.

To draw the new lines, Boundary Commissions were set up for Punjab and Bengal, each comprising four members, two nominated by the League, and two by Congress. Both Commissions were chaired by an English lawyer, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, whose impartiality was guaranteed by his lack of experience in, and knowledge of, Indian affairs. The Commissions were established on June 30th, and on July 8th Radcliffe arrived in Delhi. He had under six weeks to hear the arguments and draw the lines, according to 'contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims and, in doing so, to take into account other factors' (which were unspecified). Since the Members were hardly non-partisan, the weight fell on the Chairman. Importantly, it was to be an award, not an adjudication. To that extent he could find latitude for his own invention. And so parts of the new geography began to take shape, while in the wings the Princes argued to and fro over their futures in the new South Asia of majority rule.

Attlee had given Mountbatten instructions to hand over power to a unitary state if possible – but not against the will of any major group. There has been considerable debate over the extent to which Mountbatten did have room for manoeuvre: Hodson (1969) compares his situation with a canoeist descending rapids – really unable to dictate the major course and direction, but able to negotiate the rapids and avoid disaster on the rocks. Although Hodson concludes that this is too deterministic a summary, and that a fiasco could have resulted, it remains a persuasive image. Mountbatten's success lay in the fact that he persuaded the leaders of Congress to accept that Pakistan would be born. His truly great achievement here was to persuade a dissenting Gandhi to remain silent, and not to stir up a storm of protest. He also persuaded Jinnah to accept, however ungraciously, a moth-eaten Pakistan and the partition of Bengal and Punjab. He persuaded a majority of the Princes to accede voluntarily and uncontroversially to either India or Pakistan on the basis of proximity and majority community – but unfortunately he did not quite persuade all. In the end Mountbatten had no choice but to tear along the dotted lines, before the

rupture spread even further. Predictably the tear was not to be a neat one. The de-common-marketisation of South Asia had begun in earnest, and would continue for many decades.

8.5 Concluding Remarks

At the end of the Second World War and the collapse of Hitler's Reich, individual nations in West Europe rediscovered their tradition of representative government, and from there slowly and falteringly began to find some new system of integration which would provide political stability and economic prosperity. In India one of Europe's Empires was fading fast but, for the first time, with a chance that it would not be followed by a period of instability and petty wars – perhaps waiting yet again another coercive imperial integration. This time the chances were different because some of the seeds of representative and federal government had been sown. Whereas in earlier times factions among the élites could be suborned or co-opted with little reference to the common man, and territory had represented either revenue or strategic advantage, now territory was intertwined with both the consent and the power of the masses. The élites were not biddable simply in their own terms, they now were constrained by the people they also commanded.

New Lines on the Map

9.1 Introduction

The Partition of India into two independent sovereign states had been agreed. Mostly the boundaries of the successor states could be defined by using the boundaries of the provinces or Princely States which acceded to them – in the lower Indus valley Sind, Khairpur and Bahawalpur went to Pakistan and the boundary was fairly easily drawn. But two provinces were to be partitioned – Bengal and Punjab. To those who know the continuity of culture and language in the two parts of Bengal and Punjab, the idea of a partition to separate religious communities seems destructive and almost pointless, except that the violence the communities could inflict on each other in their moments of passion had been displayed too often for it to be ignored. So in Punjab and Bengal new lines had to be drawn – lines which would appear on the map of boundary frequencies, in a sense the basic map around which this book is written (Figure F.1), for the very first time. For the first time in South Asia's history the principle of identitive integration at the mass level was being applied, and it produced new lines which utilitarian and coercive integration had never done before. Someone had to be responsible for these new lines.

This was not the only problem. Although it has just been said that the princely states acceded to the most appropriate state, in fact not all accessions ran so smoothly. So here was another area where the territories of the successor states might be in dispute. Finally, people are potentially mobile. If the new states did not fit the communities, the communities could fit the new states – and migrate en masse to attempt to achieve that end.

These issues and the appalling human suffering that resulted are the concerns of this chapter.

9.2 Radcliffe's New Map

Sir Cyril Radcliffe's Boundary Commission's terms of reference were to divide Punjab and Bengal (and Assam) according to contiguous majority areas and other factors, which were unspecified. It was a task that many felt should never have been undertaken. The Governor of the Punjab, Sir Evan Jenkins, who had had to contain the March riots, knew that because towns might have different communities from their hinterlands, no line could be drawn to solve the minorities problem. And if the problem could not be solved, by implication partition could make it worse, provoking riots on a scale not yet seen.

There was another possibility – to move people. The Sikhs were aware that

they stood to lose most of all. Fearing that a new boundary would divide them into two, Gianni Khartar Singh on July 10th 1947 asked for a transfer of three quarters of the Sikhs from West Punjab to East, accompanying a commensurate exchange of property. Large migrations had occurred in Europe at the end of the Second World War, with for example the geographical shift westwards of Poland. But there was far too little time to organise such a transfer in Punjab before August 14th. The ghastly irony was that such migrations were about to occur in any event – but not of an orderly type. Fearing the worst, the Sikhs were making preparations to fight, and the extremists to strike at the perceived root of the problem: at one stage a Sikh plot to assassinate Jinnah was discovered.

Aware of the difficulty of the task and the compressed timetable, Radcliffe asked the respective leaders how important it was that the award be announced by August 15th. Both sides said it was imperative, and that speed effectively should over-ride careful attention to detail. In the event, Mountbatten engineered that the award was not published until two days after Independence, which meant that literally no-one was sure exactly where the border was for those 48 hours, as a result of which there were some strange goings on, which are touched on below. Further, Radcliffe had to draw the lines while not knowing initially which of the princely states bordering these two provinces would accede to India and which to Pakistan, although he might have had a fairly strong idea and during the course of his six weeks most of these issues were settled.

In the west he could assume that Bahawalpur and Khairpur, both with Muslim majority populations, would go to Pakistan, and probably he would have assumed that in the fullness of time Kashmir would do so too – because it too had an overwhelmingly Muslim population. Bikaner would go to India. So, somewhere on Bahawalpur's northern edge would be the starting point for his line, on the Sutlej River.

The Boundary Commission met in Punjab in July and for ten intensive days heard submissions from interested parties. Radcliffe did not attend – he was responsible simultaneously for the Bengal Commission too. Instead, he had daily summaries of the evidence taken to him. The Sikh proposal at one level sounded logical enough. If one started from East Punjab and added progressively districts in the west, how far could one go while still retaining a non-Muslim majority in the ever larger East Punjab? The answer was that they could go as far as the Chenab – which would then mean that the most important doabs between the Chenab and Sutlej, the Ravi and Sutlej, and the Beas and Sutlej would all go to India, and so too would Lahore and Multan. There was an historical basis in the claim too, reviving the kingdom of Ranjit Singh, the Sikh King of Punjab before the British annexation. But such a scheme would put many Muslim majority districts on the western edge of East Punjab, and deprive Pakistan of Lahore, a predominantly Muslim city, which was also the hub of communications to Rawalpindi and the North West Frontier. It would also split the Triple Canals Project down the middle.

Radcliffe rejected this, and worked in the first instance on the principle of contiguous majority districts (although he was prepared to, and did, divide at the

tahsil level, and even below the tahsil) On this basis his attention was drawn to look in detail at the land between Lahore and Amritsar.

Of this area Coupland had written in 1943:

'The two principal cities of the Punjab – Lahore the administrative capital, and Amritsar, the commercial capital and sacred city of the Sikhs – are both situated in the middle of the Province between the Rivers Ravi and Beas and only thirty-five miles distant from each other. To fix the boundary at either river is plainly impossible: it would mean the inclusion of both cities in either the Muslim or the Hindu State. Between the two cities there is no natural dividing line of any kind. Any boundary set between them would be wholly artificial, geographically, ethnographically and economically. *Inter alia* it would cut in two the system of canals on which the productive capacity of the whole area largely depends. It would also leave the capital city of each Province exposed and defenceless, right up against the frontier. Such an artificial dividing line, despite its obvious disadvantages, might serve, if it were to be merely the boundary between two Provinces in a single federal State. Administrative difficulties, such as that of the canals, might in that case be overcome. But it is no mere inter-Provincial boundary that is contemplated. It is to be a regular international boundary between two separate independent National States.' (Coupland, 1943, Pt III:86)

This spells out Radcliffe's dilemma in a nutshell. His task was, however, to produce an award, and therefore he did not have to, nor would he indeed, give a reasoned judgement between conflicting claims – since that would leave the argument open for rebuttal and appeal. He did explain quite a bit of his thinking in the announcement of the award, but much was also left unexplained. He himself thought that there could be no 'natural' solution, and that he *had* to assume that both sides would cooperate in the running of the canals after Independence. Here, demonstrated in the harsh light of farming and food requirements, was shown the reason why some sort of federation had for so long seemed to be the essential and necessary end of the independence movement.

At the southern edge of the territory Ferozpur (Ferozepore) District had a non-Muslim majority, and the district's northern boundary at the Sutlej provided a good starting section for Radcliffe's line. Some of the northern tahsils of the district had Muslim majorities, but within areas that had towns such as Ferozpur itself with non-Muslim populations. Ferozpur, like Lahore, was also a communications centre for the territory south of the Sutlej, and also a major garrison town, being at that point where several battles had been fought between the British and the Sikhs from across the river itself. As Pakistan must have Lahore, so India must have Ferozpur – and hence the Muslim majority tahsils would also go to India.

The river had been harnessed by a barrage near Ferozpur with canals on both banks, and thus if the exact line of the river were used for the boundary, the barrage would straddle the new frontier. But here was a curious twist of fate. The river may once indeed have marked the district boundary, but the river had shifted course a little, while the district boundary had not changed. The result was that a curious salient of Ferozpur district crossed north of the river and enclosed the barrage on

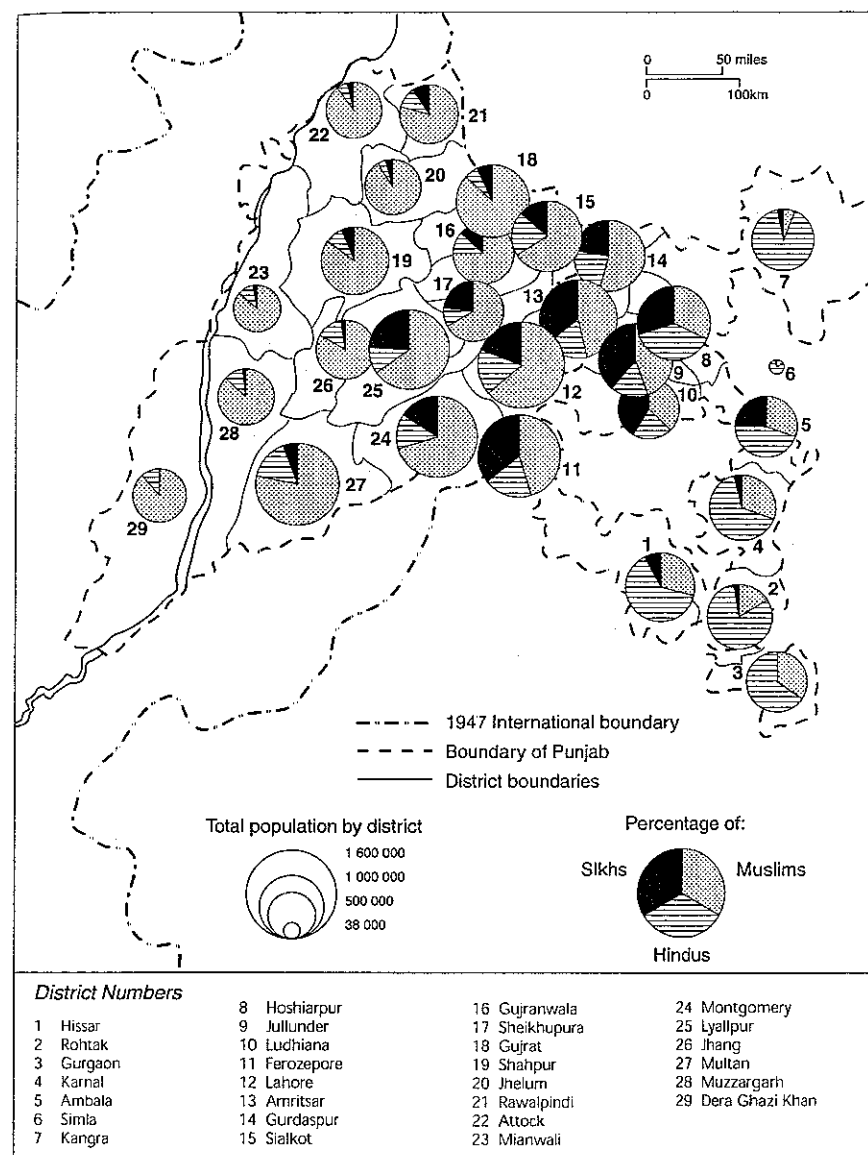


Figure 9.1 The Communities in Punjab and Radcliffe's Boundary Award 1947

Source: Based on Michel(1967)

the far bank as well. When the district was awarded to India, she then had total control of the barrage, which was the headworks for the important Dipalpur canal in Pakistan. Upstream of Firozpur, Lahore district had a curious salient going in the other direction – so that Pakistan came to own both banks of the river for a short stretch, and could presumably start building another barrage there given the necessary will. For the Indians this was a real fear in the 1950s, and was one of the reasons for their rapid construction of a new barrage at Harike, yet further upstream.

If Firozpur, Jullundur and Amritsar went to India this would leave significant Hindu majorities in Lahore District. Partly because of this, and to preserve the integrity of some of the eastern branches of the Upper Bari Doab Canals, the District was partitioned, and in one case a tahsil as well. This provided the southern part of the line between Lahore and Amritsar; but a similar approach does not appear to have been used for the northern part of the line on towards the Ravi.

Amritsar District included a Muslim majority tahsil, Ajnala, contiguous with Muslim Sheikhpura. The princely state of Kapurthala also had a Muslim plurality.¹ Both of these shared borders with Gurdaspur District, the next north of Amritsar, recorded in the 1941 census as being 50.23% Muslim, hardly an overwhelming majority over non-Muslims, but on the other hand since Sikhs and Hindus were the other 49.77%, the Muslims were clearly the major community. On the face of it, Gurdaspur could have gone to Pakistan, and Ajnala Tahsil and Kapurthala State too – leaving a rump of Amritsar surrounded on three sides by Pakistan.

So sure of gaining Gurdaspur was the Muslim League, that it sent its administrators to take over the local government. On August the 14th-15th they ran the new Pakistan flag up the flag pole. On August 17th, when the awards were announced, most of the District had been given to India, whose newly-despatched officers bundled the Pakistanis out with little pause for ceremony. With Gurdaspur in India there was then no reason to suppose that Kapurthala could join Pakistan – and its ruler was not that way inclined anyway. The Ajnala Tahsil could stay with India too, and push the border to the Ravi, thus maintaining a fair equidistance between Lahore and Amritsar.

The award had other effects too. Although one tahsil of Gurdaspur north of the Ravi went to Pakistan, the head works of the Upper Bari Doab System at Madhopur went to India. Thus India had both the headworks on the Sutlej at Firozpur threatening the Pakistani West Bank Canals, and the control of the system on which Lahore, further downstream than Amritsar, depended, not only for agriculture, but also for municipal water. Had Gurdaspur gone to Pakistan, then Pakistan could not have cut water from Amritsar without simultaneously cutting off Lahore. And it would, too, have left both new nation states with one headworks apiece on which parts of the territory of the other depended. Alternatively, using the river as the boundary on the Sutlej at Firozpur would have given Pakistan half of one of these barrages.

¹ Plurality means 'largest community', but without an outright majority. In this case it was 46%.

No further explanation for the published award was given by Radcliffe – and given subsequent events there have understandably been rumours, which have remained just that – unsubstantiated rumours, about a conspiracy – over Kashmir Gurdaspur provides the only possible route for a land link between India and the Vale of Kashmir. In August 1947 this should not have been important or a factor considered by Radcliffe, and we do not know that it was, and indeed all the statements are to the contrary. The road from Gurdaspur, through Jammu and Kashmir to join the Sialkot (to be in Pakistan) to Srinagar road via the very high Banihal Pass, had not, at that time, been developed, and in any event given the overwhelmingly Muslim nature of the Kashmir, it would have seemed most likely that it would accede to Pakistan, if to either. But rapidly the road was developed after Independence to give India a land route through to a land which remains the beautiful but contested and divided mountain redoubt of the western Himalayas. This is an issue which is examined further below. Some years later Radcliffe took the secrets of his reasoning to the grave, rightly having maintained a complete silence over how and why the award had been made the way it was.

9.3 The Second Partition of Bengal

In Bengal the issue which dominated all others was the assignment of Calcutta. Having decided to which new Dominion it should be given, the contingent questions related to how much hinterland space should also go with it. Given the size of the city and its Hindu majority and its significance for communications in West Bengal, it was perhaps inevitable that it should go to India. Having assigned it that way, Radcliffe's next provisions were not so inevitable, and presumably owed something to the 'other factors' provision. He gave Calcutta its space and avoided the fragmentation of West Bengal that S.P. Chatterjee had feared, by maintaining a corridor running east of Calcutta to the north. In doing so he incorporated significant Muslim parts of Murshidabad into India, and partitioned Malda and Dinajpur Districts as well. In the south, perhaps as compensation to East Bengal for the territory thus lost, he maintained the rather north-south boundary, and he included Khulna and its Hindu majority within East Bengal.

In the East, Sylhet District of Assam, a Muslim majority district with little geographical connection to Assam proper, was allowed to vote to join East Bengal and did so. The terms of reference of the commission were ambiguous about other adjoining Muslim majority sub-divisions – indicating that they could be assigned to East Bengal. But were these contiguous sub-divisions of Sylhet District, or sub-divisions of Assam contiguous to any part of East Bengal? Radcliffe took the former view, thus not considering so many other Muslim pockets of Assam.

Lastly, there was the outlier of non-Muslim population in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, inhabited sparsely by tribal peoples, principally the Chakmas. Their leaders had expressed a desire which Congress encouraged to be awarded to India, but Radcliffe took the view that their economic life was so closely tied to East Bengal,

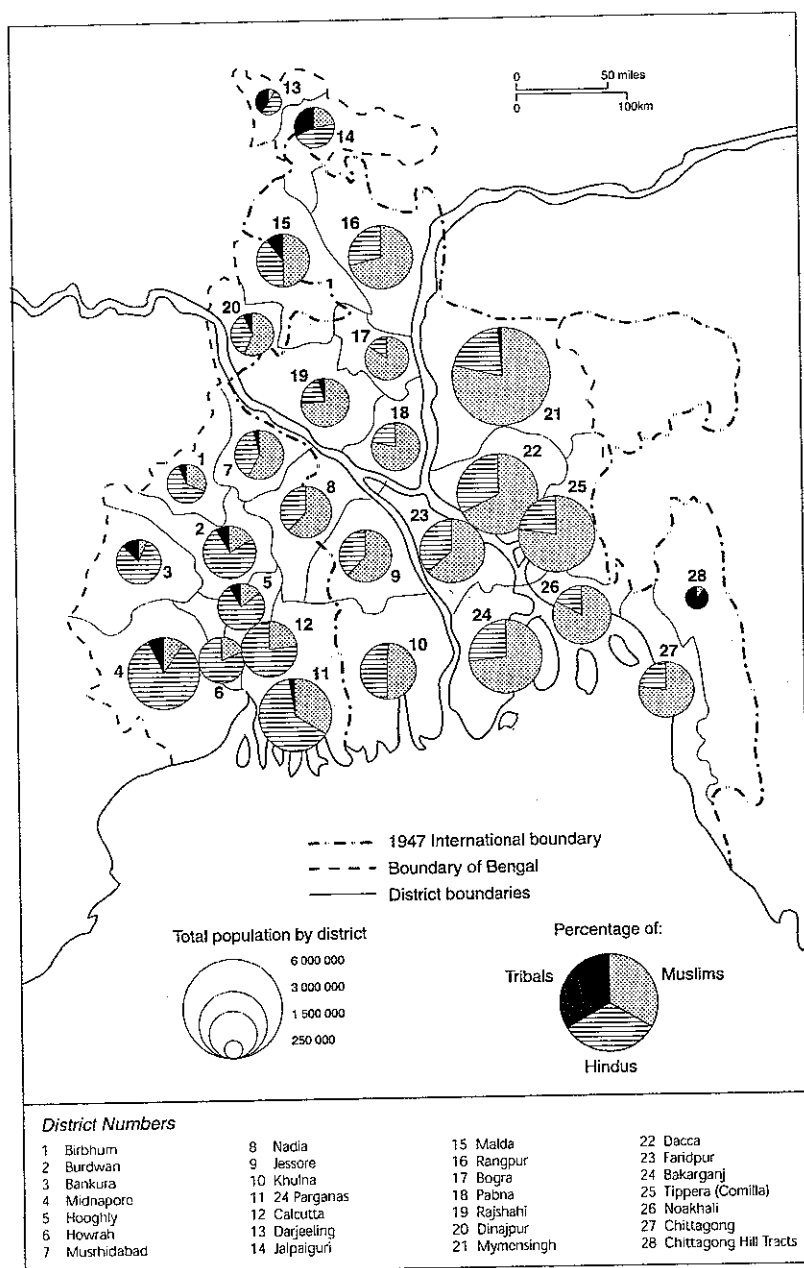


Figure 9.2 The Communities in Bengal and Radcliffe's Boundary Award 1947

Source: Based on Chatterjee (1947)

that an assignment to India would be unrealistic. Hodson observes on this point that though they were certainly not Muslim, neither were they Hindu, indicating that he thought there was reason to put them in East Bengal. But this mistakes the major point that Congress was making: it claimed not to represent the Hindus, but Indian peoples in general, even Muslims, though it had come to accept that the majority of the latter would be divorced. Certainly being non-Hindu was never a principle for the exclusion of people from India, whereas being non-Muslim has been a problem for the people of the Tracts locked into a Muslim dominated state ever since.

The awards were ready just about in time for Independence Day, August 14th-15th. But Mountbatten knew that there would be dissent from all sides, and he wished not to turn the day of celebration itself into a day of recrimination. Both sides had agreed to honour the award when it came, but he was not sure of their will to do so. By managing to be out of Delhi when the last report was received, he put off the day of reckoning till the 16th. Then the communal leaders were invited to receive the reports and to discuss them. After hours of bitter debate, all agreed to accept them as they stood, and they were published on August 17th. What persuaded the leaders to accept them was not so much the fact that any of them was satisfied, as the growing realisation that their opponents were as bitterly unhappy as themselves: and therefore such an award could not have been prejudiced in their opponents' favour either. In the atmosphere of the time, a diplomatic triumph of sour grapes for all could arguably be counted as simply a diplomatic triumph.

In Punjab, though some irrigation schemes had been dissected, the greatest, the Triple Canals Project, stood mostly intact in Pakistan, though this did not stop a major dispute erupting very quickly. Bearing in mind that no line could have divided the communities fairly, the actual line was adhered closely to the principle of contiguous majority areas. In Bengal the resource element did not figure so strongly, though the problems resulting from the division of the river basins here has now grown into a problem which outweighs that of Punjab. But the line seemed to be neither one thing nor another: East Bengal shorn of Calcutta was born as the rural slum prophesied; and yet it was not even defined to maximise its Muslim majority. With significant Hindu-majority pockets in Khulna and elsewhere, East Bengal started as a 30% Hindu state. None of this reflects on Radcliffe: it reflects on the folly of the communal leaders opting for partition at all costs. It reflects on their inability to learn from 1905. That Partition at least had had the merit of being within the same 'federal' structure.

9.4 The Princely States

The formal position that Mountbatten found was startlingly clear. At Independence, British paramountcy over the Princely States would lapse – thereby meaning that in theory they could go their own way, as independent states or forming their own groups, within or without an understanding with the new India or Pakistan. The reason for this state of affairs was simply that there were many conservatives in

the British parliament who considered that the Princes deserved to be rewarded for their past loyalty to King and Empire. To these parliamentarians, who might fairly be described as backward looking romantics, paramountcy was not something that could be transferred by the Crown: it was between the Crown and the Princes, and if the Crown were no longer to be represented directly in India by a Viceroy, and if the Crown would no longer be able therefore to fulfil the obligations of paramountcy, then the only possible action was to announce that paramountcy would lapse. It could not be handed over the heads of the Princes to the successor governments, and Attlee's Labour government could not afford to have a divided House on a bill as important as the Indian Independence Act.

But the geographical realities were different. Simply because there had been a paramount power, all of them had economies which were in some degree integrated with the rest of India, and communication lines to them and across them from British India. The majority of the 596 were too small to be viable on their own anyway, and certainly they would not withstand the pressing demands for democratic rule that were encouraged by Congress from without. Mountbatten, a relative of the Royal Family in Britain, was charged directly by the King with seeking a solution compatible with the honour and dignity of the Princes. His personal links with the crown were of great value in this matter. His first ideas were that the Princes should join the Constituent Assembly, much as they would have done under the Cabinet Mission Plan, to work out their own future. But events had moved swiftly beyond that solution. Now it had been agreed that India would be partitioned, and two Dominions would emerge. For neither Dominion was there a constituent assembly that would produce a constitution by August 14th; and it was clearly impossible for the Princes individually to negotiate with the interim governments on a one-by-one basis for particular constitutional arrangements.

A new States Department was instituted specifically to handle the problem. It worked on the presumption that the Princes should be persuaded voluntarily to accede either to India or to Pakistan, on the basis of the composition of their population and of contiguity. The accession would be for the purposes outlined by the Cabinet Mission Plan for federation, namely defence, communications and external affairs. The carrot was that princely titles and rights would be honoured, and that no charge would be put on the states for the purposes listed.

Of threatening sticks, there were many. Nehru had proclaimed in April that any state not acceding to the new India (this statement was made before Partition was agreed) would be treated as 'hostile' – a remark which earned him a fulsome rebuke from Mountbatten. But it was the truth of what would follow, despite the fact that, as Mountbatten emphasised, many of the Princes had large well-equipped and loyal armed forces. The biggest threat was uncertainty over the best timing of negotiation. That some negotiations would have to take place was certain, but would they best be held under British auspices before paramountcy lapsed, or after, between independent states and independent India (and Pakistan)? The latter course Mountbatten saw as leading to chaos and anarchy, with the scales tipped in favour of unrestrained intervention as Nehru had threatened. Nehru indeed continued to

maintain that India would exercise paramountcy as a matter of course. Jinnah in turn delighted in the British position that paramountcy would lapse, since that enabled him to negotiate with free States, and to offer them inducements to join Pakistan – thereby enabling his moth-eaten state to poach a little here and there. To that end he offered all kinds of inducements to the Maharaja of Jodhpur – and very nearly succeeded. There would be other muddied waters to fish in too.

Two specimen documents were drafted – instruments of Accession for the three Central matters, and Standstill Agreements covering non-acceded matters, which simply stated that until the final accession details were worked out, all existing economic and political accords between the States and paramount British India would be observed unaltered after paramountcy lapsed, until such time as renegotiation should occur. With this base secured, on July 25th Mountbatten then persuaded the massed Highnesses of the Indian Empire at a meeting of the Chamber of Princes to accept that there was in reality no course open to them other than to sign treaties of accession. Three variations of the treaties appropriate to three classes of states of different size and importance were ready. And all but three Princes had by August 14th acceded either to Pakistan or India. These three were the rulers of Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Kashmir.

9.4.1 Junagadh

With their internal status and income assured, and their external affairs looked after, there had been plenty of opportunities for the Princes to degenerate into pampered eccentrics, of whom there were many. Free to indulge in their chosen proclivities, many did so, though equally there were able and progressive Princes who were the very model of stabilising patronage that the conservatives of Britain always imagined them to be. In the Kathiawar peninsula lived the moderately eccentric Nawab, Muslim ruler of Junagadh, which had a Hindu majority populace, and two vassal minor princely states, Babariawad and Mangrol. The Nawab, though a Muslim who should have found dogs unclean, in fact was devoted to them, and kept eight hundred, each with its own attendant. On one famous occasion a state wedding was arranged for two of them, and a state holiday was proclaimed in their honour. Here was a man unprepared for the political storm that was breaking. His administration initially seemed favoured to India, but a Pakistani agent persuaded him that his dogs would be better looked after in Pakistan; in fact, he had heard that Congress agents were out to poison them. In May, while he was in Europe, there was a 'revolution' in the Palace administration, and a Muslim League Sindhi politician took over. On August 15th Junagadh formally announced its accession to Pakistan. India was dismayed, but could play a trick in such a confused situation. Babariawad and Mangrol independently declared their accession to India: whereupon troops of overlord Junagadh were despatched to whip the vassal states back into line. India isolated the states with units of its armed forces, which was an effective step, since the states could only otherwise be supplied by sea, although not while the monsoon season lasted.

In the aftermath of Partition there was indeed a joint Defence Council for India and Pakistan, but one which was not destined to endure. At the time of this incident the Council was chaired by Mountbatten, who had stayed in India as its first Governor-General. (He had hoped also to be Governor-General of Pakistan, but Jinnah took that post himself.) He used these two positions above all to prevent India from resorting prematurely to an armed invasion, and although the apple did finally drop into India's lap, it was not before Nehru had made public concessions of potential value to Pakistan. In a press communiqué of the 6th October Nehru repudiated Pakistani claims on Junagadh, and stated that the issue should be resolved by a plebiscite of the State's population. On the 1st November Indian troops moved into Babariawad and Mangrol without bloodshed, and the tourniquet on Junagadh was tightened. Internal conditions were deteriorating as State revenues dried up, and economic activity withered. The Nawab fled to Pakistan by air with his dogs (leaving his wife behind, so it is said) and a new administration declared accession to India. Pakistan refused to accept the new position, arguing logically that once the original deed of accession had been signed, it was no longer in Junagadh's power to alter it. To this day it claims the territory as part of Pakistan. It is said that the accession to Pakistan would have been territorially absurd: but this is not manifestly apparent. Being a coastal state and not so far from Karachi, it would have been no more absurd than much of Borneo being part of Malaysia, and no more so in purely locational terms than Ulster within the UK. Investment could have ensured that one port stayed open the year round. Given its population structure it is true it would have been unwise to incorporate it within Pakistan. But that is not quite the point. The rulers did have the right to accede as they wished, even if it might prove difficult to enforce. And Radcliffe had not succeeded in parting Muslim from Hindu, let alone Sikh. Initially, quite what Pakistan was playing for other than embarrassment for India, or simply to hold a card in reserve, is unclear. To say that as early as May Pakistan was preparing to contest for Kashmir would have been to foresee events in Kashmir with greater clarity than at that time was possible. But as the summer of 1947 passed on, the link between what happened in Junagadh and what was happening in Kashmir became much clearer. Nehru's commitment to holding a plebiscite in contested cases was adequate reward for Pakistan's opportunism.

9.4.2 Hyderabad

The vast territory of the Nizam of Hyderabad, one of the world's richest men, who locked himself and his wealth in old newspapers in a small room of his Palace, lay in the middle of peninsular India. This was a state of strategic importance over which the British and French had struggled almost two centuries before. Its size was certainly big enough to make it a viable independent nation; but its position in the heart of the Deccan straddling major lines of communication from the great port cities meant that India could not be indifferent to its claim to independence. In addition, the majority of the population were Hindu.

Nevertheless, the Nizam refused to sign an instrument of Accession, and

hoped for total independence. Negotiations dragged on for months after August 15th, with no result, although from time to time it seemed that the Nizam would in the end sign a deed of accession, on terms much more favourable to him than to any of the other princes. But there were dedicated Muslim extremists in the State, who effectively blocked attempts by the Indian Government and the Nizam to reach even such a watered-down accord. As a means of outflanking them, and in any event following policy adopted elsewhere, attempts were then made to induce the Nizam to introduce representative government, which would have isolated the extremists.

In the summer of 1948 clandestine gun-running by air from Pakistan was reported, and trains running across the State were ransacked,² in plain contravention of the Standstill Agreement. Thus India was given a pretext to undertake a 'police' action, as opposed to a 'military' action, against the state. Contingents of the Indian Army invaded the state, in the face of resistance by the Nizam's army, which held out for a week. Had there not been a stroke of luck in capturing an officer carrying orders for blowing up all bridges, the fighting could have been much longer. Even so, the death toll was nearly 1,000 combatants. In the end world opinion did not seem as hostile to India as Mountbatten had feared it would have been; and the disorder, murder and looting in the State may just have been adequate to justify the use of force. The loser was undoubtedly the Nizam, who could have remained a major leader in his own state had he been able to control the extremists.

9.4.3 Jammu and Kashmir

As Kathmandu in Nepal hides in its own broad valley behind the lofty Mahabharat Mountains, so Srinagar hides in the Vale of Kashmir, behind the Pirpanjal Range, which reach to 4,500 meters high. The southern flank of these mountains is drained by the Chenab, and commanded by the city and district of Jammu. The north wall of the Vale is formed by the Himalayas themselves. Beyond them lies Ladakh and Baltistan (Little Tibet), then the deep trough of the Indus. Beyond the Indus are the mighty Karakoram Mountains, behind which is the vast plateau of Tibet.

The great Vale of Kashmir, legendary for its beauty and its climate, is drained by the Jhelum, the most westerly of the five rivers of the Punjab. It is the heart of that territory which in its much wider extent embraces Jammu and Ladakh and is called Kashmir. It is said that the Kushan king Kanishka (reigned circa AD 78 to AD 102), whose capital was at Purushapura (Peshawar), founded Srinagar after he had forced his way up the Jhelum and annexed the Vale to his kingdom. Certainly under his reign the Fourth Buddhist Council was held in Srinagar, and the area may be presumed to have been mostly Buddhist. Hinduism later staged a revival under the Pandits, and then Sufis and other Moslems converted the majority in the Vale itself to Islam. During Mughal rule the Vale was celebrated for its beauty, and the famed Shalimar Gardens were created. The Moslems retained many customs not

² Not by Muslim Razakars, however, but by their Hindu Marxist foes



Figure 9.3 The Line of Control in Kashmir

Source: Schwartzberg (1997)

associated with Islam: they sing in the mosque. Later still came the Sikhs, who imposed their rule into the hills from Punjab. To many observers there was a fusion which gave to all Kashmiris of any creed their own identity – the culture of Kashmiriyat. Kashmiris of the Vale have their own language, Kashmiri. The British noted with some distain that they were not a martial people, that they could not recruit good soldiers from them, nor provoke them to fight.

Out of the demise of the Sikh Kingdom, described in Chapter 5, Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu added the Vale of Kashmir to his kingdom. The new princely state and its Hindu monarch were then bound by the treaty of 1846 to a tributary relationship with British India, though there was vagueness about its northern and north-western border.

The nationalist struggles in British India did not pass Kashmir by. In the 1930s a local leader, Sheikh Abdullah, was vocal in demands for the Maharaja to devolve power to the peoples' representatives. Since there was no electoral system the extent of his popular support was never measured. It also has to be said that there were Islamic leaders as well, who became pro-Pakistani. Abdullah's programme was at least semi-socialist and secular. He and Nehru shared much of their philosophy in common, and it can be said that for much of his political life Sheikh Abdullah

believed that Kashmir could find its own statehood within India, although at other times he was more pro-independence. Though Ladakh and Baltistan are predominantly Buddhist, and Jammu predominantly Hindu, overall the population of the legal entity of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947 was 77% Muslim. Inevitably, as in India, the struggle for power began to emphasise communal symbols, and the Maharaja was seen increasingly as an alien Hindu from Jammu. Nevertheless, by 1947 the then Maharaja, Hari Singh, had conceded none of his constitutional power.

In the crucial months of the Spring of 1947 the Maharaja, a vacillating man, avoided confrontation with Mountbatten and his envoys, preferring to have a 'stomach indisposition'. His Highness could not contemplate subjecting his state to Muslim rule, and he could argue with some justification that Pakistan would be theocratic, not secular, and that his Highness' Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist citizens should not be so subjected. Accession to India on the other hand was also ruled out, as it would provoke a revolt by the Muslim majority. So, doing nothing seemed to suit both his character and his purpose. By August 15th no accession of the state had been announced, and de jure he was now ruler of an independent country. De facto he was too, but destined to be so for a short time only. As Mountbatten had warned the assembled rulers, they would not be able in all circumstances to isolate themselves from the turmoil of communal disturbance and demands for majority rule. In the summer of 1947 communal riots threatened the State with collapse. Embittered Sikh refugees from Punjab moved into Jammu, and meted out revenge on Muslims. Muslim peasants from Jammu and Kashmir fled to Sialkot in Pakistan. The Maharaja's army, predominantly Hindu, was charged with re-imposing discipline, but it failed to curb the communal violence in which the majority of victims were Muslim. In Jammu elements of the Maharaja's army massacred Muslim villagers. As the cycle of violence intensified, in late October 1947 a force of 5,000 Pathans crossed from the North-West Frontier to invade the Vale of Kashmir following the only road, up the Jhelum. These Pathans are from the same stock as those who fought the British on the Afghan border, and more recently the Russians in Afghanistan. India, of course, suspected that the invasion had been engineered by the Pakistanis, but Pakistan maintained that it had been spontaneous and that they had not had the forces in position to prevent it. The tribesmen succeeded in blocking access to the valley and were on the threshold of taking Srinagar itself. Muslims in the Maharaja's army began to defect to the rebels and complete chaos threatened. The Maharaja pleaded with India to send help. It has been asserted that the only thing that stopped the invasion from achieving its aims without more ado was that the tribesmen knew they had the Maharaja bottled up in Kashmir, that no help could reach him, and that they could therefore take their time – which they did by looting in Muzaffarabad, and having what was by all accounts quite a binge.

Even at this stage there seems little evidence that India was planning to grab Kashmir for itself. But there were undoubtedly emotional forces at work. Nehru was deeply attached to the State – it was the ancestral home of his family, and of particular interest within Hinduism, because of the Brahmins of India, the Kashmiri

Brahmins are ranked highest.³ And the high mountains contained the headwaters of the major rivers: here possibly was where the Lord Brahma's foot touched earth, where the mythical Mount Meru was the centre of the world. The Indian Government seemed disposed to help the Maharaja even without accession, and it also took the view that the State's eventual fate must depend upon a plebiscite once peaceful conditions had been re-established. Mountbatten persuaded Nehru that India had no right to intervene until the Maharaja had signed a treaty of accession; although mindful of the rights of the majority it was agreed that the accession should be temporary pending the plebiscite. Hari Singh had fled to Jammu, and no-one in New Delhi knew whether or not Srinagar had fallen. In despair he signed the deed, although it is still disputed whether Indian troops were despatched before or after he signed.

Mountbatten had had considerable experience of the use of air power during the Second World War, and there is no doubt that some of this experience was put to use in helping to arrange the one thing the invaders had not considered, an air lift of regular Indian troops into the Vale. Crucially the airfield was secured in the nick of time, and Srinagar itself could now be 'protected'. India had acted alone, and had failed even to keep Pakistan informed until the orders for the airlift had been issued. Clearly the chances of a bi-partisan approach were wrecked. Jinnah ordered the move of Pakistani troops into Kashmir, though he was persuaded to retract, on the basis that the accession of Kashmir to India had been as legal as the initial accession of Junagadh to Pakistan. The two Dominions again seemed on the brink of war, just weeks after pulling back from confrontation over Junagadh. Attempts at reconciliation were ruined by rumours of Muslims perpetrating atrocities on Hindus and Sikhs; and, of course, vice-versa too. Winter set in, making re-supply of Srinagar by land from India almost impossible, and the tribesmen began again to push forward, almost certainly by now abetted by units of the regular Pakistani army in irregular dress. As an alternative to settling the issue by outright war, possibly including an Indian invasion of Pakistani Punjab, the issue was taken by India to the United Nations in New York. The UN resolution of April 3rd 1948 called for the establishment of a neutral administration, and the holding of a plebiscite to determine whether the state should accede to Pakistan or India. This UN resolution did not mention the third option – the independence of Kashmir. Both sides rejected the resolution, but did agree to a cease-fire on January 1st 1949. At that time the cease-fire line petered out in mountains, snow and ice above 18,000 feet in the area of the Siachen glacier south of K2, the world's second highest mountain (see Figure 9.3). The original line has since been 'policed' by a UN observer corps, who count the shells fired each way (on a more or less continual basis). The Line has been crossed in hostilities by both sides on many occasions since. But it is still the Line, since 1972 known as the Line of Control (LOC), but with an extra definition. Maps

³ In 1945 after his release from 1041 days of imprisonment and after the Viceroy's Conference in Shimla Nehru's mind turned to "mountains and snow covered peaks. I hurried to Kashmir. I did not stay in the valley, but almost immediately started on a trek to the higher regions and passes. For a month I was in Kashmir." (Nehru, 1962: 602)

were published in Pakistan showing the LOC extending north-eastwards to the Karakoram pass. In the 1980s the Indians (first to deploy troops here it is thought) and the Pakistanis have fought each other on the Siachen glacier. When hostilities started at high altitude, mountain climbing shops in Europe suddenly sold out of high-altitude climbing gear. Hostilities continue here as elsewhere, although both sides lose more troops to cold and accidents than they do to enemy action. Men cannot serve at these altitudes for more than 3 weeks before bodily deterioration becomes severe and possibly irreversible. Surely this has to be folly of the highest order.

Although there are others, Kashmir remains the principal bone of territorial contention between India and Pakistan to this day, the issue that sours all attempts at normal relations, and which has the capacity to draw both into war with each other. The full plebiscite has never happened, because neither side has withdrawn its forces, so neither side has acknowledged that the peaceful conditions of a reunited State have been re-established suitable for the holding of the plebiscite. Since 1949 the chances of a peaceful solution have been fleeting and few. Such a solution would probably require an act of compromise and concession that no politician on either side has the stature to survive.

Pakistan's case remains that by geography, and by religion, the State should be theirs. Pakistan maintains officially that Kashmir is still independent, and that it is waiting for the formal accession of the whole state. The part of the state now administered by Pakistan is known as Azad (Free) Kashmir in Pakistan, but as Pakistani-occupied Kashmir (POK) in India. It has a population probably above 2.5 million. India's part includes the majority of the population, now more than 8.0 million, and the original capital in Srinagar. Azad Kashmir has equivocal status within Pakistan. The nominally independent government, based at Muzaffarabad, is, in fact, under the control of the Pakistani Ministry of Kashmir Affairs. India's case is equally adamant: that Accession is a fact, and indeed it held a plebiscite (referendum) in its part of the state in 1954 which India claims confirmed the accession.

Sheikh Abdullah became Prime Minister of (Indian) Kashmir, and dominated much of the politics of the next 30 years. But he had a falling out with India, and became banned for while from his own state. By Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, Kashmir has special status, having ceded to India only those powers mentioned in the deed of accession – defence, foreign affairs, and communications. There is no concurrent list shared with the centre, and to emphasise the difference, in all other states there are chief ministers. The title Prime Minister applies only at the Union level in Delhi, and in Kashmir. It became clear that increasingly India saw the Article as temporary, and there has been a creeping annexation. It extended the jurisdiction of the Indian Supreme Court in 1962, extended the functions of the Reserve Bank and the Census, and integrated the electoral systems. The Congress Party of Kashmir has also integrated itself with the Congress Party of India. However, Indian nationals from other states are still not allowed to buy property in Kashmir. A point of real contention for many Kashmiris was the Shimla Accord of 1972 (at the time it was Simla), when the Ceasefire Line was supposed to be transformed

into a 'soft' border, which Kashmiris would be able to cross. A weakened Pakistan that had been trounced in the Bangladesh war agreed that Kashmir was a bilateral issue between India and itself, and that the two would work towards a solution. The Accord does not refer to a plebiscite, or the possibility of an independent Kashmir.

For a while in the 70s and 80s it seemed as if the status quo might be accepted, and the issue die down. But political drift reaped its own reward. Guerrilla activity in Indian Kashmir started again in 1989, and the crackdown by Indian security forces was insensitive. The Indians claim that militants, many of them international veterans from the Afghan War of the 1980s, have targeted the Kashmiri Brahmin Pandits – and certainly those who were still there (less than 200,000) have fled in fear to Jammu and other cities in India. Since 1989 Kashmir has been living through internal siege, and normal life has been paralysed. The tourist industry has collapsed, with dire economic impacts. There are many different groups involved with different aims: Kashmiris seeking unification with Pakistan, Kashmiris seeking a reunified and independent Kashmir, irregular Islamic militants from outside Kashmir, and sometimes Pakistani regulars, usually disguised as militants. Pakistan usually denies any involvement, and claims that infiltration across the border is beyond its control. But it is clear that regular forces were committed across the LoC in 1999 at Kargil, when the fighting threatened to intensify to a full blown war. In 2002 the confrontation reached fever pitch, many analysts expected a full-scale war which had the potential of escalation to a nuclear exchange, and western countries advised their nationals to leave both Pakistan and India immediately.

The cost of all of this to the people of Kashmir in trauma, injury and death has been horrific. Perhaps 50,000 have died in the last 10 years. Some commentators believe the total could be as high as 100,000 (Hewitt, 2001). More is said later about the cost to the Indian and Pakistani economies and politics, and to their international relations. The significance of the State in terms of its natural resources – for example, the rivers which flow from these mountains – and the significance of the struggle in other international spheres such as Indo-Chinese relations, or America's 2002 War Against Terror, is something to which we will also return below. If ever there was an untidy result from Mountbatten's speedy tearing along the dotted line, this is it.

9.4.4 Gilgit and the Northern Territories

Far in the north, where Afghanistan, China and greater India meet, the Indus receives two northern tributaries to its right bank. These two rivers, the Gilgit and the Hunza, occupy deep trenches through the mountains, and give their names to the two districts. Both lead to passes, the Mintaka and the Khunjerab, into Central Asia; and indeed it is through Gilgit and Hunza that the Karakoram Highway connects Pakistan with China.

This frontier area came nominally under the control of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, but the British began to worry in the late 19th Century whether the Maharaja had either the means or the inclination to be bothered with 'protecting'

them. They tried to garrison a Gilgit Agency with the agreement of the Maharaja, but by the end of the century had withdrawn. In the 20th Century these anxieties resurfaced, and in 1935 they signed a lease with the Maharaja to administer the territories directly for the next sixty years. After Pakistan assumed sovereignty over the North-West frontier Province and 'protected' Azad Kashmir from India, the status of these territories, also under Pakistani protection, was called into question. Are they or are they not part of the Kashmir issue to be settled? The Pakistani answer is that they are not. Pakistan has incorporated them within its own administration, and the sixtieth anniversary of their lease passed without formal action by the Pakistani Government. But for some Kashmiris, this is another issue with which to muddy the waters. It is not one that usually causes much trouble in Delhi, since the Indian government would almost certainly accept a united Kashmir without Gilgit, acknowledging Pakistan's highway to China. But that does not guarantee that at some future stage the issue might not be raised again as a card to be played at the negotiating table – thence to become part of some greater entanglement.

9.5 The Human Flotsam

The new borders had not completely solved the minorities problem. India was born with 11% of its population Muslim, and Pakistan overall with 13% of its population non-Muslim. In East Pakistan (East Bengal) the population was 30% non-Muslim. These are the dry figures: what it meant in reality was something far more horrific. Many of those people who were left in small minority pockets on the 'wrong' side of the new borders found themselves subjected to every conceivable act of violence and degradation. Murder, pillage, arson, rape – all of these words can fit accurately what happened. Many, particularly those near the borders, abandoned everything and trekked towards their new 'homeland'. In Punjab trains overlaid with refugees carried some, trucks and bullock carts others, while many simply made long lines of despairing walkers trailing as far as the eye could see. One caravan was estimated to comprise 800,000 people. All were subject to attack. Trains arrived with their whole passenger complement silent – unable to speak because all were decapitated or stabbed to death. A Punjab Boundary Force of 50,000 men had been established to handle some expected trouble; but the scale of violence was so colossal that it struggled to achieve even a minimum of control, and then it too collapsed as it broke down into its pro-Pakistan and pro-Indian elements. The Sikhs in particular were prominent in some of the worst attacks on Muslims – this was their revenge for their own inability earlier to make political accord with the Muslims to avoid the Partition. A common estimate is that at least 250,000 people died.⁴ In the first five months of Independence 12 million people fled both in the Punjab and in Bengal – one of the biggest population movements in history. (By 1950 the total migrants had risen to 15m.) This was ethnic cleansing on a scale that dwarfs the more recent events in the Balkans in the 1990s.

⁴ J. Schwartzberg estimates c. 400,000 (personal communication).

In Bengal, where August 16th 1946 had left many scores unsettled and where the worst trouble was expected, there was little violence. This 'miracle' was as a result of the moral power of Mahatma Gandhi's leadership – the one-man boundary force as Mountbatten described him. Gandhi had gone to Calcutta and threatened to fast unto death unless the communal and gang leaders agreed to hold the peace. As a demonstration of moral persuasion this must have been one of the most powerful ever.

This mass movement left marks on the geography of both countries. In Punjab so many people had moved that allocating new refugees to abandoned land became in effect a way of redistribution and land consolidation. It was part of the modernisation of agriculture that has continued since. In West Punjab the Muslim peasants found that they had been relieved of debt, as Hindu money lenders had fled. In the big cities – Delhi was the largest urban focus for refugees – urban populations suddenly swelled, and the new governments had major problems in feeding the crowds, and keeping them healthy. In Delhi in 1951 24% of the population were refugees from West Pakistan. In Calcutta, unlike in Punjab, the flows each way did not balance, and 2.1 million people converged on the city from East Bengal, against 0.7 million going the other way. It was the turning point that pushed the great former imperial capital on the downward slope to its current symbolic role as the epitome urban squalor. The net effect had been to increase the population of an already over-settled State (Province) by 12%.

The streams were also highly selective in other ways. For the Muslim poor near the Pakistan border, it was perhaps a realistic option to cross to the new homeland. For those living far from the borders in eastern United Province or Bihar, there was no comparable option. But for the richer urban Muslims of these areas, there was the chance of organising transport and fleeing. Many of the professional urban Muslims from all over India converged on Karachi. It became the city of the new migrants – the Mohajirs as they are known, the people of the great pilgrimage. Jinnah, the greatest of the Mohajirs, seated his new government in Karachi, and the immigrants became a major force in government and the armed services. To the native Sindhis they have remained mohajirs and have been integrated little within provincial Sindhi society. These differences have been entrenched by hostile political relations which have erupted into armed conflict and terrorism, particularly in Karachi. Since 1995-96 it has been periodically completely paralysed by violence and strikes. In the east, one movement of Muslims from Bihar settled in East Pakistan, to find themselves strangers alongside Bengali 'brothers', and after another political break in the future, when Bangladesh seceded, they would find themselves completely rejected, reduced again to refugees in their adopted Muslim homeland.

Selective migration affected the running of every kind of industry and service. The railways lost Muslims to Pakistan, and gained non-Muslims the other way. But the Muslims were mostly the drivers and the metal-working artisans, while the non-Muslims were mostly clerical. Train movements suffered, and coal production and distribution stagnated. The members of the civil service could opt for Pakistan or India, and as they did so and as the British officers left, so the skills remaining

to Pakistan and India were reduced and unbalanced. Regiments split, and brother officers parted company, many to take up armed conflict against each other in future wars.

9.6 The Divided Inheritance

Physical and financial assets had to be split. From June 1947 onwards a Muslim and a Hindu representative had headed the teams who divided the spoils. Pakistan would get 17.5% of government cash reserves and sterling balances, India the rest, and in return Pakistan would cover 17.5% of the outstanding government debt. The physical assets would be divided 20% to 80%. This meant, for example, the Food and Agriculture Department's 425 clerk's tables would be divided 340 to India and 85 to Pakistan, the 85 large tables divided 68 to India and 17 to Pakistan – and so on for the 850 chairs, 85 officer's chairs, 50 hat pegs, 6 hat pegs with mirrors, 600 inkstands, etc. that were also listed. Libraries were divided; in some cases alternate volumes of encyclopaedias went to the two inheritors. It is even reputed that English dictionaries were torn down the middle at the letter K.

The division of other responsibilities and liabilities also had to occur over the next few years with companies, such as life assurance companies, who had clients in both countries, and assets and head-offices in one. And in tax revenue which was collected at the point of manufacture – such as excise on matches levied at source where they were produced in India. They were sold both in India and Pakistan and thus the tax was raised indirectly in both countries.

Finally, the division automatically placed India and Pakistan in trading relationships with each other. Both became each other's largest trading partner overnight – and yet within a few years they had completely embargoed their trade with each other. They were natural trading partners. Pakistan produced most of the long staple cotton: India had the mills. East Bengal produced all the best jute: the mills were at Calcutta. India had been born into food deficit: West Pakistan was in surplus. East Bengal was born into food deficit too.

The complete breakdown of this natural trading pattern caused enormous hardship to both countries and is something which we will touch on again below. Obviously it seems unnecessary, but perhaps it was a price which Pakistan had to pay, for without economic freedom and independence it would never achieve political freedom and independence. But in becoming economically independent of India, Pakistan became dependent on other outside nations.

9.7 Concluding Remarks

The pursuit of self-rule – *swa-raj* – had revealed more 'selves' than Congress had wanted to admit. However, in admitting to the reality of the Muslim League's mass following, Congress inherited a strong centre in the new India, still the largest

self-governing unit the sub-continent has ever seen. The real 'surprise' at the end of the long saga was the other 'reality', of applying the logic of Partition at every scale. Pakistan got its much sought-after sovereignty, for a rather moth-eaten territory, at the price of the vivisection of Punjab and Bengal, and the creation of a bifurcated state whose two wings were separated by a thousand miles of Indian territory, and also separated by language and script, economically unrelated to each other, and linked only by Islam.

Chapter 10

From Two to Three: The Birth of Bangladesh

10.1 Introduction

Both India and Pakistan have had to struggle with the problems of regionalism and separatism since independence. In India this has frequently meant the realignment and redefinition of constituent states. In the case of Pakistan it has meant a variety of experiments with the redefinition of, and even the abolition of, provinces. It has even meant the loss of East Pakistan, which has become the sovereign state of Bangladesh. In trying to write about all of these I have experimented with keeping all of these events in one chapter, treating the case of the independence of Bangladesh simply as a special case of the problems of accommodating regional forces. In the end, for clarity and convenience I treat it in this chapter as a special case on its own. In making the story a separate chapter I have also had to decide whether it should come before or after the other stories about regionalism: I have decided it should come first, as the most traumatic event in Pakistan since 1947.

The story of the birth of a nation, in this case Bangladesh, is usually treated as a singular story – a linear narrative of that territory which achieves its sovereignty – and that would indeed be a simpler way of explaining the emergence of the new state. But, Bangladesh is just one of the many regions of South Asia, and the main reason to single out its story as opposed to that of Maharashtra or Sindh or Tamil Nadu is that it has become something which they have not, an independent sovereignty, although there is no *a priori* argument why it should have a stronger claim to such a status than the other provinces/states just named. Why it happened is a result of the sequential order of specific events. In 1947 East Bengal sought self-determination and independence from Hindu over-lordship. It joined the Pakistan movement and 'got' Pakistan, but only by failing to get the former – independence – as, within Pakistan, East Bengal was always the junior and dominated partner. So the next step logically would be to arrogate from Pakistan its share of the sovereignty that had been granted in 1947, something it achieved by embroiling the whole of Bengal, and therefore India too, in strife in 1971.

10.2 Unequal Development in Pakistan

In 1947 India acquired 81% of the Indian Empire's population, but only 72% of its area. This indicates that Pakistan in aggregate was less densely settled, but the aggregate masked the huge inequality between East and West. The East had in fact