CHAPTER 2

British Recruitment Strategies and the History of the Colonial Indian Army

2.1. The Traditional Structure of The Indian Army in the 18th Century

The precise date of the establishment of the East India Company's (EIC) presidential forces is unknown because these armies were formed gradually over a period of time and, in some cases, without specific orders. However, its beginnings may be traced back to the 16th century, when the EIC landed in India to establish trading relations with the Indian subcontinent. Surat's English factory, which had been in operation since 1619, housed the first English army guards(Lawson, 2014). Similarly, when the Madras factory was established in 1640, Surat organised and initially supplied factory guards. Later that century, the Company's factory in Bengal, which culminated in the foundation of Calcutta in 1690, was similarly supplied with critical supplies from Madras. These industrial guards were the EIC's first armed personnel(Kaye, 1953). Originally, the presidency armies were formed to protect the EIC's trade interests as well as to maintain law and order in the territories under the Company's control. Over a period, the company expanded its role and started acting as a tool for British expansion in India for which it established three distinct 'Presidency Armies,' one in Madras, one in Bombay, and the largest and most significant one, in Bengal(Omissi, 1994b).

The Company's main focus in the early eighteenth century was largely commercial activity, but when the French attacked British interests in India and conditions on the subcontinent required political and military action, this began to expand and take on new forms. Lucy Sutherland has provided a brief summary of what was going on at the time: -

> *'The new period was to see a network of English control spread over the neighbouring Indian territories and an expansion of territorial power which the whole history of the Company in India made inevitable but which, thanks to the clash with the French and the spectacular exploits of Clive and his colleagues, came more suddenly than anyone could have expected. The Company had long had the experience of the problems of government as well as those of administration of commerce; but now (except in the rising China*

trade) it was those of the government which began to prevail'.(Review & 1947, n.d.)

When conquest and annexation gave way to settled colonial control, the need for force did not go away. Imperial soldiers stayed back to protect the new territories from jealous European or local rivals and to assist in putting down recurring rebellions against colonial rule. Even when Europe was at peace, the British Army was always at war elsewhere (2015, n.d.).

Initially, each British Presidency's military forces were unique and independent. Although the Bengal establishment was initially subordinate to that of Madras, it was quickly granted independence due to slow and difficult communication by land or sea. Because of the early settlements' geographical location, small, practically autonomous local or presidential armies emerged. These forces developed progressively until they were reorganised in 1796, and their evolution was very similar. The majority of the white force in India consisted of soldiers sent from England. Later, they were joined by European mercenaries, deserters, and prisoners of war from other foreign colonies, as well as sailors from the Company's navy(Present & 2000, n.d.).

The empire could never have relied only on white soldiers. An extended assignment in a dismal and dirty colony was frequently unpopular with troops who were more urgently needed closer to home. Furthermore, British soldiers were significantly more expensive than indigenous forces(Fortnightly & 1900, n.d.). As a result, the empire obtained a substantial amount of its military manpower from local sources. It would be easier and less expensive to govern the world if Asians and Africans could be persuaded to shoulder a major share of the white man's military burden. Colonial forces had a plethora of potential recruits, with a fifth of the world's population under British control by the mid-nineteenth century(Parsons, 2019).

Colonial rulers in India had historically favoured indigenous armed forces. Local factory guards had long been deployed by European commercial firms. During the late-seventeenth-century fights against the Mughal empire, a considerable number of Indian combatants served as irregular auxiliaries in colonial service. However, their combat experience quickly demonstrated that well-trained European regular forces could easily outnumber Indian irregulars by several orders of magnitude. Since, the white personnel

were scarce, the next logical step was to drill, train, and arm Indian recruits in the same manner as Europeans. The French on the west coast created the first European-commanded Indian regular forces, known as sepoys (from the Persian word '*Sipahi*', 'soldier')(Empire & 2015, n.d.). These men easily defeated the untrained Indian levies serving for the British, briefly taking Madras in the 1740s. Following this defeat, the British imitated the French and established their own sepoy companies in Bengal and Madras by the 1750s, eventually organising these into battalions(Ramachandran, 2008).

2.2. 1857 Uprising and its impact

The Indian Mutiny of 1857, also known as the First War of Indian Independence, was a watershed episode in the history of British colonial control in India. This widespread and deadly rebellion was fuelled by a complex interaction of social, cultural, and political elements(Johnson, 2003; Siddique, 2012). Among these, one of the most incendiary elements was the British Army's disregard for the religious and cultural beliefs of Indian soldiers, which was further exacerbated by the active promotion of Christianity in India. The promotion of Christianity in India during the 19th century was notable, with missionary schools and churches becoming a common sight across the country. Missionary activities gained momentum, with organizations such as the Baptist Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society establishing missions in various regions. These missions aimed to disseminate Christian teachings and actively sought conversions among the local population(Carson, 2012). While this proselytizing effort was largely independent of the British military, it contributed to the perception among Indian soldiers that the British were actively working to alter their religious beliefs.

In 1856, a seemingly innocuous development occurred when the British introduced the Pattern 1853 Enfield rifle to the Sepoys, the Indian soldiers serving under British command. These rifles utilized pre-greased paper cartridges initially lubricated with tallow derived from beef. This seemingly minor innovation, however, posed a significant problem for Hindu soldiers, who regarded cows as sacred beings. Although the company did eventually recall the cartridges, the damage had already been done. Widespread rumors circulated, alleging that the cartridges were greased with beef and hog fat (Wagner, 2010). This information profoundly offended the religious sensibilities of both Hindus and Muslims serving in the British Indian Army. The profound cultural insensitivity displayed in this incident was just one of the numerous factors that contributed to the mounting

discontent among Indian soldiers. It fostered the perception that the British were not only neglecting their faith but actively attempting to undermine it, perhaps even coercing them into adopting Christianity. This growing resentment, combined with a host of other grievances, ultimately played a pivotal role in sparking the momentous events of the Indian Mutiny in 1857(Blackburn, 2015).

The revolt of 1857 originated within a native battalion stationed in Barrackpore, after years of mounting discontent. The uprising had a complex set of root causes, including unequal treatment of Indian soldiers compared to their British counterparts, political grievances, and interference with Indian religious practices. British dominance over Indian society and the economy had resulted in widespread poverty and widespread dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the adoption of Western education and culture had started to undermine Indian self-esteem. These diverse factors, along with religious tensions arising from the controversial cartridge issue, combined to ignite a rebellion that posed a substantial challenge to British rule in India(S. David, 2003).

Small-scale rebellions by Sepoys against British officers spread rumours, ultimately culminating in a larger revolution involving both Sepoys and the local population in northern and central India. It is estimated that 70,000 Indian Sepoys eventually joined the uprising, with 30,000 remaining loyal to the British and an equal number disarming or deserting(Gott, 2022). The British, vastly outnumbered, were forced to flee as the uprising spread throughout northern and central India. The last surviving Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah II, was declared the leader of the revolt when the rebels arrived in Delhi. By the end of May, mutinies had occurred in Agra, Lucknow, and across Rohilkhand(Dalrymple, 2007).

The 1857 uprising came as a surprise to the British and shook the foundations of the British Empire in the Indian Subcontinent. British newspapers reported horrific atrocities committed by Indian rebels, further fuelling the perception of a violent rebellion against British authority. The British depicted pre-revolutionary India as a fairy-tale land but now portray Indians as uncivilised and barbarous(Bender, 2016). These narratives were employed to support and legitimise the British occupation of India (Dalrymple). Some historians contend that economic and social concerns, such as the high rate of land tax and the potential loss of the zamindars' land rights, were the main causes of the Revolt. Talrniz Khaldun and P.C. Joshi opposed the exclusion of the landlord classes from the rebel ranks,

contending that the 100 years of British rule in India were detrimental to all social classes and that the conflict between imperialism and the Indian people was particularly pronounced in the regions where the Bengal Army Sepoys were primarily from(Sanyal, 2008).

The most significant confession by the British Government was that their pre-1857 rule in India was not flawless. As a result, the post-1857 period saw a change in the way India was governed. The events of 1857, in reality, rocked Britain's complacency and self-confidence. They knew their weakness on the subcontinent. As a result, security came first, ahead of the fundamental reforms that were to be undertaken. This was obvious in the army's reformation immediately after the war's end. In truth, the necessity to restructure the Indian army was first expressed in July 1858, during the height of the Great Revolt. The Royal Commission (Peel Commission) was formed to investigate the causes of discontent among the 'Sepoys,' or local troops serving the EIC. The goal was to discover the organizational faults which have had a significant influence on the rebellion (J. S. M. David, 2001).

Following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the colonial authorities in India learned valuable lessons that led to significant corrective measures. They realised the importance of better understanding and respecting local cultures and traditions, as their cultural insensitivity had fuelled much of the unrest. The British established the Indian Civil Service to improve governance and reduce corruption, creating a more efficient and centralised administrative structure. They also acknowledged the necessity of involving local elites in the decision-making process to gain the trust of the Indian population and began implementing a policy of ‘divide and rule’ to prevent unified opposition. Furthermore, they recognised the importance of maintaining a strong military presence to deter potential uprisings. While the Doctrine of Lapse and annexations of princely states continued, they were implemented with greater caution. These lessons and corrective measures helped the British maintain their colonial rule in India for several more decades until the country gained independence in 1947(Metcalf, 1965).

In 1859, the Royal Commission (Peel Commission) presented its report and according to the Commission, ‘the native Army should be composed of different ethnicities and castes, and in general, promiscuously mixed throughout each regiment.’ The Peel Commission's recommendations were supported in 1879 by the high-level Eden Commission, which was

established to investigate army issues in India. Both the Peel Commission in 1859 and the Eden Commission in 1879 issued recommendations based on the assumption that there would be no big foreign missions and that home security would be the primary priority. Army doctrine remained unchanged even after the second Afghan war, and it was not until the Russian fear of 1885 that the Eden Commission's assumption that 60,000 soldiers were the absolute minimum requirement under any circumstances was shattered(Elliott, 1972).

Royal Commission (The Peel Commission) for re-organization of the Army in India, was established in 1859 in the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 with an aim to examine and recommend military reforms in British India to prevent a recurrence of such a widespread and challenging uprising. The commission, headed by Lieutenant-General Sir William Peel, analysed the causes of the mutiny and proposed several significant reforms. The commission, in its report, suggested that the number of British commanders in Indian regiments should be increased in order to ensure better discipline and training. The Commission suggested improvement in the recruiting and training of Indian soldiers to ensure their loyalty to the British Crown. The need was felt to create a military department in India to manage military administration. The Commission encouraged closer integration of the British and Indian militaries to foster understanding and cooperation(Rand, 2013).

Another recommendation was the implementation of harsher hiring criteria for Indian soldiers. Following the 1857 rebellion, the British authorities attempted to set various communities against one another to avoid the creation of a cohesive anti-British attitude among the colonised. These changes were made to increase the dependability and loyalty of local soldiers while decreasing the likelihood of a new uprising(Harkness, 2018). In a series of substantial changes, the entire basis of recruitment was changed from a ‘territorial’ one to a ‘racial’ and ‘caste’ based one.

2.3. ‘Divide and Rule’: British policy in the aftermath of the Mutiny

The 1857 Indian Mutiny caused a shift in British policies in India. It marked the end of the annexationist school of thinking, which regarded Indian rulers as a barrier between British interests and the wave of nationalism. It emphasized caste and creed inequities towards the people and the army to avoid, as Sir John Strachey once stated., ‘the growth of any dangerous identity feeling from the community of race, religion, caste or local feeling. ‘It

was realized that ‘the existence side by side of the hostile creeds is one of the strongest points in our political position in India’(India - Sir John Strachey n.d.).

The Royal Commission's (Peel Commission) witnesses provided varied advice on the future composition of the Indian Army. Regarding recruiting, most people believed that caste should be given less weightage. Sir George Clark stated, ‘I should recruit a good soldier wherever I found him, whatever his caste’. However, there was little agreement. Many witnesses wanted the higher castes to be barred from serving in the army; others claimed they formed the best soldiers and should not be excluded. Some claimed that Sikhs or Muslims were the most trustworthy and efficient recruiters, while others warned that relying on them would be ‘an enormous risk’(Omissi, 1994b). Several witnesses predicted that soldiers recruited outside India would ‘split and thereby neutralise’ the non-European forces, while some predicted Malays in this role while others predicted Africans or West Indians(Omissi, 1991). However, some witnesses believed that soldiers from outside might incite racial tensions among the Indian population, in addition to displacing socioeconomic groupings that relied on military duty. 'The right policy,' according to Sir John Lawrence, was not to push such men aside but to nourish, exploit, and control them(Farooqui, 2014).

Finally, the Commission recommended to maintain native army units split along religious, regional, and caste lines. Troops from specific areas, faiths, and castes were preferred over others for recruitment to create competition and mistrust among factions within the army. The British also separated the sepoy army from the British army, placed Indian soldiers under the direction of British commanders, and prevented soldiers from practicing their religious and cultural traditions. These measures were designed to divide the native army and prevent troops from establishing a cohesive front against British colonial control. The British maintained authority and control over India for many years by keeping the soldiers divided. Lord Elphinstone said troops from various origins should not be mixed together in the same regiment. 'Divide et impera was the old Roman motto, and it should be ours'(Cohen, n.d.).

2.4. Role of Sikhs During and After the 1857 Uprising

The 1857 Indian uprising and the British annexation of Punjab in 1849 have very different meanings and levels of significance in the eyes of Sikh and Indian nationalism,

respectively (Deol, 2003). In comparison to 1849, which marked the tragic end of 50 years of independent Sikh statehood, 1857 had little significance for Sikh nationalism; in the context of Indian nationalism, the year 1849 just represented the British Empire's ongoing growth in India. The beginnings of the Indian nationalists' battle for independence, however, in 1857 are critical. Punjab was a significant British foothold during this period of colonial power struggles. Although some Punjabis serving in down-country battalions revolted, the majority of Punjabi troops did not. Since the British wisely governed the province after its annexation, they were reaping the rewards. After 1852, a formerly punitive tax assessment was reduced, and irrigation projects appeased the rural inhabitants that supplied the majority of recruits. The British may have been secondary to the intentions of the Indian soldiers, who also had their own interests. The Sikh community had never shared the general consensus regarding how the nineteenth-century events had played out(Deol, 2003).

The 'Purbiya' soldiers of the British Indian army fought against the Sikhs during the Anglo-Sikh wars in the middle of the nineteenth century, causing the independent Sikh kingdom to fall in 1849. The Sikhs were unable to recover from this sense of betrayal. The British Indian Army's 'Purbiya' soldiers were seen as equal foes by them (Hopkins, 2008). Many Punjabis despised the sepoys of the Bengal Army for bringing the Sikh kingdom to an end, and they were not enthusiastic about re-establishing Mughal power. A saying of the tenth Guru, on which the times had bestowed sudden relevance, circulated amongst the Sikhs:

> *'Then shall the English come and, joined by the Khalsa, rule as well in the East as in the West. Wherever they take their armies, they shall conquer and bestow thrones on those who assist them. Then in every house shall be wealth, in every house happiness, in every house rejoicing, in every house religion, in every house learning, and in every house a woman*(Omissi, 1994b).

After defeating the Sikh army in 1849, the victorious British generals decided to honourably incorporate the valiant Sikh soldiers and generals into the British army in India. As a result, British rule in India was able to achieve its strategic goal of temporarily making Sikhs their allies. Second, the defeated Sikhs resented the Indians who had fought alongside the British army that defeated them. Third, the British exploited Sikh grievances against Indians to rally Sikh support against the Sepoy Mutiny in India in 1857(G. Singh & Shani, 2022).

The Bengal Army's Purbiya battalions were essential to the Indian insurrection against the British in 1857. British leaders decided to forgo recruiting men from the eastern plains once the revolt was put down. The new Bengal Army was supposed to be mainly composed of recruits from North Western ethnic groups, such as the Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim communities of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province. Sir John Lawrence started enlisting additional battalions in the Punjab as soon as the insurrection got underway. There were a lot of contenders. By June 1858, the Bengal Army had around 50 000 paramilitary police and 80,000 troops. Of them, 75,000 were non-Sikh Punjabis, and only 23,000 were Sikhs (Omissi, 1994b).

The 1857 Indian Uprising and the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-1849) were two watershed moments in colonial history wherein the concept of 'martial races' was formally developed and codified(B. Singh & Singh, 2019). The British faced a massive insurrection in India against their rule during the Indian Rebellion of 1857, and many sepoys (Indian troops in the British army) joined the fight against their oppressors. While others, such as the Sikhs and Gurkhas, were loyal, the British believed that others were dishonest or colluded against them(Chakravarty, 2005).

These two occurrences contributed to British notions that some 'Martial races' were genetically superior to others because they were more martial and dedicated. Even during the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848–1849), a crucial struggle between the British and the Sikh Empire, the expertise and discipline of the Sikh army impressed the British. They started recruiting more Sikh soldiers and came to see them as an essentially 'martial' race, and the concept of 'martial races' appeared. The British very skilfully assimilated the Indian army into colonial society by giving 'martial races' ethnic and military identities, then combining these created groups into a regimental system that boosted racial pride while providing an institutional identity (Colonialism, 2009).

The 'martial races' theory was a part of the British Indian Army's reorganization plan in the early years of the British Raj, using racial, social, and religious criteria. It was constantly modified and changed to meet shifting political and military requirements wherein a small percentage of native communities or classes were urged to enlist in the army. Muslims, Nepalese Gurkhas from the northern and frontier provinces of India, Punjabi Sikhs, and other so-called 'Martial Races' made up the core of the Imperial military. These ethnic groups had significantly aided the upkeep and growth of colonial

power. The uniforms of the regiments from various communities could be used to identify them(Roy, 2013).

2.5. Concept of 'Martial Race Theory'

A significant ideological dilemma beset the rapid expansion of the Indian Army during this period. The guiding doctrine for recruitment was heavily influenced by martial-race ideology and theory. There's some scholarly debate about when and why this ideology came into existence. Gavin Rand suggests the pivotal moment in its emergence was the 1857 Uprising (Roy, 2013). Prior to this, as noted by David Omissi, the British relied on caste as a key factor in recruiting specific communities for the army. However, the Bengal Army's mutiny in 1857 prompted a shift in policy from categorising communities based on caste to categorising them by race. This shift represented a noteworthy change in the recruitment strategies of the British-Indian Army, influenced by the lessons learned from the 1857 Uprising(Omissi, 1991).

According to the Martial Race Theory, only specific communities within the subcontinent, referred to as ‘martial races,' were deemed suitable for military service due to both biological and cultural reasons. Gavin Rand underscores the fact that these ‘martial races' weren't designated to bolster British power but rather served as a means to further explain and justify India's subjugation. Heather Streets concurs with this perspective, asserting that the martial race stereotypes were deliberately constructed by the imperial elites for pragmatic political purposes(Streets, 2017).

Cynthia H. Enloe adds that martial races tended to inhabit geographically distinct regions on the periphery of the state, and the imperial elites often employed them against the dissident lowland population. This strategy was a calculated move, capitalising on the geography and perceptions surrounding these martial races to serve the interests of the imperial regime(Roy, 2016a).

During the late nineteenth century, the recruitment policy in British India was heavily influenced by the Martial Race Theory. This theory was also the result of curious exploration by British civilian and military officers who delved into anthropological pursuits. They engaged in the study of racial physiognomy, a field distinct from ethnography, which focuses on the examination of social customs. In the Victorian era,

prevailing beliefs centred around a racial hierarchy and the notion that certain racial traits could be hereditarily transmitted from one generation to the next. This era nurtured the belief that warrior-like instincts were inherent qualities of specific bloodlines. Mary Des Chene argues that the British associated martial prowess with race, asserting that it was a hereditary attribute passed down through bloodlines. Moreover, the social environment also played a significant role in moulding the martial characteristics of these different racial groups(des Chene, 1999).

The notion of ‘martial races’ was based on the assumption that particular ethnic, religious, caste or socioeconomic groupings held innate attributes that made them more suited for military duty. These tribes were seen to have male spirit, loyalty, and bravery, whereas those designated ‘non-martial races’ were thought to be unsuited for war. Surprisingly, the ‘non-martial races’ were frequently made up of members of higher castes from an educated and politicised middle class. They were seen as potentially dangerous and untrustworthy by the British administration in India(Barkawi, 2017).

The notion of ‘martial races’ served as a political and social construct strategically employed by the colonial authorities to legitimise and regulate their rule over the Indian subcontinent. This construct relied on cultural and racial thinking, drawing upon existing distinctions of caste, religion, and social status. It aimed to reinforce and perpetuate hierarchical divisions within Indian society, reinforcing the dominance of the British Raj(Salter, 2017).

To justify their rule and reinforce the notion of racial superiority, the British deliberately perpetuated racial attitudes and stereotypes. They categorized Indian communities based on their own perceptions and the existing divisions within the caste system. While it is true that some Indian communities had martial traditions independent of colonial influence, the British distorted and manipulated these traditions to fit their own interests. The formalization of martial race theory was reinforced through official handbooks and its widespread dissemination by military commentators. These actions further entrenched the divisions among Indian communities and solidified the hierarchical structure promoted by the British(Omissi, 1994a).

The British colonial government's ‘Divide and Rule’ approach in India resulted in bloodshed and division among the Indian populace. In the late nineteenth century, the

British Indian Army ignored both the uniqueness and the commonality of its soldiers by considering Indian soldiers as members of various tribes rather than individuals. This strategy fostered segregation and antagonistic emotions among various populations. Ultimately, this tactic fuelled bloodshed and conflict in India while serving the goals of British imperialism(Chowdhry, 2000).

However, one may argue that the northward change in recruiting patterns reflected true military need rather than martial-race ideology. Given the Indian Army's expanded deployment against the Russian threat in the northwest, recruiting people from adjacent areas may have seemed more appropriate. However, the shifting recruitment pattern in South India at the turn of the century shows that this is only partially true. Although martial race theorists claimed that the 'typical Madrasi' had 'deteriorated,' not everyone agreed that replacement recruits could be found primarily in Punjab or Nepal. Some believed that southern India had its own martial races, such as the Mapilas and the Coorgs(Philip Mason, n.d.).

Scholars like Stephen P. Cohen, Philip Mason, and David Omissi contend that the Martial Race idea considerably influenced the army's recruiting trend beginning in the late nineteenth century(Roy, 1997). Field Marshal Roberts, the most renowned field commander of the Second Afghan War and a staunch supporter of the martial race theory, stated in his autobiography and dispatches that, while anyone could become a soldier in the Occident, only certain groups were qualified for soldiering in the Orient due to its distinct historical and biological characteristics. He saw the people of north and northwest India, particularly the Gurkhas, Sikhs, Pathans, and Dogras, as martial(Roberts, n.d.).

The British colonial officials greatly admired the Jat cultivators, considering them among the ‘martial races.’ They not only recruited Jats from eastern Punjab and the Delhi-Agra region (now Haryana) but also showed favouritism towards those Jat peasants who had embraced Sikhism, a religion the British deemed martial, from central Punjab. In 1928, Major A.E. Barstow of the 2nd Battalion of the 11th Sikh Regiment observed that the Jat Sikh's status was notably higher than that of his Hindu counterpart. This elevation in status could be attributed in part to the Jat Sikh's dual identity as both a soldier and an agriculturist and partly to the freedom and fearlessness he had inherited from the Khalsa traditions (Barstow, 2017). In his 1928 book titled ‘The Sikhs: An Ethnology,’ Barstow made the following remarks:

> *'The archetypical Jat Sikh is known for his loyalty and unwavering commitment to his employer. He rarely displays insubordination and, characterized by a strong sense of self-worth, upholds a higher standard of honour compared to many other individuals in Oriental cultures. Managing a Jat Sikh requires a firm and resolute hand. When punishment is deemed necessary, it should not lean towards leniency. Instead, it should adhere to the principle of being substantial and consequential, rather than trivial and frequent. The latter approach resembles minor irritations and may lead to a sense of dissatisfaction in his mind.'*

According to Heather Streets, the Martial Race Theory served not only as a tool of colonial dominance but also found application within the ranks of the British Army. Notably, groups like the Scottish Highlanders, Sikhs, and Gurkhas were classified as martial races. Candler even underscored that the Gurkhas possessed a similar tenacity as the Highlanders. Streets contend that this theory was wielded by military leaders to navigate the complexities of global imperial politics.

The British media played a substantial role in popularising the notion, portraying select communities as embodying fierce martial prowess, all within the framework of the Martial Race theory. Streets suggest that, in her terminology, this stereotype epitomised an idealised form of masculinity.

It is worth noting that General Claude Auchinleck, who would later rise to the rank of Field Marshal and serve as Commander-in-Chief of India, contested the validity of the Martial Race theory. On the 17th of March in 1941, he corresponded with Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for India, asserting, in terms of recruiting the rank and file, I am entirely convinced that, regardless of any political considerations, we ought to broaden our pool. This initiative was already underway before my arrival. I intend to pursue and expedite this endeavour. There is an abundance of untapped potential that we can and should leverage. Politically, I believe it is imperative to address, to a significant extent, the nearly universal call for broader recruitment and to give this process due public attention(Roy, 2016b).

However, Auchinleck's perspective was just one of many in the broader discourse of the time. Although he displayed remarkable determination, energy, and a genuine interest in

the Indian Army, his efforts only met with partial success. It's important to note that not all proponents of the outdated Martial Race Theory hold conservative views. In fact, William Arthur's account suggests that during the 1930s, the Martial Race discourse was seen as a forward-thinking concept. In the first half of the 20th century, recruiting based on racial criteria wasn't seen as incompatible with modernity. On the contrary, it was believed that such recruitment practices were essential for the operational efficiency of the Indian Army up to that point. The outbreak of WW II led to the significant expansion of the Indian Army, particularly in its technical branches. This expansion necessitated the recruitment of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including urban areas. Importantly, the Martial Race theory was not entirely discarded, either in theory or practice. Instead, it evolved through a process of amalgamation and adaptation to meet the changing requirements of the time(Johnson, 2014).

The martial race theory faced opposition from dissident military members, educated Indian nationalists, and excluded subordinate groups. Lord Roberts, a strong proponent of the theory, faced resistance within the army, particularly from officers in the Madras Army. Before the Great War, the need for a broader recruitment base led to disagreements, and the Nicholson Committee in 1912 recommended a broader recruitment strategy. This concept, growing alongside the martial race theory, rejected the connection between martial inclinations and sociocultural backgrounds, genetics, or climate.

General Harris, in the pre-1857 Madras Army, advocated for an open recruitment strategy, considering soldiers from the southern region superior due to their toughness and lack of religious preconceptions(Dodwell, n.d.). This philosophy also ignored the height condition. Men as short as four feet five inches were enrolled in the Madras Army's prized horse battalions. General instructions issued by the commander-in-chief of the Madras Army in 1839 stated that Indians of all castes were eligible for recruitment. To keep a balance, the Tamils of Trichinopoly, the Telugus of the Northern Circars, and the Muslims of the Carnatic were taken into account (Dutta, 2014).

2.6. Challenges to 'Martial Race Theory'

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Doubts arose regarding the heavy reliance on men from the Punjab due to troubles in the region and concerns over the militant Tat Khalsa movement("Beyond Amritsar," 2022). Educated Indian nationalists, criticised as weak by the martial-race theory, opposed it and advocated for a cost-effective conscript force instead of the 'mercenary' Indian Army. Excluded groups like the '*Mahars*' and Muslim '*Merat-Kathats*' petitioned against their exclusion, asserting their warlike nature and highlighting Hindu-Muslim tensions. The '*Mahars*', led by Oopal Baba Walangkar, organized and demanded the reinstatement of their army jobs, emphasizing their Kshatriya origin. They continued to petition for entry into public service and developed a movement for self-assertion, guided by influential figures such as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Their military history served as a rallying point for campaigns seeking separate representation within Hinduism and an end to traditional servitude. In 1936, the Bombay Mahar Conference even voted to leave Hinduism, following Ambedkar's lead from the previous year(Patankar, 2004).

After 1857, the former policy of recruiting 'Purbiyas' was replaced with a balanced enrolment of diverse communities from around the country. The Punjab School and the Sind/West India School both proposed balanced recruiting. The Punjab lobby included Chief Commissioner John Lawrence, the chief of the Punjab Frontier Force, Brigadier General Neville Chamberlain, and Lieutenant Colonel Herbert B. Edwardes, an officer in the same force. The commissioner of Sind, Bartle Frere, Major General Sir Hugh Rose,

commander of the Field Forces south of the Narmada, Brigadier J. Christie, Head of the Dinapore division, and H. Ricketts, all used a broad-based recruiting approach(Aitchison, 1916).

The balance could be done at two levels: across the various armies of British India and among various groups within a unit. The Punjab School adopted the concept of balancing Purbiyas in the Bengal Army with Sikhs and Pathans from northwest India in the Punjab Frontier Force. The Sind School supported recruiting from all presidencies. Their objective was to strike a balance between the Purbiyas of the Bengal Presidency and groups like the Marathas and the Baluchs. They also desire participation from all regions so that no single faction could prevail(VanKoski, 1996).

2.7. British Army's Recruitment Policy in India During WW I

Indian sub-continent had played a crucial and complex role in supporting the British war efforts during WW I. India, known as the 'Jewel of the Empire,' served as a strategic reserve for the British Empire, protecting British interests across Asia. The British Army in India was primarily focused on the perceived threat of a potential Russian invasion from the North West Frontier, considering it a critical area to defend(Jeffery, 1981).

The Indian Army, led by British officers, was re-organised following the Mutiny of 1857. However, the ratio of one British soldier to every two Indian soldiers reflected a deep-seated lack of trust(Rand & Bates, 2013). This ratio, along with the recruitment of soldiers from specific regions and the history of the Mutiny, raised questions about the true nature of the Indian Army and the British presence in India. With the outbreak of the First WW, the British implemented changes in their army recruitment policy to rapidly expand their military forces and meet the demands of the global conflict. Extensive recruitment campaigns were launched throughout India, employing new methods to encourage enlistment. Incentives such as signing bonuses, job security, and opportunities for career advancement were offered to attract volunteers(Koller, n.d.). The formation of 'Pals Battalions', where men from the same locality or social group enlisted together, aimed to foster a sense of camaraderie and duty among the recruits(Kennedy, 1986).

Propaganda played a significant role in these recruitment efforts, utilizing posters, pamphlets, newspapers, and endorsements from prominent figures to evoke patriotism and

a sense of urgency(Vellacott & Messinger, 1992). The British government showcased the Indian Army's significance as a strategic reserve for the British Empire, emphasizing the importance of defending the nation and supporting the war effort. However, the response to these recruitment drives varied among the Indian population. While some Indians willingly joined the war effort, there was resistance and opposition from different sections of society. Leaders and political parties had divergent opinions on India's involvement(Roy, 2018). Moderate leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Muhammad Ali Jinnah supported India's voluntary recruitment and financial contributions, viewing it as an opportunity to strengthen India's case for political reforms and self-rule within the British Empire(Harrell, n.d.; Menon, 2016).

On the other hand, extremist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant vehemently opposed the forced recruitment policies and criticized the diversion of funds, arguing for a focus on addressing domestic issues(Jayapalan, 2001). These contrasting viewpoints reflected the broader debates surrounding India's role within the British Empire and its aspirations for self-rule. Despite the resistance, India made significant contributions to the British war effort during WW I. Indian troops were deployed overseas and fought in various theatres of the war, including Flanders, East Africa, Egypt, and the Persian Gulf region. The Indian Army's contribution exceeded 250,000 troops, and approximately 1.2 million Indians were recruited during the war. India also provided substantial financial support. The Indian government raised funds through taxation, loans, and the sale of war bonds, amounting to over £146 million. Additionally, India bore ordinary charges for troops deployed outside the country and made significant financial contributions, including a gift of $100 million towards war costs in 1917(Chandra et al., n.d.).

The Indian Army consisting of soldiers from present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh played a crucial role, particularly on the Western Front in Europe and the Mesopotamian Campaign. Indian soldiers fought alongside the British, displaying immense bravery and participating in significant battles. They faced heavy casualties in engagements like the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, the Battle of Festubert, and the Battle of Givenchy, where they demonstrated determination and resilience(Cardozo, 2016). Indian cavalry units also made notable contributions during the Battle of Cambrai. Indian soldiers received numerous gallantry awards, including the prestigious Victoria Cross, recognising their exceptional valor. Besides the Western Front, Indian troops fought in Mesopotamia, defending Basra

against the Ottomans and engaging in fierce combat at battles like Ctesiphon and the Siege of Kut(Basu, 2016). Sadly, the Indian Army suffered significant losses during the war, with approximately 74,000 soldiers losing their lives(Kumar & Markovits, 2020). Despite their sacrifices, the contributions of Indian soldiers were often overlooked.

2.8. Major Shifts in Recruiting Policies Prior to WW II Preparation

The British implemented major changes in their recruiting policies during the 20th century in anticipation of WW II. The most important factor in the same was the concept of total war, which emphasized the need for a fully mobilized nation and a larger military force. The lessons learned from the high casualties and the scale of warfare in WW I prompted a re-evaluation of recruitment strategies. They aimed to tap into the manpower resources of diverse social and ethnic groups, including those previously excluded from military service. This shift in policy was driven by the realization that a more inclusive approach would be necessary to meet the demands of modern war.

To entice Indian youth and broaden recruitment during the war effort, the colonial power implemented specific measures. They offered Indian soldiers attractive allowances, including higher salaries, bonuses, and additional benefits compared to civilian jobs, making military service financially appealing (Mazumder, 2011). Alongside economic incentives, the colonial power launched extensive propaganda campaigns across India, highlighting the courage, dedication, and sacrifices of Indian soldiers in defense of the colonial power. These campaigns showcased specific instances of bravery, such as successful military operations, frontline combat, and acts of valour on the battlefield, aiming to instill a sense of national pride and encourage Indian youth to join the military.

During the colonial period in India, political leaders Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose presented significant challenges and resistance to the colonizers. Gandhi advocated nonviolent resistance and called for India's independence, opposing British involvement in WW II. Conversely, Bose took a more militant approach, aligning with the Axis powers and forming the INA. Negotiations were attempted with both leaders, but their differing viewpoints influenced the trajectory of India's struggle for independence. Gandhi's nonviolent methods gained widespread support, while Bose's militant stance challenged British authority. Both leaders were crucial in mobilizing the Indian masses and shaping the fight against colonial rule(Simms, 1971).

The British used a variety of techniques to stimulate recruitment and increase popular support for the war effort. These included media efforts, patriotic appeals, a focus on freedom, justice, and national dignity, and the implementation of economic incentives. In British-ruled India, the British used many forms of propaganda to encourage Indians to join the military services. Propaganda leaflets depicted brave soldiers defending freedom, justice, and national dignity, inviting Indians to join the military and contribute to the war effort. Recruiting strategies in India relied heavily on patriotic appeals to instill a sense of duty and commitment to the colonial state. The concept of national pride and prestige was also central to the recruiting process, as joining the military allowed individuals to display their devotion to colonial authority while also contributing to the country's standing in the international arena. There were public speeches and rallies, and recruiting operations set up booths and centers. These programs were meant to galvanize popular support, build a sense of unity, and mobilize the populace in preparation for the harsh times that would come with WW II.

In 1939, Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, declared India at war amidst escalating tensions and conflicts worldwide(Raghavan, n.d.). WW II was on the horizon, with Germany's invasion of Poland marking its official beginning. As major powers like Britain and France faced off against Germany and its allies in Europe, India, a prized possession of the British Empire, grappled with its own political aspirations. The decision of Lord Linlithgow to involve India in the war was a strategic one. He viewed India's resources, manpower, and strategic location as crucial assets that could bolster the British war machine. The timing and manner in which this decision was made drew sharp criticism from the Indian political class. Linlithgow's unilateral declaration, without consulting the Indian leadership, ignited a firestorm of controversy(Priya, 2012).

The Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, vehemently opposed India's involvement in the war. They argued that the conflict between imperial powers did not directly concern India's fight for independence. Their advocacy for a policy of non-alignment and non-violence resonated with many Indians who saw the war as an opportunity for India to assert its own path towards independence. They saw supporting the British war effort as a means to safeguard Muslim interests and gain leverage for their political demands in the post-war negotiations. This divergence of opinions within the Indian political class further accentuated the complexity of the

situation. The rulers of various princely states in India held their own divergent views. Some princely states offered their support to the British war effort, while others remained neutral or sought concessions in exchange for their cooperation(Ramusack, 2003).

The British Ministry of Information (MOI) emerges as a pivotal force in shaping the course of history, particularly in the crucibles of WW I and II. Through a diverse array of communication tools, ranging from persuasive pamphlets to resolute posters, the MOI adeptly summoned the Indian youth to partake in colonial warfare while steadfastly bolstering morale and countering opposing narratives. At the core of this propaganda engine, the esteemed War Propaganda Bureau, Wellington House, deftly wove narratives with the aid of influential figures, while vigilant censorship regulated the flow of information, ensuring a narrative steeped in unity and high spirits. With the advent of WW II, the MOI resurged in 1939, resolute in rallying the loyalty of the valiant Indian Sepoys.

These historical epochs, replete with trials and triumphant moments, stand as an enduring tribute to the transformative journey of the British Indian Army. Within these chronicles, the stories of courage, sacrifice, and growth are etched, a testament to the unwavering spirit of those who answered the call to arms. Notably, WW II witnessed the MOI's adeptness in employing a diverse range of media channels, from radio broadcasts to newspapers, films, posters, and leaflets, with the amplification of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The establishment of regional information offices and the Film Division during this period added layers of coordination and engagement. These collective endeavours, coupled with the MOI's shrewd strategic communication, played a pivotal role in the varied makeovers and challenges faced by Indian Sepoys within the British Indian Army.

In examining this narrative, it is evident how the colonial masters adroitly employed the Indian soldiers over the years. Their sagacity lay in utilizing ingenious tactics, communication channels, and propaganda to secure allegiance and support. This history underscores the complexities and nuances of the relationship between the colonial authorities and the Indian Sepoys, revealing a story of resilience, adaptation, and the indomitable human spirit. It is in these accounts that the indelible mark of history is etched, resonating with the enduring legacy of those who served in the British Indian Army (Welch, 2017).

Through cunning manipulation and the policy of divide and rule, the British exacerbated divisions within Indian society. The sacrifices of Indian soldiers and their indomitable spirit generally went unnoticed. In the annals of history, the cunning manipulation, economic exploitation, and recruitment of Indian youth by the British Empire stand as dark chapters. Yet they also reveal the strength and determination of a people who, against all odds, rose up to reclaim their dignity.

The British Indian Army witnessed many key transformations during the period from its formation to WW II. So far as the Raj was concerned, the British Indian Army was, of course, a tactical necessity. It was necessary for their survival and yet, it took them a long time to be convinced of their motives, particularly after the 'setback' of 1857. Accordingly, regular changes were made to ensure that the Army served colonial interests. In the process, communities were pitted against each other. In addition, the colonizers frequently used propaganda to draw Indian youths towards the war, particularly during the time of Linlithgow, who misjudged the mood of the country leading to the Second WW.