

IMPERIALISM IN INDIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

OVERVIEW

The British empire in India

- A. Company rule under the English East India Company
 - 1. EIC took advantage of Mughal decline in India, began conquest of India in 1750s
 - 2. Built trading cities and forts at Calcutta, Madras, Bombay
 - 3. Ruled domains with small British force and Indian troops called *sepoys*
 - 4. Sepoy mutiny, 1857: attacks on British civilians led to swift British reprisals
- B. British imperial rule replaced the EIC, 1858
 - 1. British viceroy and high-level British civil service ruled India
 - 2. British officials appointed a viceroy and formulated all domestic and foreign policy
 - 3. Indians held low-level bureaucratic positions
- C. Economic restructuring of India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka)
 - 1. Introduction of commercial crops: tea in Ceylon, also coffee and opium
 - 2. Built railroads and telegraph lines, new canals, harbors, and irrigation methods
- D. British rule did not interfere with Indian culture or Hindu religion
 - 1. Established English-style schools for Indian elites
 - 2. Outlawed Indian customs considered offensive, such as the *sati*

Imperialism in southeast Asia

- A. Dutch East India Company held tight control of Indonesia (Dutch East India)
- B. British colonies in southeast Asia
 - 1. Established colonial authority in Burma, 1880s
 - 2. Port of Singapore founded 1824; was base for conquest of Malaya, 1870s
- C. French Indochina created, 1859-1893
 - 1. Consisted of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos--former tribute states of Qing dynasty
 - 2. French encouraged conversion to Christianity, established western-style schools
- D. Kingdom of Siam (Thailand) left in place as buffer between Burma and Indochina

Pivot of World Empire: The Rise of the British Rule in India

A. Under the British East India Company

1. By the beginning of the 19th century India was becoming Britain's major colonial possession. It contained the empire's largest colonized population. The willingness of Indians to serve in British-led armies contributed a powerful land force to the empire. Indian ports were vital to British sea power. During the 19th century India became the major outlet for British manufactured goods and overseas investment, as well as a major supplier of raw materials.
2. It would become clear that the East India Company, which began as a profit-making government monopoly, had become *a government within a government*. In 1784 Great Britain assumed full responsibility for Indian affairs under the India Act. (The first governor-general to be appointed under the India Act of 1784 was the same Lord Cornwallis who was defeated by the Americans at Yorktown in 1781.)
3. The **Sepoy Rebellion**, 1857. The following year, the British introduced the Enfield rifle into the Indian army. Sepoys had to bite off the tops of the greased cartridges in order to load the rifles. Rumor spread that the cartridges were smeared with a mixture of beef and pork grease. Hindus believe the cow is sacred, and Muslims avoid pork because they believe it to be unclean. Both groups were enraged at British insensitivity to their religious beliefs. When the sepoys refused to load their rifles, some were dismissed from the company, but others were sent to prison. This proved to be the final act of humiliation to Indians. On a Sunday morning in May, 1857, three sepoy divisions near Delhi rose in revolt. They freed their fellow prisoners and then marched on Delhi, intending to restore the Mughal emperor. The sepoys encountered a group of four hundred British men, women, and children. Promised safe passage out of the city, the civilians were massacred. Only four escaped. At the time, there were 40,000 British troops and 250,000 sepoys guarding a country of 200,000,000. The rebellion attracted many discontented Indians and quickly spread along the Ganges Valley. It took British troops over a year to put down the rebellion.
4. End of the East India Company. The Sepoy Rebellion marked a turning point in India's history.
 - a. In 1858 Parliament passed "An Act for the Better Government of India." It abolished the British East India Company and transferred the governing of India to Great Britain. The governor-general was replaced by a viceroy-who was answerable to the secretary of state and to Parliament.
 - b. Indian troops became part of the British army, whose strength in British soldiers was increased in India.
 - c. Missionary activities were reduced and no new laws affecting religion were to be enacted.
 - d. By 1870, only two fifths of South Asia remained under Indian rule. The rest was under the direct control of Great Britain. Its goal was still to make a profit, and efficient government would help achieve that goal.

B. Colonial Society in India.

1. The British were no different from other Europeans who refused to accept the fact that India was already one of the world's great civilizations. Educating Indians to be like the British often meant abolishing Indian traditions that offended westerners.
 - a. In 1529 the British government abolished *suttee* (*suti*). Many Hindus were outraged at such attempts to erase five thousand years of Indian tradition.
 - b. Less traditional Hindus agreed that even though suttee had no place in a modern society, the British had no right to abolish Hindu customs.
 - c. When the new governor-general passed a law in 1856 allowing Hindu widows to remarry, Hindus saw another age-old tradition abolished by the stroke of a British pen.

2. Adapt and Interact.
 - a. To ensure efficient government in a country as large as India, faster communication and transportation were needed. The British built railroads and a telegraph system and established a postal service → increased contacts, migration to cities, shared experiences, news, and ideas.
 - b. In a curious and accidental way, British technology was helping to unite India.
3. Indian industry suffers. The cotton that India exported to London was quickly and cheaply converted to cloth in British textile mills. Since India had no protective tariff, the machine-made cloth from Britain was shipped back to India and sold at a lower price than domestic cloth that was woven by hand. By 1875, the Indian handicraft industry was all but destroyed by British technology.

C. Reform and Resistance.

1. Most of the westernized Indians were educated in British-style universities that began to appear in India during the 1850's. In all these schools, English was adopted as the official language. Speaking in English soon became the sign of an educated Indian. Although there were some attempts to educate school-age children, the emphasis was on higher education.
 - a. Britain's objective was to train a loyal group of Indians who would devote their lives to the civil service.
 - b. In the process they also read the works of English philosophers who wrote on nationalism and independence. Some British officials feared that they were creating an educated Indian elite who would lead India to independence.
2. In addition to western technology and culture, Indian leaders were also taught the high standards of the British system of justice. They soon found, however, that the British did not live up to their own standards.
 - a. The most serious complaint was that the British always **segregated themselves from Indian society**. Signs reading "*For Europeans Only*" were posted at cultural events and social clubs, on trains, or any place where British and Indians chanced to meet.
 - b. The bitter rejection these Indian leaders experienced helped them regain pride in their own heritage. Cherishing democratic ideals, they sought to bring about change through peaceful and legal methods.
3. In 1885, nationalists formed the **Indian National Congress** to call public attention to their views. The first resolution of the Congress called for a reduction in military spending. India financed most of Britain's wars in South Asia. Moreover, 25 percent of its budget went to pay the salaries of British officers serving in India. Since the British collected taxes in cash rather than in crops, many peasants were unable to pay their taxes and lost their land. Congress leaders called for a fairer land tax and a reduction in British debts. Their demands fell on deaf ears.
4. **The partition of Bengal.** In 1905 Bengal and its 85 million people were divided into two provinces: West Bengal remained Hindu, but East Bengal was joined with Assam and now had a Muslim majority. News of the partition was greeted with joy by Muslims. No longer were they the weak minority under the foot of the better educated, politically powerful Hindu majority. In 1906 a group of Muslims took the opportunity to organize the Muslim League. The Hindus were far from pleased by the partition. They suspected that the partition was a deliberate British attempt to weaken Hindu power and to diminish Indian efforts toward national unity.
5. The partition of Bengal provided an issue to publicize the Indian National Congress.
 - a. Congress leaders called for a boycott of British imports. To show their support, millions of Indians filled the streets of Calcutta, Bengal's largest city. Bonfires fed with British cloth kept the city lighted through the night. The wearing of homespun cotton became an emblem of defiance toward British rule. The boycott also stimulated India's crippled handicraft industry. Boycotts of British sugar, glass, and shoes soon followed.

- b. Next, Indians extended the boycott to British-run schools. The Congress leaders worked for a rebirth of Indian education with the emphasis on Indian history and cultural achievements.
 - c. Other party members believed that Parliament would never change its ways. They began to use terrorist methods to win independence. The British cracked down. Terrorists were imprisoned and their leaders deported.
6. Moderate Indian leaders believed that the best route to independence was through the democratic process. Their judgment was supported in London. In 1909 Parliament passed the **Indian Council Act**. It provided for:
- a. the election of Indians to provincial councils
 - b. Indians were added to the governor-general's executive council
 - c. a small group of wealthy educated Indians were given the right to vote.
 - d. Muslims -- who felt that the National Congress was interested only in Hindu causes -- were granted separate representation on the council.
7. In August, 1914, World War I began. India had to wait more than thirty years longer before it gained its independence.