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The Removal of Indian Civil Servants from the East India Company

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Introduction

Revolution, warfare, and scandal compelled reforms to British imperial rule in India during the final decades of the eighteenth century. The Second and Third Anglo-Mysore Wars (1780–84 and 1790–92) and the broader Anglo-French imperial struggle during the American and French Revolutions threatened the military dominance of the East India Company (EIC), while the impeachment of former EIC Governor General Warren Hastings brought corruption in India to the fore of public discussion in Britain. Amidst fierce debate over the Company's future, Parliament passed William Pitt's East India Company Act of 1784, paving the way for the appointment of Charles Cornwallis as governor general. The Cornwallis administration set about enacting a series of reforms, most notably the Permanent Settlement of 1793 which restructured and anglicized the system of land tenure and revenue collection. The prior system, in place since the EIC assumed the *diwani* (the right to collect land revenues in Bengal and Bihar) in 1765, was largely inherited from the Mughals and relied on Indian civil servants. However, amidst broader reforms to the EIC bureaucracy and property laws, the Permanent Settlement removed Indian civil servants from all but the lowest level positions, replacing them with British administrators. Why, after decades of direct rule, did the British remove Indians from the civil service and adopt a more exclusionary system of governance in India?

Existing scholarship generally attributes the removal of Indian civil servants to some combination of Indian civil servant corruption and incompetence, improved British training, patronage, or the establishment of a racial hierarchy. However, these factors were comparatively stable between the assumption of the *diwani* in 1765 and the Permanent Settlement in 1793, and thus cannot explain the timing of the removal. Instead, I argue that the removal of Indian civil servants, and the Cornwallis reforms in general, need to be understood as part of a broader

political shift at the end of the eighteenth century towards a more autocratic and exclusive system of governance. Prompted by metropolitan political developments and imperial competition during the American and French Revolutions, this shift occurred not only in India but across the British Empire. Whiggish notions of free trade and liberty were overcome by a reactionary vision of empire which sought to consolidate control by imposing a rationalized and anglicized imperial bureaucracy that excluded non-British from positions of decision.

Historiography

Much of the early historiography on the Cornwallis reforms focuses on their legal origins and economic impact. The removal of Indians from their prior roles in revenue collection is mentioned, though the reasons for it are not discussed in depth. These narratives link the reforms to a legal discourse based on various British perceptions of Mughal precedent, and see the reforms as a continuation of prior forms of governance.[1] Cornwallis, cast as a reformer, acted on the orders of the Company Directors and drew heavily from prior ideas, in particular Philip Francis' 1776 proposal for a permanent settlement under which land tenure was to be fixed indefinitely so long as revenue demands were met.[2] This version of events, exemplified by

[1] For example, see K. C. Chaudhuri, *The History and Economics of the Land System in Bengal* (Calcutta: The Book Company 1927), D. N. Banerjee, *Early Land Revenue system in Bengal and Bihar* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936), and Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Paris: Mouton, 1968).

[2] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, chapter 1; Chaudhuri, *The History and Economics of the Land System in Bengal*, chapter 1 and forward by P. C. Roy. Francis' proposal for a permanent settlement to replace the Hastings era five-year land contracts was defeated in the Calcutta Council, but the idea of a permanent settlement was ultimately implemented in 1793. The 1793 Permanent Settlement set a fixed revenue demand to be paid by zamindars (Indian landlords) to the EIC, with all revenue generated beyond the fixed demand being retained by the zamindar. If the revenue demands were not met, the property was seized and put up for public sale, with the new owner taking over the role of zamindar.

Ranajit Guha, argues that the Cornwallis reforms were not a radical change and that the British imperial project was stable.

British dependence on Indian merchants, bankers, collectors, assistants, and other civil servants in the early years of the *diwani* is well attested to. Guha shows how Hastings, Francis, and others felt dependent on Indians for their critical knowledge of Persian and Bengali and familiarity with traditional agriculture, accounting practices, and law. European collectors were limited by a lack of training and did not have enough time to gain sufficient comprehension of the required knowledge. The interference of Europeans in this system was condemned, as they had just as much if not more of a role in Company corruption than Indians.[3] Francis in particular rejected claims about Indians being untrustworthy, stating that "white collectors are not much honester [sic] than black ones."[4] However, views on the extent of Indian capabilities were tempered by a perception that Indians lacked natural affinity for trade, opening a role for Europeans.[5] Notably, Guha's analysis focuses on the period before Cornwallis' arrival, and does not discuss how Hastings-era perceptions of Indian civil servants compared with those held under the Cornwallis administration.

Although Indians were excluded from many civil service positions, they continued to play a central role in the revenue system as zamindars. Traditionally seen as feudal landlords, zamindars were recast – with carefully argued but poorly attributed claims to Mughal precedent – as benevolent agents of modernization, combining the orientalist view of an enlightened Mughal strain of "oriental despotism" with the English concept of aristocracy. EIC officials saw zamindars as important modernizing agents whose interests in the land would lead to capitalist

[3] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, 13–15, 150–55.
[4] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, 153.
[5] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, 133–136.

improvements and help advance Indian society.[6] Guha argues that EIC officials hoped to replace the thieving and corruption of the prior system of revenue farming, in which both Indian and British collectors were seen as corrupt.[7] The prior corruption and incompetence of zamindars was likewise attributed to the degradation of the old revenue farming system.[8] Period complaints saw the Hastings-era system as hampered by confusion and unclear structure, in which sovereign powers were split between the Mughal Emperor, the various native princes, the Presidency at Fort William, and the Court of Judicature acting in the name of the King in England.[9] In this telling, the Cornwallis reforms were not about exclusion, but rather a rationalization and bureaucratization of the civil service in order to fight corruption.

There is debate over the extent to which the change from Mughal precedent to an anglicized bureaucracy under the Cornwallis reforms represents a broader shift in the nature of British imperial rule in India. Guha casts the use of Mughal precedent as part of a broader British preoccupation with development and domination in India. British overtures to Mughal precedents were not an attempt to answer British questions about legitimacy, but to foster Indian compliance with British rule. The restriction of Indians to positions of execution rather than of decision was part of this design to solidify British domination by creating a small Indian elite that the British could coopt.[10] The exclusion of Indian participation from higher level civil service positions closed off a major route of social advancement for Indians. Instead, the upper

[6] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, 40–49, 92–112. For further discussion on the use of Mughal precedent in period debate over zamindars, see also Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth Century India: The British in Bengal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 237–243.
[7] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, 56–57.
[8] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, 170.
[9] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, 143–159.
[10] Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997) 32–45, 84–88. Notably, Guha criticizes the Cambridge school for stopping here in their model of colonial domination. He argues this fails to account for the role of subalterns who, being excluded from the colonial benefits of the elites, would have no incentive to cooperate.

rungs of society became tied to land through the zamindar system, creating a comparatively more fixed and controllable system.[11] In this narrative the goals of the British imperial project were stable, even if the rhetoric and exact means employed changed over time.

More recent scholarship challenges the idea that the British imperial project was stable, instead arguing that the Cornwallis reforms were emblematic of a substantial shift in British rule in India. Robert Travers in particular develops this argument with his discussion of "ancient constitutions." He argues that the EIC, inspired by a belief that the English Constitution reflected universal nature and common sense, employed Mughal "constitutional" precedents to legitimize their rule in South Asia. The English Constitution itself was not applicable in South Asia as it was too complicated and perfected a system for application in what was seen as a less developed society.[12] Even if the interpretations of Mughal history were fanciful, these justifications were necessary under existing views on the legitimacy of British sovereignty in South Asia.[13] The rapid transition away from these views in the 1780s and 1790s represents a fundamentally new form of empire in South Asia. Though some of the ideas behind the Cornwallis reforms, such as permanently fixing land tenure, had been couched decades earlier in the rhetoric of Mughal constitutions, the reforms themselves enabled a fundamental shift.[14] The original structures of Company rule in India were largely derived, and therefore dependent on, preexisting systems and

[11] Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony*, 34–35. However, see also C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 66, 71–72. Though the zamindar system limited social mobility long term, this was initially not the case. The revenue rates set by the Permanent Settlement were high enough that many established zamindars could not afford them, leading to the loss and subsequent sale of their property. These open positions were frequently filled by the very Indian collectors, merchants, and civil servants who were excluded under the Cornwallis reforms.
[12] Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 7–28.
[13] Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 7–28, 165–169. Travers argues that Francis' 1776 permanent settlement proposal was as much about constitutional history as it was about political economy.
[14] Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 230–251.

ideas. However, the Cornwallis reforms instituted a more rationalized British bureaucracy, which in turn established a racial hierarchy that excluded Indians from positions of consequence.[15]

Travers attributes this fundamental shift in the structure of empire in India to a desire to reform the Company's image, which had been tainted under the Hastings administration with public tales of corruption and despotism involving both Europeans and Indians. Cornwallis was sent by Parliament and the Court of Directors to stamp out corruption, especially as it related to stereotypes of oriental despotism.[16] This period also represented a shift in perceptions about the necessity of Indian officials due to advancement in training for British officials in native languages and customs, supported by the anglicization of many bureaucratic practices which no longer required esoteric Indian knowledge. No longer seen as critical, Indians were excluded from all but low-level positions and were scapegoated in a new system which relied on racial hierarchy and British domination to restore confidence in British rule in India.[17]

Widespread concern over corruption amongst both Europeans and Indians is reflected in virtually every narrative of the Cornwallis reforms, even those without any claims to a fundamental shift in empire. Such views were particularly prominent in revenue collection, where Indians were seen at times as refusing to cooperate. Indian collectors were able to pocket revenues for themselves and "pull it over" on the British given their superior understanding of the workings of the system.[18] Indian revenue collectors, just as their British counterparts, engaged in all manner of private dealings. They moved back and forth between revenue collection, financing, and trade, working for both the British and for various native polities. In this way they acted much as they had under the Mughals. C. A. Bayly argues that this confusion

[15] Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 230–251.
[16] Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 231–243.
[17] Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 229–232.
[18] Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony*, 157–159.

between private interests and state-revenue demands contributed to British incentives to create a more permanent and stable relationship between the various actors, such as through fixing land revenues and reforming the civil service.[19] A general decline in the Bengali economy caused by the end of silver and gold imports in 1757, the famine of 1769-70, and the syphoning off of revenue by Indian and European officials and merchants necessitated the economic reforms of the 1790s and the institution of a disciplined cadre of European collectors. This in turn was part of a new era of exclusive European executive domination.[20] Ultimately, Cornwallis "sought to remove Indians from all but minor offices" due to the perception that "corruption spreading from Hindu merchants and Muslim 'tyrants' to the personnel of the Company – as exemplified by Hastings' career – was in danger of undermining moral integrity as the basis of good government."[21]

Much of the existing historiography on the Permanent Settlement is focused on events and actors in India, and, except for the Hastings impeachment, pays relatively little attention to developments in the metropole or elsewhere in the British Empire.[22] However, India was not governed in isolation, and the EIC was closely intertwined with broader imperial developments, as demonstrated by James Vaughn.[23] Unlike Guha, who sees a stable imperial project, and Travers, who sees the Cornwallis reforms as paving the way for a radical shift away from empire

[19] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 54–59.
[20] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 64–70.
[21] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 78. Bayly cites the 1917 version of W. K. Firminger, *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company*, originally published in London in 1812 and commissioned during debate of the EIC's 1813 charter renewal.
[22] This is not to say that the imperial dimension is ignored or denied, but that it factors in only briefly, such as mentions of acts of Parliament. The primary consideration is firmly on Indian developments. For example, Bayly acknowledges the post-American Revolution Parliamentary impetus behind Cornwallis' reform mission to India, but spends little time discussing the imperial and metropolitan background to these events. His insightful analysis is focused primarily on the EIC in India, as he seeks to "discuss the reasons for the British conquest of India between 1757 and 1818 particularly from the vantage point of the indigenous conditions which made it possible." Bayly, *Indian Society*, 46, chapter 2.
[23] James Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III: The East India Company and the Crisis and Transformation of Britain's Imperial State* (Yale University Press, 2019).

based on Mughal precedent, Vaughn focuses on the shift from the First to a Second British Empire during the third quarter of the eighteenth century.[24] Vaughn argues that the "Company's imperial metamorphosis, and the origins of British India and the Second Empire, were rooted in the political defeat of radical liberalism. The transition to the Second Empire was a result of the victory won by metropolitan conservative-reactionary forces over their radical political opponents."[25] These metropolitan developments caused a shift from an "empire of liberty" based on free trade to a more coercive imperialism based on revenue extraction and the subordination of colonial subjects to metropolitan authority. This is contrary to sub-imperial and Namierite narratives, which downplay the metropolitan "politics of empire."[26] This broader focus is not to deny the importance of the local context, only to show that it is not the only context that matters. For example, the use of Mughal precedent not only aided the Company's legitimacy within India, ostensibly tying the EIC into a long line of Indian polities, but also gave it political cover against its critics back in Britain. Because the EIC officially attained control in Bengal through bilateral treaties with the Mughal government, it could not easily be absorbed into direct Parliamentary control as many of the Company's political opponents desired.[27]

Vaughn's narrative ends before the Cornwallis reforms, but it is useful for situating subsequent developments and illustrating the importance of taking a broader imperial perspective. Corruption (especially European corruption) was a widespread issue from the very beginning of direct EIC control. This corruption did not go unnoticed and was the subject of parliamentary attention during political debates over the EIC. After the 1757 Battle of Plassey

[24] In particular, Vaughn seeks to fill in the oft overlooked gap between the 1757 Battle of Plassey and the assumption of the *diwani* in 1765, showing that the latter was not the inevitable result of the former.
[25] Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire*, 12.
[26] Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire*, introduction. For a similar, though more expansive account of radicalism and its reactionary backlash across Europe, see Jonathan I. Israel, *The Enlightenment That Failed: Ideas, Revolution, and Democratic Defeat, 1748-1830* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[27] Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire*, 159–160, 194–196.

established British military control in Bengal, the ensuing changes in British policy in India were closely linked to metropolitan politics, and by the start of the 1780s there was a clear shift towards a more coercive, consolidated, and autocratic Empire on the eve of Cornwallis' arrival in India.[28]

Insufficient Explanations

There are a number of potential contributing factors and plausible explanations for the removal of Indian civil servants. The most notable are Indian civil servant corruption (either real or as scapegoats), their (in)competency relative to Europeans, a desire to expand patronage opportunities, and British racism. These factors all have some degree of factual basis and may well have had some impact on the removal, but they alone cannot sufficiently explain why the removal happened, and in particular why it happened when it did. Each of these factors – and their causal limitations – will be discussed in turn.

Corruption

EIC governance was rife with corruption during the second half of the eighteenth century. Company servants amassed private fortunes by syphoning off Company funds, including those derived from land revenue. Reports of this corruption, and of the rapaciousness of the Company in general, led to widespread public attention and calls for reform, prompting an end to Hastings' tenure as governor general, his eventual impeachment (which was itself widely reported on), and the subsequent appointment of Cornwallis. Corruption was thus a major impetus behind the

[28] Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire*, see especially chapter 4.

Cornwallis reforms. The corruption of Indian civil servants in particular, however, was not a major part. Far more attention was paid to European corruption in both Company correspondence and in the public sphere, and there is little to suggest that Indians were used as scapegoats.

Amidst regular reports on trade, shipping, public works, commission disputes, and appointment and reappointment of Company officers, EIC correspondence out of Fort William prominently features reports of corruption.[29] In some cases these reports focused on corruption involving Indian civil servants and other Indian intermediaries, like bankers and merchants. In one instance, orders were given to develop measures to prevent the extraction of exorbitant *batta* demanded by *shroffs* in the exchange of gold and silver for the Company.[30] EIC leadership considered the matter "an abuse of such a generally pernicious tendency," and Cornwallis reported "that there appear[ed] to be no *effectual* remedy for the evil."[31] Though Cornwallis' correspondence primarily focused on the military and on Europeans (soldiers, company servants, and traders), he did occasionally note cases of corruption amongst Indians in the civil service. Responding to a report from the Secret Committee, he agreed with the validity of a particular allegation of Indian civil servant corruption and negligence. In investigating such instances, he felt that the "customs and prejudices of the natives render it difficult in such cases to obtain information from them."[32] The extent of this corruption is unclear, but Cornwallis' advice that it

[29] Fort William in Calcutta was the administrative home of the Bengal Presidency, headed by the governor general.
[30] In this context *batta* refers to a difference of exchange value. *Shroff* refers to a banker or money exchanger. Indian-run banking and money lending continued even after the removal of Indian civil servants.
[31] *Fort William – India house Correspondence and Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto*, Vol. XI 1789-92, I. P. Banerjee, ed. (Delhi: National Archives of India, 1974), letter dated 28 April 1790. Emphasis in original.
[32] *Correspondence of Charles, first Marquis Cornwallis 1738-1805*, Vol. 1, Derek Charles Ross, ed. (London: J. Murray, 1859), letter dated 16 November 1786 to the Secret Committee.

was best to keep those suspected of corruption separated from other Indian civil servants implies that it was limited to particular suspected individuals.[33]

In comparison, reports of corruption amongst Europeans were far more common. This is reflected in frequent admonitions to refrain from or adhere to certain conduct. Examples include orders to keep more regular correspondence, condemnation of conduct causing "embarrassment," and reminders as to the limits of emoluments which should not be exceeded.[34] Sometimes officer reappointments were contingent on adhering to certain stipulations and prohibitions against engaging in activities not expressly permitted. One such case warned that the officer was "permitted… to proceed to Bengal for the purpose *only* of instructing Youth in the several branches of Education; but should he attempt to pursue any other employ, he must be sent to England."[35] General prohibitions on private engagements beyond the scope of official Company duties were also being implemented at the time, such as the banning of Company officers from working in banking houses and houses of agency. Violations of these policies were subject to disciplinary proceedings, with punishments including fines and deportation. These proceedings frequently concerned illicit private trade and the theft of funds that were supposed to go to the Company, such as fraudulent dealings in stationary, wax, and sand, and a particular case involving a "Mr. Bruce" blamed for the loss of Rupees 1,25,831 in remissions to China.[36]

While EIC corruption was nothing new in the 1780s, the development of printing in Bengal expanded the extent to which it could be reported on. The first recorded printing press in Bengal was set up by James Augustus Hicky in 1777. Hicky and the other printers that followed in the next decade engaged in jobbing, printing regulations, and, most notably, printing

[33] *Correspondence of Charles Cornwallis,* Vol. 1, letter dated 16 November 1786 to the Secret Committee.
[34] See for example *Fort William,* letter dated 8 April 1789.
[35] *Fort William,* letter dated 19 March 1790. Emphasis in original.
[36] *Fort William,* letter dated 28 April 1790.

newspapers, of which Hicky's was also the first in 1780.[37] The overall output of these printers was limited by their small number and comparatively high cost of printing due to difficulty in procuring materials.[38] However, what these early printers did produce was significant, as exemplified by *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*. Hicky was a vocal critic of the Company and of Hastings in particular. He published numerous articles questioning the right of the Company to rule in India, arguing it was founded on immoral military conquest. He also reported widely on company abuses and corruption, and engaged in personal attacks against prominent Company officers and other members of British Indian society.[39] Indian newspapers circulated widely through the postal system, finding an audience of EIC officers, soldiers, and others in the European community in Bengal. Copies even made their way into headlines in Europe, causing concern for the EIC as criticism of its monopoly and abuses spread in Britain.[40] Eventually the Company silenced Hicky, imprisoning him for libel and seizing his presses in 1782, shutting down his paper after just over two years of circulation.[41] However, other papers soon filled the void. Some, like the *Bengal Journal* (c.1785–1793, also shut down by the EIC), continued reporting on corruption, while others, like *The India Gazette* (founded ten months after *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*), acted as Company mouthpieces, showing the Company's awareness of the influence of newspapers both in India and England.[42]

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[37] Graham Shaw, *Printing in Calcutta to 1800: A Description and Checklist of Printing in Late 18th-Century Calcutta* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 1–3, 51–54.
[38] Shaw, *Printing in Calcutta*. 1–3, 21–27. Between 1780 and 1790 there were three to five private presses running in Bengal at any given time, all run by Europeans in Calcutta. By 1793 there had been 8 or 9 presses in total. That the first presses were private endeavors speaks to print initially being a limited priority for the EIC. However, the EIC quickly became a substantial and often critical patron for early printers, commissioning regulations, grammars, and dictionaries.
[39] Andrew Otis, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette: The Untold Story of India's First Newspaper* (Chennai: Tranquebar Press, 2018), see in particular preface, 98–114. 152–158.
[40] Otis, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette,* 82, 92.
[41] Otis, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette,* 146–160, 196–202.
[42] Shaw, *Printing in Calcutta*, 3–7; Otis, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*, 250–254. Like anti-EIC newspapers, pro-EIC newspapers also had their articles reprinted in England. See for example *Star and Evening Advertiser*, issue 980, 17 June 1791, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, https://link-gale-

News of Company corruption ultimately influenced Parliament to attempt serious reforms. Unlike Bengal, printing in Britain was well developed and had long contributed to a politically active public sphere. Reports of corruption and brutality from Indian newspapers, private letters, and elsewhere circulated widely in Britain as the methods, efficacy, and legitimacy of the Company and its monopoly were increasingly subject to scrutiny. Former Company officials like Francis played an active role in calling for reforms, publishing numerous pamphlets both in name and anonymously. Francis even attempted to engage directly with Hicky, though by this point *Hicky's Bengal Gazette* had already been shut down.[43]

As in India, discussions in Britain of EIC corruption primarily focused on Europeans. Indian civil servants were rarely mentioned, and even less often directly accused of corruption. The nature and effectiveness of the revenue collection system was hotly contested as part of debates over the renewal of the Company charter, the impeachment of Hastings, and the land reform proposals that ultimately resulted in the Permanent Settlement. Attention focused on the duration of land tenure, how and when property values were to be assessed, and above all just how much revenue was being collected. Detailed accountings (often conflicting) of EIC revenues were published, the profits and shortfalls being variously attributed to failings of the revenue collection system, war, and poor crop years. However, Indian civil servants rarely factored into these debates and relatively little consideration was paid to whether revenue collectors ought to be Indian or European.[44]

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com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/Z2001421575/BBCN?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=2682c67c, which features an entire page of articles originally published in *The India Gazette.* Topics include the conduct of the war with Tipu Sultan and support for the Cornwallis administration from "leading figures" in Calcutta.

[43] Otis, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette,* 203–207.

[44] This is reflected across numerous newspapers and periodicals. For example, see the India/East Indies sections of the following: *World*, issue 702, 30 March 1789, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/Z2001513433/BBCN?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=359b3ee2; *Public Advertiser*, issue 17446, 7 June 1790. *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/Z2001210142/BBCN?u=chic_rbw&sid=

One of the few exceptions to this trend is the case of Goonga Govand Sing, an Indian civil servant accused during the Hastings Trial of improperly receiving funds in the name of Hastings. John Shore brought up Sing in response to questioning over the improper remittance of funds back to England by Company Officers, including by Hastings himself.[45] In defense of Hastings, Shore stated that he "did not think any native a proper person for the situation of *Dewan* to Revenue Committee," and found Sing to be in "want of zeal and diligence." Nonetheless, Shore asserted that he "knew of no better system than the present, which could be devised for the collection of the India Revenues," albeit with the caveat that the "*Dewan* ought not to be a native."[46] In this instance, Shore used an Indian civil servant as a scapegoat for European corruption. However, Shore's argument is an isolated case and is not supported or repeated in the many other articles on the Hastings trial and the debate over revenue collection and land reform. Discussions of Indians more frequently cast them as victims of Company corruption and exploitation rather than as participants.[47] In response, Shore and others asserted that Hastings was actually quite popular amongst Indians, referring to alleged testimonials from Indians who had worked with him. Similar claims were also made about Cornwallis' popularity

bookmark-BBCN&xid=d60b24c2; and *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 59, 1 January 1789, *American Historical Periodicals from the American Antiquarian Society*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/SOGJWS145977892/GDCS?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=1155dd32. A similar lack of attention to Indian civil servants is shown in period pamphlet material. See Charles William Boughton-Rouse, *Dissertation concerning the landed property of Bengal* (London: printed for John Stockdale, 1791), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/CW0106264782/ECCO?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=0cd938ab&pg=1, which does not bring up Indian civil servants despite providing an extensive analysis of Indian property law and revenue collection.

[45] John Shore was an EIC officer and ally of Hastings. He became a member of the Supreme Council in Bengal in 1787 and served as an advisor to Cornwallis. He later served as the Governor General from 1793–1798.

[46] "Westminster Hall: The Impeachment," *Oracle*, issue 316, 3 June 1790, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/Z2000992207/BBCN?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=da7b2539.

[47] Such accusations featured prominently in the Hastings trial. See the entry for 28 November 1787 in *Journal of the House of Lords Volume 38, 1787-1790* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830), 8-57, *British History Online*, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol38/pp8-57.

amongst Indians.[48] If Indians were widely understood to be corrupt and untrustworthy, it does not make any sense that they would also be cited as character references.

EIC officials were well aware that Europeans were largely (though by no means exclusively) at fault for corruption. Simply removing Indian civil servants would not have solved the problem. Even so, this would not necessarily have prevented the use of Indians as scapegoats for Company corruption, as Travers and Bayly argue. However, if scapegoating was part of a larger campaign to rehabilitate the EIC's image in the face of widespread public attacks, the removal of Indian civil servants would have featured more prominently in public sphere debates. Scapegoating requires finger pointing, and the removal would have been touted as a victory against corruption. Yet, the pro-EIC and pro-Hastings factions hardly ever attempted to shift the blame onto Indians, even in post-reform discussions comparing the accomplishments and shortcomings of the Cornwallis and Hastings administrations.[49] Thus, while attempts to counter corruption were an important impetus for EIC reforms, corruption alone does not adequately explain the removal of Indian civil servants.

[48] See for example "High Court of Parliament: Trial of Warren Hastings," *Morning Post*, issue 7004, 19 June 1794. *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/Z2000925930/BBCN?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=f15ddeb5; and "East India Intelligence," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1 September 1789, 852, *American Historical Periodicals from the American Antiquarian Society*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/TPVURI469637043/GDCS?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=3f25a18a.

[49] See for example "Trial of Mr. Hastings," *Morning Chronicle*, issue 7658, 24 April 1794, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/Z2000800350/BBCN?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=752a802d. This half-page article attempted to defend Hastings by arguing that he lacked the powers needed to reform the revenue collection system. The article focused on the permanent settlement of land tenure and its advantages relative to the prior system of yearly settlements. It discussed the depressed state of zamindars before the settlement and repeated the common claim that Hastings was popular with Indians, but made no mention of Indian civil servants.

Competency and Training

There is little evidence to suggest that European civil servants had become more competent relative to their Indian counterparts by the late eighteenth century. Major reforms in training and education of British officers did not occur until several years later under the governor generalship of Richard Wellesley (in office 1796 to 1805), with the establishment of Fort William College in Calcutta in 1800 and the East India Company College (also known as Haileybury) in England in 1806. Both schools trained Europeans in classical and vernacular Indian languages, knowledge of which did not go out of demand after the Cornwallis reforms.[50] The only notable change in European training during the leadup to the Cornwallis reforms was the printing of EIC manuals and regulations starting in 1779 with the development of local printing presses. However, this development is quite minor and seems to have had more to do with fighting the confusion and corruption enabled by exploiting conflicting manuscript regulations.[51]

Company correspondence from the period does not reveal any perceived problems with the competency of Indian civil servants, and in fact shows that they could be more competent than their European counterparts. EIC officials were concerned that many European administrators were incompetent and lacked the necessary experience and knowledge of Company affairs to effectively fulfill their duties. The ensuing investigation into the issue determined that:

> it has been too much a Custom of late years for the duties appertaining to the lower Class of the Civil Service to be almost entirely performed by Native Writers… by which means our Covenanted Writers are prevented from acquiring that regular progressive knowledge

[50] Rosane Rocher, "Sanskrit for Civil Servants 1806-1818," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122, no. 2 (2002): 381–90.
[51] Otis, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*, 20-24.

> of our Affairs in general as would qualify them to discharge the Duties of higher Stations either with Credit to themselves or advantage to the Company."[52]

It was therefore directed that a regulation to remedy the situation be established and that no European servants were to move to a higher appointment without an appropriate length of service and a certificate from a superior attesting to their abilities. In this case there was no discussion of removing the Indian civil servants.[53]

While there is a certain logic to the argument that European administrators would be more accustomed to the anglicized civil service and land revenue collection system introduced under Cornwallis, this alone does not explain the removal of Indian civil servants. A change in the language of administration does not necessarily require a change in the administrators. In his 1776 proposal, Francis simultaneously argued that revenue collectors ought to be Indian rather than European, and that the official language ought to become English instead of Persian and Bengali.[54] Civil servants, Indian or European, still had to undergo training, and the EIC could have chosen to retrain Indians in the new system. Indians were evidently capable at their jobs, and their knowledge of local languages, while perhaps not quite as useful as under the old system, was certainly not useless, as seen by the continued use of Persian as an administrative language in other contexts into the 1830s and by the continued emphasis on training in South Asian languages for European officers.[55] Further, there does not appear to have been any suggestion in either EIC correspondence or in the public sphere debates surrounding the reforms that Indians would be unable to adapt to the new system or that their knowledge was obsolete.

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[52] *Fort William*, letter dated 19 March 1790.
[53] *Fort William*, letter dated 19 March 1790.
[54] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, 153–155.
[55] Robert Travers, "Imperial Revolutions and Global Repercussions: South Asia and the World, c. 1750–1850," in David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 164.

Patronage

The choice to remove Indian civil servants was based on a unique cost benefit analysis. As P. J. Marshall argues, the structures of Indian society limited the number of positions that the British could open up for themselves, and there was little that a European could do that could not be done just as well by an Indian at lower cost. The positions held by British thus had certain considerations beyond cost. A certain number of higher-ranking positions in both the military and civil service had to remain in British hands if British rule was to be maintained. Patronage also factored in.[56] The Court of Directors had a greater emolument than the Crown's civil list and faced pressure in the late eighteenth century to make appointments. These positions could be quite lucrative and were often given to members of the middle class and "genteel poor" with few prospects at comparable positions in Britain. The Cornwallis reforms affected the demand for such positions as the professionalizing of the civil service led to the cutting of many British positions, not just Indian ones.[57] This situation could indicate the possibility that freeing up space for patronage positions had an impact on the decision to remove Indian civil servants.

However, while it is conceivable that such patronage considerations had some degree of influence, patronage alone is unconvincing as an explanation for the removal. Period correspondence and reporting concerning the Cornwallis reforms very rarely mentioned patronage. EIC patronage was nothing new in the 1790s, having seen an expansion in importance during the 1760s after earlier Whig reforms limited patronage opportunities in Britain.[58] If the availability of patronage opportunities was an issue for the Pitt administration, it is unclear why they could not have been expanded elsewhere in the Empire or in Britain. Further, patronage

[56] P. J. Marshall, "British Society in India under the East India Company," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, No. 1 (Feb. 1997) 90–92.
[57] Marshall, "British Society in India," 97–99.
[58] Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire*, 221–222.

positions in India largely remained under the control of the Court of Directors as part of the 1784 India Act, which placed administrative control over the Company into the hands of the new Board of Control and governor generalship, a Crown appointment. Thus, those leading the reforms were deliberately not in control of Company patronage and it is unlikely that they had any great incentive to expand positions they would not fill.

Race

A seemingly obvious explanation is that Indians were removed because of British racism. However tempting, this hypothesis does not hold up well under further examination. The existing historiography rightfully tends to downplay the influence of racist ideology and civilizing projects on imperial governance in the latter half of the eighteenth century, instead seeing these factors as nineteenth-century developments. Travers notes that notions of European supremacy and the naturalness of British rule in India could not be taken for granted. This is in contrast to the period discussion of indigenous Americans, who, compared with India's tradition of manufacturing and a strong state, were cast as "savage" and "uncivilized."[59] Such views would not be commonly applied to India until the next century, a shift readily apparent when comparing print material. While nineteenth century British intellectuals like John Stuart Mill wrote extensively on the barbarous state of India as a justification for its colonization by the more advanced British nation, such arguments were largely absent in the period of the Cornwallis

[59] Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, 7–8.

reforms.[60] In contrast, publications from the late eighteenth and even the early nineteenth centuries spoke of India as already possessing a long-established civilization.[61]

This is not to say that there was no concept of otherness or that Enlightenment thought was strictly non-racial. Recent scholarship has shown that religion and other cultural factors have long been used along with varying notions of physical difference to construct notions of racial others, like Jews and the Islamic "Saracen."[62] The eighteenth century saw the early development of the scientific study of race, which often employed skin tone, facial shape, and other factors that would come to define nineteenth century biological conceptions of race. However, there was no consensus during the period on what exactly race was, and differences between races (often tied to concepts of the nation) were subject to extensive debate. Rather than an essentialist view, racial difference was often considered as the product of historical progress and as subject to environmental and cultural factors.[63] The presence of an Enlightenment racial discourse is not the same as the presence of a racist discourse, as came to prominence in the nineteenth century.[64]

The British conceptions of difference and otherness prevalent at the time of the Cornwallis reforms were multifaceted, and there is little to suggest that Indians were perceived as innately less capable or loyal than their European counterparts. Period actors expressed their views of difference between peoples (both Indian and European) in terms of government,

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[60] See for example John Stuart Mill, "A Few Words on Non-Intervention," (1867) in John M. Robson, ed., *Essays on Equality, Law, and Education* (University of Toronto Press, 1996).
[61] See for example Charles Marsh, "The Virtues of Indian Civilization," from a speech made to Parliament in 1813, reproduced in *Problems of Empire: Britain and India 1757-1813*, P. J. Marshall, ed. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968).
[62] Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[63] For an extensive analysis of the concept of race during the eighteenth century, see Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and Silvia Sebastiani, "Anthropology beyond Empires: Samuel Stanhope Smith and the Reconfiguration of the Atlantic World," chapter 8 in L. Kontler *et al.*, *Negotiating Knowledge in Early Modern Empires* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[64] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 167.

climate, and religion. Inferiority was often tied up with class and education, and as such was situational and subject to change rather than innate.[65] This is demonstrated by Cornwallis' and Shore's views of zamindars and sepoys (Indian soldiers). Cornwallis had a largely positive view of zamindars, seeing them as benevolent and capable improvers in line with his views on English landlords. Shore on the other hand felt that they lacked the necessary education to improve their land as Cornwallis envisioned. Both men felt zamindars superior to peasants, and neither felt that their inadequacy was innate.[66] Cornwallis and Shore's positions switched when it came to sepoys. Shore held that British-trained sepoys had "proved obedient, submissive, and attached to our government and their officers in a degree not exceeded by any troops in the world," and argued that they should be permitted to follow their customs, religions, and "prejudices" as the "sepoy will naturally respect those who respect them."[67] Cornwallis viewed sepoys and their loyalty less enthusiastically. While sepoys were capable soldiers and had "on many occasions evinced great fidelity and attachment" to the Company, Cornwallis advised that "when wavering in their allegiance, a respectable body of Europeans would awe them to obedience."[68]

At least within the military, Europeans were not necessarily seen as superior to Indians, nor were all Europeans considered equal. In a letter to the Court of Directors, Cornwallis voiced his disapproval of the quality of European recruits for the Company army, stating that "the abuses or neglects in recruiting your Europeans, appear to be scandalous, and if not corrected, may endanger the safety of your possessions in the quarter of the globe." The men received were "in very bad condition," with "many of [their] numbers consisting of foreigners, sailors, invalids,

[65] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal,* 26-29, 150–152.
[66] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal,* 164–177, 187–199.
[67] *The Private Record of an Indian Governor-Generalship: The Correspondence of Sir John Shore, Governor General, with Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control, 1793-1798,* Holden Furber, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), letter V, received July 1794 from Shore to Dundas.
[68] *Correspondence of Charles Cornwallis,* Vol. 1, letter dated 16 November 1786 to the Court of Directors.

or men under the proper size for military service." Many of them had apparently enlisted merely to get passage to India. However, forced by "humanity and necessity," these men were still accepted rather than deported, though Cornwallis emphasized that such incapable recruits must not continue to be sent.[69]

The social hierarchy within British India did not follow exclusively racial lines. While Calcutta neighborhoods were often separated by race, other factors like class, nation, and religion also had an impact. Upper class British, like military officers, wealthy traders, and EIC officials, lived separately from lower class traders, including Jews, Parsis, and Portuguese. Some lower-class Europeans lived in predominantly Indian parts of town, as was the case with Hicky, the Irish printer.[70] Race, class, and nation played similar roles within British military forces in India. White soldiers were excluded from white elite society and were seen as disorderly and prone to violence and crime.[71] Military officers of the Crown serving in India enjoyed higher standing and compensation than their EIC army counterparts. Even within the EIC army there was a national hierarchy amongst European soldiers, with British at the top. In a petition reprinted in the British press, EIC officers "observ[ed] with the deepest anxiety and concern" that in some units German officers were in command of British soldiers, decrying the situation as "a species of mortification which Britons have hitherto never learned to bear, and which not only justice forbids, but policy condemns."[72]

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[69] *Correspondence of Charles Cornwallis,* Vol. 1, letter dated 16 November 1786 to the Court of Directors.
[70] Otis, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette,* 9–15.
[71] Marshall, "British Society in India," 94.
[72] "Impartial Statement of the Proceedings between the Board of Controul, and the Directors of the E. India Company, respecting the four regiments of his Majesty's troops intended for serve in India at the expence of the Company" [sic], *The Gentleman's Magazine,* 1 March 1788, *American Historical Periodicals from the American Antiquarian Society*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/QTRPAZ359887174/GDCS?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=2b401dfc.

There were racialized notions of other in eighteenth century British India, but they differed considerably from the scientific concepts of race that predominated in the nineteenth century and were not necessarily stronger or more influential than difference based on class, education, and religion. There is little to suggest any meaningful change in British concepts of race or the increased influence of racist ideology during the leadup to the Cornwallis reforms. This is in stark contrast to the overtly racist ideology and civilizing project of the following century, some of the earliest examples of which include regulations passed in the early 1800s establishing that the mixed-race children of British soldiers were considered Indians, not British subjects.[73] If British racial perceptions of Indians were largely the same at the time of the reforms as when Indians began working for the EIC under the old system, then race alone cannot explain why they were removed decades later. While the Cornwallis reforms did establish the basis of a racial hierarchy that would become a central feature of later British colonial rule, this was not the goal of the reforms. Instead, the reforms were part of a larger shift to solidify British metropolitan control over the empire in the wake of increased imperial competition and the rise of more conservative and reactionary metropolitan politics.

Imperial Competition and Metropolitan Politics

The removal of Indian civil servants was not an inevitable part of the land tenure and revenue reforms of the Permanent Settlement and broader Cornwallis reforms. Francis' 1776 reform proposal argued for the fixing of land tenure on terms not dissimilar from the Permanent Settlement of 1793, yet Francis and others of his time felt that Indian civil servants were in many

[73] Marshall, "British Society in India," 95.

ways preferable to Europeans.[74] What changed between 1776 and 1793? There were no clear shifts in Indian competency or corruption, nor any change in British racial perceptions of Indians. The last quarter of the eighteenth century was far from stagnant, however. The American and French Revolutions ushered in a new phase of imperial competition and British control in India was subject to new threats, in particular by Tippu Sultan of Mysore, a French ally. Metropolitan politics were also changing, with the political defeat of radical liberalism by conservative reactionaries marking the transition to a Second British Empire. By the 1780s Whigs like Francis were out of power. EIC and Metropolitan leadership shifted to men like Cornwallis, Shore, and Dundas under the Tory administration of William Pitt the Younger, prime minister from 1783 to 1801. The removal of Indian civil servants was part of this political and imperial transition, a continued drive to solidify British metropolitan control over its colonies in the face of imperial competition by pursuing a more exclusive system of governance.

The solidification of British rule in India was part of Pitt and Dundas' broader global strategy to consolidate the British Empire in the wake of the American Revolution.[75] The East India Company Act of 1784 was amongst the first acts of this consolidation, enacted by the nascent Pitt administration on the heels of the Paris Treaty and the Second Anglo-Mysore War. Pitt's India Act brought the EIC under more direct government control, making the governor generalship a Crown appointment and clearing the way for the appointment of Cornwallis in 1786. It increased the authority of the governor general over the Supreme Council of Bengal and the presidencies of Bombay and Madras, and established the Board of Control, staffed with Pitt allies like Dundas and William Grenville, to direct the Company. While the EIC thus lost its

[74] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal,* chapters IV and V.
[75] Travers, "Imperial Revolutions and Global Repercussions," in Armitage and Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context,* 158.

administrative independence, it was permitted to continue managing its own commercial affairs.[76] This period was marked by increased metropolitan scrutiny of EIC affairs. Parliament conducted inquiries into minute details of Company administration, covering everything from treaties negotiated with Indian polities to the wages paid to Indian weavers and whether or not they were required to work for the Company exclusively. Other inquires targeted the revenue system, including attempts to discern total amounts collected, who possessed land and through what title, and the extent of powers exercised by Company servants and their native agents.[77]

Despite the intense political and public debate surrounding the EIC back in the metropole, the Cornwallis administration's reform efforts were initiated during what was, militarily speaking, a comparatively peaceful time in India.[78] Although there was no open conflict, there was still a degree of post-American Revolution tension. Anti-Company agitators like Hicky reprinted American pamphlet material in India.[79] Rumors circulated of planned uprisings in Goa, where, with alleged support from Tippu Sultan, "a number of natives, excited by Romish priests, had formed a scheme for erecting an independent republic in that country, like that of the republicans in America."[80] However, reform efforts were soon interrupted (and eventually spurred on) by the French Revolution in 1789 and the resumption of fighting in India

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[76] For general discussion of the 1784 Act and its history, see John Keay, *The Honourable Company: a History of the English East India Company* (London: Harper Collins, 1991) chapter 17. The political debate behind the 1784 Act and how the Act altered the structure of British governance in India are further discussed in Sunit Singh, "The Fox India Bill of 1783 Reconsidered" (working paper, University of Chicago, May 2023).

[77] "Enquiry into the administration of the East India Company's affairs in Bengal," in IOR/A/2/7 *Composite volume of papers of Henry Dundas relating to the privileges of the Company and to its administration in London and India, 1720-1785*. This particular document is not dated but references a treaty concluded in 1780. Unfortunately, no responses to these inquiries are included.

[78] This sentiment is widely reflected in British newspapers from the time of Cornwallis' arrival up until the French Revolution. See for example "Extract of a Letter from Bengal," *World*, 30 March 1789, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/Z2001513433/BBCN?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=359b3ee2.

[79] Otis, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*, 107–115, 190–196.

[80] "East India Intelligence," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1 December 1788, *American Historical Periodicals from the American Antiquarian Society*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/RPZVXZ408691862/GDCS?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=ab998522.

the following year. British reactions to the French revolution were initially mixed, in some cases even hopeful that the new French government would be a peaceful one.[81] This cautious optimism was not to last.

Anglo-French imperial competition reignited as Parliament and public opinion soon turned against the French Revolution and its supporters in Britain. War with France was increasingly felt to be imminent, its radical ideology seen as an existential threat to British liberty and the English Constitution. Amidst a wave of xenophobia and reactionary anti-republicanism, British exceptionalism and the English Constitution formed a flag around which to rally.[82] Addressing the House of Lords in December 1792, King George III warned that "seditious practices… have of late been more openly renewed," and appeared "to proceed from a design to attempt the destruction of our happy Constitution, and the subversion of all order and government; and this design has evidently been pursued in connection and concert with persons in foreign countries."[83] Even Charles James Fox, radical Whig and archrival of Pitt, argued that the Constitution was under threat, but from British reactionaries rather than foreign subversives.[84] The growing reactionary fervor in the wake of the French Revolution led to social

[81] See for example Richard Price and the Revolution Society, *A discourse on the love of our country, delivered on Nov. 4, 1789 ... to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain*, 3rd ed. (London: G. Stafford for T. Cadell, 1790), *The Making of the Modern World*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/U0102311016/MOME?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-MOME&xid=6b2731f5&pg=1; and "Important Proceedings of the National Assembly of France," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1 June 1790, *American Historical Periodicals from the American Antiquarian Society* https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/PFUDKR267214528/GDCS?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=bf66235e.

[82] This sentiment is widely reflected in pamphlet material and Parliamentary debate. See for example *Comments on the proposed war with France, on the state of parties, and on the new act respecting aliens* (London: C. Dilly, 1793), *The Making of the Modern World*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/U0102493528/MOME?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-MOME&xid=378d49ed&pg=3; and *Jordan's Parliamentary journal, for the year MDCCXCIII, Being an accurate and impartial history of the debates and proceedings of both Houses of Parliament, from the opening of the session on the thirteenth day of December, 1792* (London: J. S. Jordan, 1793), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/CW0105410295/ECCO?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=748e2bdf&pg=1.

[83] *Jordan's Parliamentary Journal*, 9–10.

[84] *Jordan's Parliamentary Journal*, 25–26, 31–46.

ostracization and legal prosecutions of dissenters. Many British radicals were forced into silence or exile as universal notions of republicanism, egalitarianism, toleration, and equal rights were subjected to increasing popular scorn and consternation.[85]

Developments in India were closely related to the French Revolution. Of particular concern, the resumption of fighting with Mysore in 1790 marked a new threat to British rule and an opportunity for the French to return after their defeat a decade prior. French involvement in India gradually increased as the war went on, and in response the Royal Navy began forcibly seizing both French and neutral foreign vessels suspected of carrying military aid through Indian waters.[86] Period newspapers and periodicals regularly reported on happenings in India and France side by side, and Parliament discussed the fighting in India as part of the broader struggle against the French.[87] Cornwallis regularly corresponded with Pitt, Grenville, and other allies in Britain, freely moving between discussions of India, the wider conflict with France, and efforts to defend against opposition politicians in Parliament.[88] King George III singled out Cornwallis for particular praise as part of an address on British and French relations to the House of Lords; following an update on European happenings, George III pivoted to India, proclaiming that "the brilliant successes of the British arms in India, under the able conduct of the Marquis Cornwallis, have led to the termination of the war by an advantageous and honorable peace, the terms of which are peculiarly satisfactory to me from their tendency to secure the future tranquility of the

[85] Israel, *The Enlightenment That Failed*, 657.
[86] "East India Intelligence," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1 April 1792, *American Historical Periodicals from the American Antiquarian Society*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/VYDMLP646306240/GDCS?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=7f930bcd.
[87] See for example *An impartial report of the debates that occur in the two Houses of Parliament*, Vol. 1, William Woodfall and Assistants (London: T. Chapman, 1794), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/CW0106346158/ECCO?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=9e07f52d&pg=1, 429–436.
[88] See for example *Correspondence of Charles Cornwallis*, Vol. 2, letter dated 4 May 1791 from Grenville.

British dominions in that part of the world."[89] With the fighting in India over, attention turned back to the task of reform as a necessary means of securing a lasting peace and stable revenue in Bengal.[90]

Consolidating imperial control in India meant pursuing a broadly exclusive system of governance. The 1784 India Act brought the EIC under the political and administrative control of Pitt and his allies, while still keeping the commercial affairs of the Company independent. This arrangement kept India out of Parliament's direct control and helped to resist calls for opening up the country to free trade, as Whigs had earlier advocated for.[91] Instead, India was to be ruled under an exclusive and authoritarian regime that resisted the establishment of free speech, free trade, and settlement. Free speech was actively curtailed, and the Company was quick to censor and shut down Indian newspapers that criticized it.[92] Passage to India was restricted, and private traders, missionaries, and settlers were considered threats to the stability of British rule. Dundas in particular argued against opening up trade and settlement for fear that it would upset the public order and be economically damaging to the Company and Britain.[93] EIC officials feared that the presence of too many Europeans, especially those outside of the Company's direct control or with ties to foreign countries, would disrupt the submission of Indian subjects and threaten "order and subordination." The limited number of European merchants already present were causing problems with their "wish to be emancipated from every material restraint." Such demands, if made from an even larger European community and combined with Indian agitation against greater European encroachment, "might render it extremely difficult for [Britain] to

[89] *Jordan's Parliamentary Journal*, 11.
[90] *Jordan's Parliamentary Journal*, 9–11.
[91] Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire*, 197–198.
[92] Shaw, *Printing in Calcutta*, 3–7; Otis, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*, 250–254.
[93] "House of Commons," *General Evening Post*, 23 April 1793, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/Z2000477626/BBCN?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=00a85604.

maintain, in that remote quarter, a government sufficiently strong and energetic to contain all these interests within their due bounds."[94] It was amidst this obsession with imperial control that Indian civil servants were replaced by a small, professional, and British bureaucracy.

India was not the only part of the Empire undergoing reform and imperial consolidation in the 1780s and '90s. Following the American Revolution, reforms were also enacted in Ireland, Canada, and the Caribbean, a trend reinforced through imperial competition and British attempts to consolidate its Empire and national identity after the French Revolution.[95] The Canadian Constitutional Act of 1791 makes for a ready comparison with the Permanent Settlement. Both were enacted soon after the French Revolution (though the Permanent Settlement was somewhat delayed due to the Anglo-Mysore War) and sought to further bind the colonies to the metropole. In each case the prior systems of land tenure and revenue collection, inherited from the French and Mughals respectively in the 1760s, were anglicized and brought to more closely follow the English Constitution. The 1791 Act, drafted by Grenville, strengthened the power of the governor, a Crown appointee, and established a Crown-appointed council with hereditary membership modeled on the House of Lords. Aspects of the prior seigneurial system were retained, and tenants paid their rents to the seigneur, not unlike how rents were paid to zamindars in Bengal. However, the presence of British settlers in Canada, many of whom were exiled American loyalists, is a marked difference from the Indian case. British settlers in Canada retained an amount of local representation that was not enjoyed in India. However, the perception of conflict between the older French inhabitants and newer British settlers (referred to

[94] "Opposition to European Colonization in India," Report of a Special Committee of the Court of Directors, 27 January 1801, reproduced in *Problems of Empire*, P. J. Marshall, ed., 220.
[95] Maya Jasanoff, "Revolutionary Exiles: The American Loyalist and French Émigré Diasporas," in Armitage and Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context*, chapter 3; Israel, *The Enlightenment That Failed*, chapter 24.

as separate and unamalgamable races with their own languages, laws, and customs) led to the partition of the province of Quebec into majority French and British regions.[96]

The Cornwallis reforms enacted a new anglicized constitution in British controlled India.[97] The ways in which local, on-the-ground developments shaped these reforms is well attested to in the secondary literature. However, these reforms were also inextricably intertwined with broader imperial developments and metropolitan politics during the age of revolutions. While news of EIC corruption and the ensuing spectacle of the Hastings impeachment surely impacted the course of the Cornwallis reforms, the process of reform had already begun with the 1784 India Act, a post-revolution attempt to consolidate imperial control even before the Company's image had been publicly tarnished. If not for the shifting politics of the metropole, Whigs like Francis could well have continued in power in India and adopted a settlement which kept Indian civil servants in place. Corruption was nothing new or uniquely Indian, and Indian civil servants could have been retrained to serve in whatever new system was adopted. However, the reforms occurred at a time of imperial competition which saw the ascendance of reactionary politics. The xenophobic, intolerant, authoritarian, and hierarchical British society that emerged was in fear of attack from within and without, and had to be secured. This led to the removal of Indian civil servants and the implementation of a small, professional, and distinctly British bureaucracy that excluded non-British from positions of decision and administration. Indians were subsequently relegated to positions of execution, such as zamindars and sepoys, that British rule depended on to maintain control on the ground.

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[96] Alain Gagnon *et al., The Constitutions That Shaped Us: A Historical Anthology of Pre-1867 Canadian Constitutions* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015). See especially 35–36, 86–91, 121–127.
[97] The language of a "new constitution" for India was used by commentators at the time. See for example "Trial of Mr. Hastings," *Morning Chronicle*, 24 April 1794, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/Z2000800350/BBCN?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-BBCN&xid=752a802d.

Epilogue

The Cornwallis reforms had a mixed impact. Although British imperial control in India was secured, the Permanent Settlement ultimately failed to establish a productive rural peasantry under a benevolent and improving zamindari. Instead, it led to a system of extraction as zamindars exploited their tenants, who had lost their customary protections under prior Mughal law. The fixed nature of revenue rates was also ill adapted to dealing with years of poor harvests and famine, further exacerbating the plight of the peasantry. The zamindari did however remain a largely loyal class that supported British rule even into the twentieth century.[98] Period commentary on the aftermath of the Permanent Settlement criticized the lack of protections for peasants, and even the abandonment of the prior Mughal system. However, even in the latter case, the removal of Indian civil servants was not discussed.[99]

Amidst the broader changes of the Cornwallis reforms surprisingly little attention was paid to the removal of Indian civil servants, even at the time. While debates raged about the duration of the land tenure settlement and rates of land revenue, little consideration was given to the fate of Indian civil servants. Although their removal was a deliberate one, it was not a central goal of the reforms, nor were its ultimate consequences foreseen. Racism was not a motivating factor behind the removal, but the reforms nevertheless established a clear racial hierarchy that undergirded British rule. The Indian independence movement was quick to seize on the exclusion of Indians from positions of decision, and their inclusion was a central demand of early

[98] Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, chapter VI; Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony*, part 2 chapter III.
[99] See for example Nathaniel Halhed, *A memoir on the land tenure and principles of taxation obtaining in the provinces attached to the Bengal Presidency, under the ancient Hindoo system, pending the duration of the Mohummedan rule and under the British government, anterior and subsequent to the promulgation of Lord Cornwallis's code of revenue regulations* (Calcutta: S. Smith and co, 1832), *The Making of the Modern World* https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/U0104824916/MOME?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-MOME&xid=d8a47c87&pg=1.

nationalists like Dadabhai Naoroji.[100] While Indians eventually were permitted a very limited role in the civil service (such as using their knowledge of Indian languages to review publications for censorship and copyright), they would not be meaningfully included until the leadup to independence.[101]

The exclusion of Indian civil servants as part of a process of anglicization begs the question of why Indians could not become British. This is a question for further inquiry in its own right. In comparison, Scots served as merchants, soldiers, and administrators throughout the Empire (and especially in the EIC), and despite being considered racially distinct from the English were able to become British, in part through imperial service.[102] Perhaps it is a matter of timing – the Scottish union occurred at the start of the eighteenth century in a very different political climate than that of the end of the century. And by the nineteenth century the solidification of biological concepts of race and white racial supremacy meant that even anglicized Indians, "English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect," could serve only as intermediaries between British rulers and Indian subjects, for they would still be "Indian in blood and colour," in the infamous words of Macaulay.[103]

[100] Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (London, 1901); Dadabhai Naoroji, "Presidential Address at the 1906 Congress Session [The Swaraj Speech]," in *Speeches and Writings of Dadabhai Naoroji* (Madras: G.A. Nathesen & Co., 1917).
[101] Robert Darnton, "Literary Surveillance in the British Raj," *Book History* 4, (2001).
[102] For further discussion of the Scottish experience in the British Empire, see Colin G. Calloway, *White People, Indians, and Highlanders: Tribal Peoples and Colonial Encounters in Scotland and America* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[103] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Education" (1835), ¶31.

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