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British Imperialism and Anglo – Indians

Since the early decades of the ancient times we can see the tendency especially among the (naval) trading states to occupy or colonized strategically important points like coastal cities, ports, islands etc. as ‘key points’ for their economic activities. For that time the ancient Greek city – states can produce a good example which colonized almost all the coastal side of the ‘ancient world’ including a small portion of coasts of Spain and France, most of north Africa, the whole coastal area of today’s Turkey and today’s Sicily. However, “modern colonialism” starts with the occupation of the Canarias by Spain in early 15th century¹ which made Spain the dominant hegemonic power of the century. This position then undertaken by Portugal and the Netherlands, later by Britain and France and finally Germany and Italy joined the competition as the late comers. Starting from this point colonialism can be defined very briefly as Kaya points out as the “conquest and control of other people’s lands and goods²”. In addition, it is important to underline the difference between colonialism and imperialism which are very similar terms. Imperialism very simply is a term interconnected with capitalism and industrialization because especially after the Industrial Revolution in the early decade of the 19th century the great powers of the century started to look after for new places to find raw materials, cheap labor, and most importantly new markets to sell their manufactured goods; new areas in order to make investment can also be added to the dynamics of imperialism. So, the main difference between these two concepts is that imperial activities do not need any military force, i.e. occupation of another land and its inclusion to the ‘motherland’. Departing from this starting point I want to concentrate this paper on the relation between the British colonialism/imperialism and India which described as the ‘jewel on the crown’ of the British Empire. First, I will start with the definition of British colonialism/imperialism, i.e. its development and of course deconstruction, later, the case of India, starting from the British rule in India, the nationalist movements between the interwar years and the independence of India in 1947 and finally, the special relationship between Britain and India and especially the case of the Anglo – Indians which are children of biracial

¹ Kaya, A. (2009). *Lecture Notes*.

² Kaya, A. (2011). *Lecture Notes*.

marriages between the British males and Indian females as a policy supported by the British government in the early years of colonial activities by the East India Company but given up in the early decades of the 19th century. In other words, on the attitudes towards Anglo – Indian by the side of Britain, India, and other dominions of the British Empire and also the restrictive and discriminatory citizenship and immigration policies of Britain in post – World War II era.

British Imperialism: Expansion and Deconstruction

The British Empire can be analyzed in two stages; the first stage starts in the early 16th century with the activities of the East India Company and continues until the 19th century when the whole logic of British Imperialism changed. This point is the beginning of the second stage in the imperial activities of the British Empire but with a different logic. In other words, we can see the construction of an ‘informal empire’ which based only on trade agreements instead of controlling politically the land. Finally, the position of the empire between the war years and its deconstruction will be reviewed.

First, it is important to underline that although Britain controlled and expand its empire for almost 300 years we cannot say that the empire was what Johnson calls a “monolithic entity” (2003, p. 1). The reason is that, there was not a single language, neither code of laws, nor a single religion also there was not even one type of governance in the empire (Porter, 1996, p.1). In addition, there is no clear definition for the British imperialism because it had not one single effect towards all (Johnson, 2003, p.3).

After Britain consolidated its political power on the ‘main – land’ as early as the 16th century and strongly influenced by the activities of Spain and Portugal in high seas started to seek for new wealth first in coastal areas of North America and West Indies (Johnson, 2003, p. 3 – 4). In addition, development of trade relations in Asia and southern Africa was also in the agenda of Britain (Johnson, 2003, p. 4). It is important to note that colonies at that time were controlling by companies like the East India Company, Hudson’s Bay Company etc. for the name of the Crown and with mercantilist agreements with some restrictions to the trading partners of Britain. The result of the activities of Britain in America and the Caribbean was that 40% of its trade was colonial in 1760 (Johnson, 2003, p. 19). The first period as I mentioned above, ends with the loss of the American colonies after the War of Independence in 1783. This declined the prestige of the British Empire for a while but it did not affected very much its trading relations because it soon revived its trade with America and the Caribbean with a different logic (Johnson, 2003, p.14).

The second stage of British Imperialism based on the replacement of the old restrictive mercantilist point of view by the idea of free trade (Johnson, 2003, p. 20). The territory of the British Empire was started to be governed by an oligarchic structure composed by political officials, soldiers, police officers and of course businessmen (Johnson, 2003, p.5). Also with the effect of the Industrial Revolution, Britain started to construct a large network of railway and shipping transportation which were connecting the flow of raw materials to Britain and the manufactured goods of Britain to the colonial markets. This transportation system was supervised by banks, insurance and joint stock companies with their main offices in Britain (Johnson, 2003, p.5). In order to be easier for Britain to consolidate this system in colonies Britain tried to invest for the infrastructure of the colonies. However, it was impossible to equalize the whole empire so; it concentrated on important regions for according to its interests (Johnson, 2003, p.8).

During the 19th century we can see that Britain aimed to be center of the world and to have a global free trade area. In order to achieve this aim, Britain tended to control other countries without occupying them, and we can call this system as the construction of an 'informal empire'. Argentina, Egypt and Persia are the best examples for this tendency of Britain as they are controlled more strictly compared to some formal parts of the empire like Canada or Nigeria (Porter, 1996, p.2). *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* written by Marx in 1848 explains very clearly the logic of the British imperialism in the 19th century stating that: "the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere" (cited in Porter, 1996, p.3). As a result, there was almost nowhere where the British trade had not penetrated by the 1850's (Porter, 1996, p.7). However, it is important to underline that this position of Britain is strongly related with the end of Spanish trade monopoly after the 1820's, when Britain started to recognize the independence of Latin American states, i.e. former colonies of Spain resulted with the supremacy of Britain (Smith, 1998, p. 72).

The World War I was really damaged the economies of Europe including Britain which enabled US to emerge as a rival to Britain and damaged its position as the 'banker of the world'. However, Britain tried to recover its exports and foreign investment but it obliged to quit from the gold standard system, the symbol of its power. Although, it tried to return to the gold standard in 1925, it obliged to quit again in 1931. This was according to Cain and Hopkins the unpreventable decline on its imperial power (1994a, p. 4). Of course, this was

not the end of its economic or imperial power because it was the victor of the world and it was in a better situation compared to France and Germany (Cain and Hopkins, 1994a, p.5).

The economic power of Britain enabled it to survive during the World War II, but there were tensions in Europe and Asia which directed Britain to concentrate its trade towards Canada and African colonies. However, the aftermath of the War was bitter to Britain as well as France because it was the beginning of a new period, where they were not the dominant actors. It was the beginning of the Cold War, in other words a new bipolar world where neither Britain, nor France or another European state was a main actor. Decolonization of India was an important loss for Britain because it was its third biggest trading partner; the Suez Crisis of 1956 was another event which showed the weakening power of British domination (Johnson, 2003, p. 198).

World War II and the independence of India was the starting point for the decolonization of British overseas territories. However, it is important to underline that on the one hand, the decolonization continued until the mid – 1980's with Brunei when on the other hand, Britain withdraw its imperial aims with the establishment of the Commonwealth of Nations soon after the end of World War II. Another important point is that, Britain has still many overseas territories and dependences (Johnson, 2003, p. 190, p. 200, p.203).

India: Colonial Rule and Independence

This part will major on the evolution of the British colonial rule in India, than the colonial tie during the 19th and 20th centuries and especially during the World War I, and finally, the nationalistic movements in India and its roads towards independence, concentrating on Gandhi in domestic plane, and the activities in Diaspora.

It is important to underline that the colonization of India by the East India Company took almost one century because of the big territory it was expanded. The colonization process started with the occupation of Bengal with the Battle of Plassey in 1757, and it finished with the occupation of Oudh in 1856 (Cain and Hopkins, 1994b, p. 320). Although the colonization period of India matches the Industrial Revolution in Britain, Cain and Hopkins points out that the expansion of the Empire towards India had not a connection with the Revolution but with the modern manufacturers of England. Because, they point out that the British goods started to enter the market of India during the 1840's (1994b, p. 321). Another point made by Cain and Hopkins is that, the colonization of India is much more related with the interconnectedness of land and money in the 18th century.

The East India Company, as Cohn points out, established a state order in India which means that it had very extensive powers like waging war, making peace, raising taxes, and to

administer justice (1996, p. 58). So, the British government established, as Cohn puts it, a “dual principal of sovereignty” in 1785, which gave the right to the Company to administer the territories belonged to its shareholders but under regulations passed by the Parliament (1996, p. 58). However, the British government decided to abolish the East India Company in order to transfer its administrative power to the crown in 1858, secured in India (Cain and Hopkins, 1994b, p. 318) and this resulted, according to Smith, with exploitation of Indian resources as never before (2002, p. 50). After the abolition of the East India Company the second aim was to increase the loyalty of Indian princes to Queen Victoria, with a new title as ‘the Star of India’ and of course with land and money offered to them (Smith, 2002, p. 55). The result was that India became the single largest market for British goods in 1913 with its 60% import rate. In addition, it was one of the largest foreign investment areas of Britain in 1913 with £380 million of British overseas investment (Smith, 2002, p.56).

Strongly related to the increased educational opportunities for the people in India, the educated Indians started to criticize the British rule and they formed an organization with national aspirations in 1885 (Smith, 2002, p. 56). However, strong resistance to Britain dated to the period after the World War I; because during the War India presented a strong loyalty to Britain with its 1,200,000 volunteers and the £100 million “gift” for war costs (Smith, 2002, p. 61). The resistance against Britain, according to Smith, is strongly related to the long – term effects of the War (2002, p. 61). And, the first resistance movements to British Rule had begun in 1919 which was also the first national *Satyagraha* (non – violent resistance), called by Gandhi, and against the Rowlatt Acts related to the continuation of war time restrictions during the peace (Smith, 2002, p. 62).

Cain and Hopkins also relate the resistance to Britain to economic problems dated back to the aftermath of World War I, stating that these problems provided nationalistic movements strongly influenced by the Irish Home rule movement, Japan, and Russian Revolution (1994a, p.181). By 1922, the National Congress Movement – headed by Gandhi – started to be supported by millions of people including not only the élites but also people from different reaches of the society. Soon after the first resistance movements, the British government introduced the Montagu – Chelmsford Reforms related to the transfer of some legislation areas to Indian ministers.

However, the civil disobedience continued in 1930 – 31 including a boycott to British goods (Cain and Hopkins, 1994a, p. 188). The response of British government to these acts was the introduction of the idea of federation in India, which was an administrative style used before in Canada and South Africa, but it is strongly refused by India (Cain and Hopkins,

1994a, p. 192). Another solution offered by the British government, introduced in the 1935 India Act, which was offering a federation based on diarchy. However, this offer was also rejected by India (Smith, 2002, p. 63, Cain and Hopkins, 1994a, p. 193).

World War II was the final stage of British imperial purposes in India. The effect of Quit India campaign of 1942, the alliance of the Congress with the Muslim League and the composition of Indian Civil Service were other factors related to the India independence (Smith, 2002, p. 66, Cain and Hopkins, 1994a, p. 195). However, it is important to note that the alliance of the Congress and the Muslim League did not last long and collapsed after the Congress' immediate disappearance from the political scene (Smith, 2002, p.66). Finally, India emerged as an independent state in 1947 and the British troops withdrawn in 1948 (Smith, 2002, p. 67).

Up to now it has been discussed about the effect of domestic resistance in the independence of India. However as Ficher – Tiné (2007) points out, the élite in Diaspora or exile and students were also working for the Indian independence. The first anti – imperialist movement dates back to 1905 with the ‘Young India Idea’ but because of their violence – including – attempts to overthrow the British Rule, the British – Indian government tried to suppress them and these attempts resulted with the decision of Indian nationalists to leave the country (Ficher – Tiné, 2007, p. 329). Also, students studying in Britain and Japan – strongly influenced by the Pan – Asian movement – were actively supporting the nationalistic movements in India. On the other hand, migrants in the US were participating to “religio – cultural” activities and some nationalist settled in Europe since 1890’s and early 1900’s were also looking for supporters (Ficher – Tiné, 2007, p. 328 – 329).

The earliest radical anti – imperialist nationalism movements dates back to 1905 with the establishment of India House very interestingly in London, i.e. the heart of the Empire by Krishnavarma who influenced by the atmosphere of 1905. He first, started to publish a journal and secondly tried to organize the South Asian student community in UK (Ficher – Tiné, 2007, p. 330 – 331). However, the activities did not last very long because of the strict policies of the British government and the key figures of these activities obliged to leave the city in 1911 (Ficher – Tiné, 2007, 232 – 233). When the India House in London closed down other ones established in Paris, Tokyo and New York and the Indians in the US started to cooperate with Irish republicans in New York (Ficher – Tiné, 2007, p. 335). Finally, the students who were educated in Tokyo were strongly influenced by the idea of uniting India, China and Japan in order to fight against Western influences (Ficher – Tiné, 2007, p. 336).

It is important to underline that, as Ficher – Tiné puts it; the supporters of “the radical Diaspora nationalism” were using very effectively the latest technology in communication, travel and media in order to establish an anti – imperial network (2007, p.343). They were also trying to mobilize other Indian nationalists – like migrant workers – and they had strong lobbying power with important strategic alliances.

However, although these effectiveness of the Diaspora in their places of activities and their earlier anti – imperial discourses dating back between the last decade of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th century, India gained its independence almost four decades later and Ficher – Tiné offers two explanations for this. First, he finds the discourses made in Diaspora very elitist so, he argues that they cannot influence the people in India as the mass politics of Gandhi. Second, concepts like socialism, pan – Asianism, and internationalism were not fitting well the cultural/religious references of the Indians at ‘home’ (2007, p. 344).

Britain and India: The Special Case of Anglo – Indians

In this section the biracial marriages between British men and Indian women which was the official policy of the British Empire until the Victorian ages will be discussed. The policies of the British and Indian governments towards Anglo – Indians (especially after the independence of India) and the nationality laws and immigration policies of the British government during the decolonization and the parallel establishment of the Commonwealth constitute the concentration of the section.

First, the policies of the British government in the new colonized lands will be mentioned. Porter points out that, once a territory colonized there were two possible policies to be applied. In places where ‘white’ people were in majority or economically dominant if they were minority (for instance like in South Africa) the policy was self – governance. On the other hand, if the people living in the colony were ‘colored’ it was thought that they are not ready or incapable of parliamentary self – governance so, the British government applied, what Porter calls, “native policies” which were modified according to the national interests of the colony and related to this they were differing related to the characteristics of the colony. In other words, there were various styles of “native policies” applied in the colonies (1996, p. 18 – 19).

However, India was a special case because, although it was governed by the East India Company in principle, the British state had very close relations with India strongly related with its value for the state. The East India Company was respecting the Indians and their life style but it still believed there must be, as Porter puts it, a “regeneration of Indians” but these constructive steps must be applied very sensitively and with full of tolerance

without provoking Indians unnecessarily which would also effect the position of the Company (1996, p. 19).

As it has been mentioned above, the relationship between Britain and India was very special. We can see that the British government had a different administrative style there which was like an Anglo – Indian state. It is important to note that Britain was not the only state which had interests in this land France, Portugal and the Netherlands gained some small port – cities in the coasts of India. Before the East India Company arrived in India, Portugal was there and it started to support the marriage of its traders with Indian women in order to strength its position. So, Britain also started to encourage the traders there to marry Indian women and also it was doing extra payments to them in order to increase the number of these marriages (Hedin, 1934). Consequently, as Britain occupied India, the number of *Goanese* (Portuguese – Indians) started to reduce but continued to exist with their Portuguese names; they continued to marry “pure” Indians, and to be employed especially as clergies (Hedin, 1934, p. 166).

After the abolishment of the East India Company, the administration of India transferred to the Crown and this was a new period in India which especially effected Anglo – Indians. Until the East India Company abolished, Anglo – Indians males, because of their special knowledge, were employed in important positions by the Company. However, when the Company abolished there were many positions opened for the sons of important personalities in Britain but these position were ‘occupied’ by the Anglo – Indians. So, the Victorian government started not to encourage these marriages and an active discriminatory period started towards the Anglo – Indians (Hedin, 1934, pp. 166 – 167).

Williams describes the Anglo – Indians as: “... Some of the women are almost blonde and very pretty. Most of them have an anemic look. They speak in a metallic falsetto with a curious sing – song accent. They always wear European clothes... They are ostracized by both English and Indians... They always speak of England as “home” though they may never been there” (cited in Hedin, 1996, p. 168). Buettner points out that, Anglo – Indian families with low income were sending only their sons to Britain in order to be educated because it was not enough only to “look like Britons” but also education, class, occupation etc. were important (2004, p. 10). Hedin points out that, Anglo – Indians were employed in lower white – collar status regardless if they are employed in private or public sector (1934, p. 173).

However, the aftermath of the World War II and the independence of India made created more difficulties towards Anglo – Indians (who were accepting Britain as “fatherland” and India as “motherland”) because it imprisoned them between the Orient and

the Occident. The British government were discriminating them with its new nationality laws only applicable to Commonwealth members when on the other hand, the new government of India was not accepting them because they were not “pure Indians”. Alison, points out that because of this discriminatory nature in India and the decreasing opportunities for their children members of the Anglo – Indian community decided to migrate from India after 1947 (2005, p. 105). Blunt points out that, before the independence of India there were almost 300,000 Anglo – Indians in India, but a third migrated in Britain in 1940’s and 1950’s, and to the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in 1960’s and 1970’s (2003, p. 283, Alison, 2005, p. 105 – 106).

Ballard points out that migration to Britain started long before the independence. First, there were many students, who were studying in the UK; second, before many males were on tranches during the World War I there was a shortage of labor force which was supplied by India and these people settled in Britain after the War. Third, there were many Indian soldiers who battled during the War under the British army who also settled in Britain because they were able to find some available jobs fitting them (2003, p. 3 – 4, Alison, 2005, p. 106). Migration continued during the World War II, and its aftermath when the Indian soldiers decided to demobilize in Britain instead of India, and many Anglo – Indian women migrated with their husbands because of security concerns (Alison, 2005, p.110). Alison also points out that, the Anglo – Indians who migrated to Britain were different from other South Asians because, they believed that they were going to a more familiar environment (2005, p.110). However, as Blunt underlines, the migration of Anglo – Indians after the independence started to be more difficult because under the new British Nationality Act they were under the obligation to prove their paternal British descent (2003: 284).

On the one hand, the Anglo – Indians were trying to receive citizenship under the conditions of the British Nationality Act of 1948 which was stating that; “British subjecthood was to be acquired in future only as a consequence of citizenship of a member state of the Commonwealth” (cited in Blunt, 2003, p.288). Also, Anglo – Indians were under the obligation, as I mentioned above, to prove with documents their British paternal descent that was born on the current limits of the UK and Colonies until 31 December 1949 in order to receive citizenship (Blunt, 2003, p. 288, Alison, 2005, p. 118 – 119). On the other hand, countries like Australia were restricting the entrance of migrants with, what Alison calls, “color bars” based immigration policies, i.e. it was only accepting the “white” subjects of the Empire (2005, p. 114). Another important fact is that, when the deadline for application passed, the Office of High Commissionaire extended the deadline for Irish origin and

naturalized British subjects while on the other hand, trying to limit the registration of Anglo – Indians (Alison, 2005, p. 123). As a result, the Office of the High Commissionaire was trying to encourage the Anglo – Indians to accept their Indian descent and stay in India (Alison, 2005, p. 124).

Khadria points out that, although the subjects of the UK and Colonies were entitled to enter the UK within the period of 1945 – 1955, the British immigration policies were based upon the question “how we can limit the entrance of Asian and African people, without damage the liberal image?” (2006, p. 174). The Labor government was trying to restrict the entrance based on three categories; those having a job offer in Britain, special skilled people and workers restricted with a quota parallel to the needs of the labor market would be able to enter the UK. However, the mission failed and for the first time a restrictive policy was faced high opposition (Khadria, 2006, p. 174). However, Khadria points out that, by the beginning of the 21st century the British government tried to encourage the migration of skilled Indians directly related with their language advantage and also the Indian students started to be supported in order to continue their education in the UK(2006, p. 175 – 176). As a result, we can see that, as Khadria points out, the UK changed its policies in order to attract high – skilled Indians (2006, p. 183) and I believe that this is strongly related because qualified Indians started to leave Britain in order to migrate to the US, Canada, or Australia when their highly discriminatory immigration policies started to change after 1960’s (Khadria, 2006, p. 173) which started to effect negatively sectors like information, health etc. where the skilled Indians were on important positions.

Conclusion

The British imperial period is a phenomenon which continued for many centuries and we can see that its effects do continue until now because, as Johnson (2003) points out, there are still territories and dependencies in overseas which are belong to Britain. On the other hand, especially in the 19th century Britain started to reshape its policies because it changed its point of view towards the direction that it would be more beneficial to have a free trade area and to use hard power, as Porter points out, only to ensure the security of the traders. In addition, during the 19th century Britain had an empire composed by two parts; first, its colonial empire which composed by lands occupied by the British army and controlled directly by the British government or by companies for the name of the crown. And secondly, its ‘invisible empire’ which composed by very important trade partners of Britain like Persia and Argentina which were not under the direct control of the UK but it was intervening more strictly compared to its formal colonies. Finally, it is important to remind that Britain had not

an identical administrative policy in its colonies but different methods based on the national interests of the colonies.

India on the other hand, was very important for Britain because it was its third largest trading partner after the US, and Germany and it was one of the biggest importers of British manufactured goods. However, as I mentioned before, the colonization of India was not directly related to the Industrial Revolution in Britain as the goods started to enter the Indian market after 1840's. However, after the World War I and especially the Great Depression India's importance was related to its sterling supplier position which was also one of the most important reasons behind the attempts of Britain to hold India within the empire.

Another special relation of India and Britain was the Anglo – Indian community living in India as a result of biracial marriages between British and Indians. It is important to note that biracial marriages were policies encouraged not only by Britain but also by other colonial countries like France, Portugal and the Netherlands in many colonies. However, I think that the case of Anglo – Indians is different from other biracial marriages in colonies because; first, it was a policy encouraged with extra fees by the government and second, males from Anglo – Indian families were employed in important positions by the East India Company as they were familiar to both cultures. On the other hand, during the Victorian ages this policy started not to be supported by the government and Anglo – Indians started to be discriminated with the reason that they were not “pure Britons”; and this discrimination continued towards them after the Indian independence based on the reason that they were not “pure Indians”. As a result, many of them decided to migrate from India during 1950's and 1960's with the image that they were going to a more familiar environment. However, they were restricted first, with the British Nationality Act (which effected their free entrance right to the UK) second, with the immigration policies of other Dominions like Australia and even New Zealand and third, with restrictive immigration policies of the British Labor government.

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