CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

The present study deals with the Imperial War commonly called the World War II and its results especially in connection with the Punjab of 1939-1945. Both the terms have been used synonymously. However, for India, the character of the War was imperial one. India was unilaterally forced into the War. It was much more a World War with large scale campaigns fought not only in Europe but also in Africa and Asia. India contributed heavily with men, material and money. The Punjab contributed nearly half of the Indian army. War is a complex phenomenon rooted in the precepts and policies of a regime. It requires analysis as it influences all facets of life: economy, agriculture, irrigation, trade, commerce, industry, education as well as on the political scenario of the Punjab in particular and India in general. The Punjab Governor, H.D. Craik reported Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy on September 13, 1939, ‘a remarkable wave of enthusiastic loyalty in the Punjab’. Economic interest and tradition of loyalty caused ‘outburst of popular enthusiasm’. The present attempt is unfold the reality beneath such a ‘loyalty’ as it entailed sufferings and exploitation of men and material in the Punjab and India as well.

I

The Imperial War broke out in Europe on September 3, 1939. Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, declared ‘India to be a belligerent country’ without taking Indian political opinion into consideration. He principle objective was to harness Indian resources- both men and material-for the War efforts. The immersed himself in the War problems. From 1939 to 1945, the Punjab was mobilized once again to support Britain in a major world conflagration. Lord Linlithgow gained fame for his organization of the Indian War effort. Within weeks, about 34,000 men were recruited to the army which included 19,000 men from the Punjab. The War heralded the ‘rapid growth’ of the armed forces : 1,75,000 in beginning of the War to 20 lakh in the last phase of the War. Thus, a huge host of men were raised at the rate of 70,000 per month. This happened, nevertheless, when India was ‘even more unprepared in a material sense than Britain’. Indian political opinion was ‘divided’ one. One faction in the Congress made it an issue of democracy. The other
including Jawaharlal Nehru called it the imperial war and emphasised the concern of freedom. Subhas Chandra Bose who called it Imperialist War and decided to fight against the British. Indian National Congress wanted ‘the War aims’ to be declared and implementation in India after the War. Lord Linlithgow’s response was ‘entirely negative’. Moreover, the British harped on differences among the Indians. The Congress preferred to resign from the provincial ministries. Thus, India had been ‘lugged into the War as an appendix of the British Empire’, in a typical imperial drive. Hence, the War more of a imperial character that a numerical one. It proved to be ‘the war for resources and war with resources’. Lord Leopold Amery, the Secretary of state for India characterized war ‘as essentially a war of a machines’.

It is pertinent to mention that the World War II was a crucial phase in the history of both imperialism and the evolution of science and technology. Its results were manifold and multilayered. As the Imperial War signaled the collapse of imperialism and disintegration of the political and socio-economic systems sustaining it, it inaugurated at the same time a new world order based on new ideas, institutions and modern science and technology. The collapse of imperialism encouraged struggle for freedom in the colonies leading to freedom of several of them. The War caused erosion of imperial hold which initiated the process of ‘transfer of power’ in a phased manner. Curiously, however, the War set in motion contradictory trends working in opposite directions: while the people in the colonies initially came in support of their masters to face the global crisis and the latter initiated liberal reforms for socio-economic reconstruction, there the nationalist leadership in the colonies considered it as an opportune time to step up their struggle for independence. Paradoxically, both of them were successful, to an extent, in achieving their ends. However, the process gave birth to complex developments and trends that were often influenced by the factors and forces operating across the globe. Moreover, the War time policies provided opportunities to the major political and economic powers of the world to adjust their position in the changing world scenario and fashion the tools for their future operations. Hence, new players emerged on the international scene and a new power structure and equation came into being. The emergence of the United States of America as a global power and its rise in the East was perhaps the most conspicuous and representative of the trend.
Since India, particularly the Punjab on the basis of their share in Army was part of the British Empire, it got thickly involved in the War. It felt its impact in full measure. The initiative for mobilization was spearheaded largely by the Unionist Government in the Punjab. The Punjab Premier, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, called on the Punjab ‘to demonstrate its sympathy for Britain in practical fashion and to maintain the splendid tradition of the Province as ‘the sword arm of India’. The Premier and his Ministers toured the Punjab to drum up enthusiasm for enlistment to the Indian army. They warned their detractors. However, experiences were quite different from those of the developed countries. Here, the War accelerated the process of erosion of colonial power and her transition from colonialism to democracy. It acted as a catalyst for state initiative for material reconstruction, indicating a basic shift in the colonial policy. However, the process was not so simple at it appeared at the first glance. The fierce conflict the War ignited between imperialism and nationalism released great forces of change with immense results. Meanwhile, the internal economy passed through a period of upheavals as it was exposed to the western capitalist market forces; and when the British authorities and business interests started withdrawing from India, new players entered the scene. All this had deep and long-term implications for the developments in economy, politics and science and technology as well as the state policy governing them in this particularly in the Punjab. In a large way, India was forced to feed and clothe, pay and train, arm and equip, transport and maintain all forces. The withdrawal of large members from the land, created its own problems. Due to undeveloped resources untrained manpower, India felt ‘unduly heavily the strains of the War efforts’.

Studied and seen in this background, a cursory glance at the developments in India, particularly in the sensitive border province of Punjab that presented a puzzling scenario from political view point. The popular memory in the Punjab did not conjure a picture of scientific achievements, materials rejuvenation and of economic prosperity as in the case of the West. No scientific breakthrough was recorded here; no technical innovation worthy of note took place; and the socio-scientific movement that gathered strength around the time here, had different goals and priorities than those in the West. For India, especially the Punjab, it was really a turbulent time full of political upheavals, communal riots and human miseries perpetrated by a horrific famine and other natural
calamities. Yet, it was a period of unprecedented official initiative for organizing science that led to the establishment of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the first all-India body to manage and promote the various sectors of science. It was also the period of hectic scientific technical exchanges and industrial collaborations with other countries. But none of these measures apparently appeared to have produced concrete results of basic value for the local society. This experience of our country stands in total contrast with that of the advanced countries, including Britain which ruled us. This fact is mind-boggling. Hence, the main issue has to be probed in this study and also this has to be examined in a wider perspective which calls for a look into the various aspects of the subject before any conclusive opinion is offered.

It is worth mentioning that the World War II was the period when the Indian resources, especially of the Punjab were likely to be most freely used in the interest of the British Empire and its Allies. From this point of view, it is worth while to follow the development and transformation in India, a classic colony, to find out how England used our economy in her imperial interest in the condition of War there; and no War could illustrate the better than the World War II. Several problems cropping up during the War in India had their roots in the past. The British connection with the Punjab in particular and India in general started through trade much before political control brought her under complete subjugation as their colony. Though the imperial control from London was never to end absolutely, the consolidation of the British authority in India gradually minimized its needs. No wonder, the imperial control over India and also the Punjab from London was the most overbearing in the 1940s as the period presented the greatest crisis for the Empire. The collaboration model represented by the Unionists began tottering under the contingencies of the War. Any study of the official initiatives and policy measures here during the period has to be looked at not from only the angle of India as a colony alone but also from that of the British Empire, imperialism and capitalism. Thus, imperialism and colonialism on the one and nationalism as well as indigenous response on the other constitute the most dominating backdrop for the present study—a vantage point from which to look at the developments. A glance at history may, therefore, present a vivid opinion of the going-on, since the most decisive clash between imperialism and nationalism, culminating in the end of the British rule took place around the World War
II. Moreover, examination of the colonial attitude towards economy as well as science and technology through the expansion and consolidation of the British rule in India may explain several issues of the period and provide them an appropriate prospective.

Socialism gave a great momentum against colonialism setting up the process of decolonization that was boldly catalyzed by the World War II in the Punjab in particular. The impact of the Russian Revolution was felt soon after 1917 as revolutionary factions sprang in the various parts of the country. In 1925, the Communist Party of India was constituted. By 1930, the indigenous view started visualizing the country reconstruction using some of the socialist tools like planning and industrialization. Soon, the national leadership advocated socialism as a panacea of country’s problems and pleaded for all-round national reconstruction. Some of the results of socialism and the socialist experiments in the USSR ought to be at once taken note of. First, opposition of socialism to all forms of inequality and exploitation and, thus, to capitalism and imperialism; second, the encouragement and inspiration it provided to the freedom movements all over the world; and, third, its world view of progress based on modern science and technology as well as modern industries. Since a perceptible understanding of these realities was a pervasive truth in India even before the World War II began. Thus, by the time the War broke out, the British Empire and imperialism were on the defensive. The process of decolonization had started. Canada and Australia had already achieved dominion status. On the Indian sub-continent, in 1937, Burma ceded from India where the struggle from freedom had entered its last phase. The constant growing pressure from the Axis powers in both the East and West; further territorial losses during the War were shown to compel the governments in London and New Delhi to consider rethinking India’s problems, especially keeping in mind the geography of the border policy. All this has to be seen and viewed in the background of development the world over, especially in the former colonies. For, this, the War was not only the greatest War of the human civilization but also a major turning point in its evolution as it brought into being a new world order that increasingly sustained itself by relying on collective wisdom, democracy and modern science. During the World War II, reconstruction was another significant cause that influenced the development of science. With Britain’s declaration of War against Germany, India became a party to it; she was thus subjected to its requirements, demands
and strains. In the process, she was exposed to the happenings beyond her borders and to the myriad of global forces that accelerated the pace of her freedom struggle. The early exigencies of the War led to a number of War supply and preparatory measures, stimulating industrial activities and the training of technical personnel in India. At the outbreak of the Imperial War, the Indians army needed nearly 40,000 items of supplies. The number had grown into 60,000 at the end of the War. But as the War expanded and prolonged, the situation became worse. It demanded long term measures. Responding to the situation, the colonial government launched a massive program of all-round reconstruction based on modern lines. It was drastic change in the attitude of the British towards Indian problems.

Finally, the process of transition and globalization set in motion in the 1940s in India and all over the world, requires to be addressed to follow why the happenings in took place the way they did. For India, it was not merely a period of transition from colonialism to democracy but also one of an unprecedented exposure to the global forces of change. This offered the Punjab happy and rich prospects for interaction with the world beyond the colonial and imperial confines. Yet for a country still under subjugation and tied to the Allied cooperation, the situation was really puzzling and not certain. Whilst Germany and Japan were highly admired in India for their development and ingenuity, they were officially kept at bay as enemies of the Empire. In reality, the study of developments in various walks of the life of the province of Punjab in relation to the World War II has been a relatively slow affair even in the developed countries closely involved in the War, like Britain and the United States of America. The erstwhile colonies such as India, particularly its region of Punjab that participated in the War actively, did have their own problems in the colonial legacies and also the compulsions of their international relations pursued after the War and freedom. From this point of view, one would have hoped that the end of the Cold War would encourage nations to throw open their Wartime archives to researchers. However, this prospect was not absolutely free of their problems. The recent revelations about War crimes had stirred strong nationalist sentiments several countries embittering their international relations. Information regarding secret scientific plans and missions, experiments in chemical Warfare and field trials of military medicines were pregnant with disturbing implications.
arising out of racial, religious and nationalistic discriminations. These were likely to cause problems and embarrassment. It was bound to deter authorities from declassifying records in the near future, and in several cases oblige them not to ever do so at all. As such, the War was destined to remain a most secret War of history. All these issues have obstructed research here also, where, like many other regions of the developing world, the subject is yet to open up sufficiently for historical investigation. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the World War II, nearly one and half decade ago, a spate of literature on it was produced. However, India’s share and contribution were negligible. India, especially the undivided Punjab had had additional problem despite the fact that the Western science had eclipsed the indigenous knowledge and skill. Here, it could not draw the attention of historians at provincial as well as national level at once because it was yet to address the local problems meaningfully. As a consequence, political and economic problems stole the limelight for decades after liberation.

II

It is pertinent to point out that the present attempt is to trace out only the impact of the World War II on the province of Punjab here. We are fully aware that the World War II was one of the most significant happenings of the first half of the 20th Century. It was much more truly a World War, in fact, a Total War with large scale campaigns fought not only in Europe but also in Africa and Asia. India being under the British contributed heavily with men, material and money. The Punjab’s share and contribution in the Indian Army was not less than 50 per cent. A large number of Punjabis were recruited in different branches of the Indian Army. Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, wrote to Lord Amery, the Secretary of State for India in March, 1942, that the Punjab supplied nearly 50 per cent of the soldiers to the Indian Army. Moreover, the War had a devastating impact on India’s economic life. Every industry was ‘controlled’; every commodity ‘rationed’ and every service ‘regulated’. It also exhausted the economic resources of the colonial state in India, particularly of the Punjab. It eroded imperial hold over India. As a result, England initiated the process of withdrawal of its rule and supremacy over India which was at that time heavily in debt. Indian experienced three phases during the War: (i) ‘Phoney’ War. It ended with the fall of the France; (ii) The Middle Eastern Theatre. It added boom to trade and industry. The size of the army
increased; and (iii) Japanese aggression. India began to suffer the complexities of the War. Thus, India was ‘lugged into the fight merely as an inanimate appendage of an insatiate Imperialism’.

Let it be noticed that during the course of the War, nearly twenty lakhs Indian joined the armed forces. It was, in fact, ten-fold increase. Winston S. Churchill, the British Prime Minister, considered the numbers upwards of 2.5 million which included volunteers. The number of combatants recruited from the Punjab went up to 8,00,000. Large scale recruitment had a great impact on the various aspects of people life in the Punjab. Potential recruits were urged to fill the ranks of the Indian Army. The civilians were mobilized to support the war industries. Rural population was rallied ‘to intensify areas under cultivation through a Grow More Food Campaign’. The Punjab bore the main burden of providing cannon-fodder for the various theaters of the War, supplying more than one third of all military manpower. The civil bureaucracy operated along with the military establishment squeezing every village for manpower for the War. The Punjab Premier, Sikander Hayat Khan, ‘the solider Premier’ assured to Governor Henry Craik that the Punjab could supply half a million recruits for the Indian army within weeks. The Punjab collected Rs. 250 million through War Loans. In the first two years of the War, mobilization were effected with impressive results. Money collected for the War Chests was equally impressive. By the end 1941, a total of Rs. 55 million had already been collected which surpassed the donation during the World War I. In the middle of August 1941, recruitment attained a record figure of 50,000 per month. By October 1941, the figure had reached 7.5 lakh. Land grants became a source of patronage for recruitment. In 1943, the Punjab Government reserved 200 square of land to increase recruitment. Furthermore recruitment from the villages was determined by local conditions such as floods, diseases, availability of manpower and harvesting seasons. Throughout the War, the Punjabi element within the Indian Army never dropped below three-fifth of its total strength. Especially, the Punjabi soldiers shed their blood for the British imperialism in Europe, Africa, Middle East, South East Asia and the Far East. The troops proved masters of rigours and intricacies of desert warfare. In the late 1942, there appeared signs of War-weariness. Coercion began to be used to sustain the supply of recruits. Quotas were fixed for the Sarpanches and revenue officials. Hence, hostility towards the War
and the Unionist Party increased. Moreover, the colonial state had become more interventionist. The officer associated with the Government began to hated in the villages. The number of deserters increased. The recruitment was extended to ‘non-martial classes’. The Punjabi Muslims there ratio in the Army. The ratio of the Jat Sikhs decreased. They traveled throughout the world during various campaigns. They came in contact with the subjects of various countries. This contact changed their outlook and thus broadened their vision. Above all, these recruits sent huge amounts out of their salaries to their families (parents and other relatives). This economic strength raised their standard of living. Large sums of money flowed into the Punjab’s villages. In 20 villages in the Ludhiana district during April 1943-November 1944, over Rs. 20,000 were sent each month by army recruits. The War added stimulus to the rural economy. Under the ‘Grow More Food’, area under the cultivation increased from 30 million acres in 1939 to 35 million acres in 1943. With increased agricultural income the farmers covered redeemed mortgaged land: 203,669 acres in 1940 to 482,641 in 1942. *Pucca* houses were built even in the rural areas; some families bought agriculture land in their villages if they did not have it before the War. To some extent ‘leveling of class’ did take place in the province.

After the close of the Imperial War, several recruits were retrenched. The demobilization brought of number of Indian Army from the highest figure of 2 million in July 1945 down to 5 Lakh in July 1947. Still there were a few, who got permanent commission in the army. In 1939, for owe Indian there were 10.1 British offices. In 1945, there were only 4.1 British offers which paved the way towards total Indianisation of the Army. They indeed rose to a very high post when the British officers departed immediately after the freedom of India in 1947. A large number of soldiers were demobilized. It caused massive unemployment. By the end of 1946, less than 20 per cent of the ex-servicemen registered with employment exchanges had found work. The speedy end of the War in Asia took the Unionists by surprise. The Unionists Government could pay to the returning soldiers ‘a meagre bouns of Rs. 5 per head and 50,000 acres of land for a million soldiers in the Punjab’. They joined agriculture, trade, transport and even political activity. Furthermore, a large number of Punjabi soldiers became the Prisoners of War (POW) whereas the British Commanders surrendered their weapons/arms before
the victor Japanese after Singapore’s siege. At a number of other places, the Germans captured the Punjabi soldiers and made them prisoners In all, they numbered more than 40,000 including 20,000 from the Punjab under the leadership of General Mohan Singh. But, soon these troops joined the Indian National Army of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. They fought against the British in Burma and Malaya fronts. This was the direct impact on the Indian National Army.

The immediate impact of the War on economy of the province of Punjab was not very healthy. It entailed heavy economic expenditure. The Government diverted funds to defence. The colonial military budget may had been detrimental for the Indian economy as a whole, but military expenditure benefited Punjab and the recruited Punjabis. The money supply was increased to finance the deficit. It rose from about Rs. 3 billion in 1939 to Rs. 22 billion in 1945. Money supply with the Public increased by Rs. 1776 crore between 1939 and 1945: it rose to about 7 times the pre-war level. It caused massive inflation, causing serious erosion of real incomes. In fact, the war economy came to characterized by ‘galloping inflation’. The inflationary pressure emanated largely from the massive expansion in public expenditure. Between 1939 and 1945 nearly Rs. 3.5 billion were spent on defence purposes in India. During the six years of War (1939-1945), the Indian Government spent not less than Rs. 17,400 million on behalf of the United Kingdom. India’s defence expenditure increased from Rs. 495 million in 1939-40 to Rs. 3913 million in 1945-46. India paid in at least Rs. 1900 million to the Empire Dollar Pool until October 1946. The exports of Indian agricultural and industrial products to Britain increased. It liquidated Indian debt to Britain. Thus, Britain become indebted to India in 1945 to the tune of more than £1,300 million which was one-fifth of Britain’s GNP. The entire sum was kept out of reach of the Indian people during the War. Many industries suffered great loss; their exports were drastically cut down. The disastrous raids of Germans submarines led to the sinking of many British ships. As a result, the merchants did not dare to export the manufactured goods. Besides, it had positive economic impact also.

A large number of Punjabi youth got employment abroad; they were paid fairly handsome salaries, which resulted in improving the economic condition and position of several families in the state of Punjab. New industries such as surgical factories were
established. Large scale preparation of War ammunition and arms led to the rise and growth of these industries. This way, Indian became a major supply base. Several barracks were built for the large army. This provided work to the contractors and jobs to the labours and masons. Its few benefits such as windfall gains and super-profits for the capitalists and employment opportunities for the middle classes were for out-weighted by the ravages and miseries wrought by it. There were some adverse effects on the economy as well. Food could not be imported from abroad either because those countries were occupied by the enemies of the British or because of attacks of Germans submarine. It became difficult to import rice and other food grains. The prices of food grains increased which benefited the peasants to some extent. The prosperity of the Zamindars affected the recruitment drive. In mid May 1943, it was noticed that ‘the prosperity of zamindars coupled with harvesting operations worked against recruitment’. With high wheat prices, the revenue demand could be met by the sale of a very small portion of the produce. The recruited peasantry ‘benefited’ directly from the British Indian army. Pay and pensions bolstered economic capabilities, close interaction with the British raised social standing and the policies the government strengthened the political position of those supposedly martial races. Overall, the Hindus and Sikhs benefited more from the War than the Muslims as they resorted to large-scale profiteering and often got official patronage. By 1943, scarcities began to be felt in the markets V.K. R.V. Rao argued that the main reasons for the price rise lay in the shortages caused by low production and by speculation. “Grow More Food” campaign was launched in the Punjab. The official Gazette announced the control of prices of flour, oils, vegetables, milk, butter, meat fruits, coarse cloth etc. The black market thrived. The Lahore Retail Price Index shot up from a base of 100 in August 1939 to 398 in 1946. It brought untold miseries and suffering of the mass of workers and peasants. Wage cuts were announced. The Government of India introduced statutory price control. It proved extremely unpopular with wheat producing cultivators in the Punjab. It was Sir Chhotu Ram, then Revenue Minister, Punjab who advised the peasants not to sell their crops at lower prices. The Viceroy called it ‘ruthless political opportunism’ and asked to the Punjab Governor ‘to admonish him (Chootu Ram) very severely’. The Governor, Sir B.J. Glancy tried to defend Chhotu Ram. However, the Viceroy did not budge. The Punjab Government
questioned the Policy of requisitioning from small landholders. The Policy was unpopular as it agitated the supporters of the Unionist Government under duress from the Central Government Party. The Unionists resorted to force to requisition grain from the villages. This caused disturbances in Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur and Ferozepur in the early 1946. Under the War's pressure, inflation crept up due to the money supply in 1939-1945 that had increased five-fold. Due to inflation, the industrialists and war-contractors made huge profits. The middle classes particularly in the urban areas found it extremely difficult to make both ends meet. Shortage of food grains led to the introduction of rationing of food. Food prices in wartime Britain rose about 18 per cent; in India about 300 for rationed foods. With economic dislocation, the position of the Unionist Party became precarious. The Wheat Commissioner of India, in consultation with the Punjab Government agreed to allow exports of wheat and wheat products to the maximum permissible limit of 9 lakh tons during 1942. In March 1942, the export of Wheat was criticised in the Legislative Assembly. Even then between May and October 1943, 265,100 tons of foods triffs were dispatched from the Punjab to Bengal. Since the prices in U.P. were higher, large scale food grain smuggling began from the East Punjab. As the grain prices recovered in 1945, the farmers tended to hold back the grains for higher returns. By December 1945, many towns in the Canal Colonies faced a ‘Wheat famine’. The Punjab Government decided to build up buffer stock of 40,000 tons of wheat. It was generally believed that the War and the high prices would bring about equality. The war brought to the fields of Punjab a time of unprecedented prosperity. The Punjab ate more, were ford, and silver, gulped drum ghee with tea. The pricing policy ‘disclosed the power or lack of various social classes in India. Moreover, the War saw the beginning of economic planning. So, a separate Department of Planning was established in 1944 for the first time to regulate the work of development.

Also there was a socio-cultural impact of the War. A large number of Punjabi youths left their homes in order to join different War theaters, so they went to far away places. Thousands of them lost their lives in the battle-fields. Many were severely wounded. An equal number of men were disabled for life. All these happenings had an adverse impact on the society. There were thousands of young widows and orphaned children. Several elder parents lost their young sons. A few young military men brought
non-Indian wives. All these caused socio-cultural tension, rather disastrous. There were certain effects on the cultural and religious life too. As many youths went to foreign lands, a few were converted to other religions. Of course, this happened only in some cases. Owing to foreign contacts and mixing up of men of different provinces, regions and countries more liberal cultural outlook was developed. At the same time, the War left deep impact upon the administrative structure of the province. No doubt, the War entailed huge economic burden on the masses. The World War I cost the Indians Rs 550 crore which included the free gift of Rs. 190 crore made by the Government of India to the British Exchequer. The World War II was more costlier for the Indians: Rs. 1135 crore without counting the charges for the additional indebtedness incurred on account of the War. A huge amount was raised by voluntary or forced donations for its funds. Certain new taxes were also levied. India’s contribution in the War finance was ‘substantial’, perhaps ‘beyond her ability’. Major portion of the Punjab budget was diverted for War efforts. Consequently, development work suffered set back. The colony ‘reeled under the heavy yoke of the War efforts’. Despite this, Winston S. Churchill felt that ‘India was doing nothing’ on the war front. Famine, inflation, scarcity, hoarding and black-marketing plagued the land. Moreover, the Government could not spend very liberally on education and health services as well as other social welfare schemes. Indeed, there was a sliver lining. Sometimes, new roads, bridges, hospitals or railway lines were constructed to meet the needs of the army only. These were used by the people during the War time as well as after the War. Moreover, the ratio propaganda of the Axis Powers contributed in no small measure to disconcert the masses. The radio broadcasts from Germany and Japan aggravated the panic among the people. In March 1942, the Punjab Government registered ‘a growing receptivity of the population for radio broadcasts of Axis Powers’ and considered steps against owners of radio licenses.

The political parties and their politics were equally affected by the results of this War. The Unionist Party was the most concerned party during the War period. Sir Sikander Hayat Khan remained the Premier or Chief Minister during 1937-1942, till his sudden demise due to heart failure. He showed ‘unreserved support for Britain’. Malik Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana became the Premier, who held this post till the elections of 1945-1946. Though the Unionists suffered a severe set back; All India Muslim League
was able to carry away majority of the Muslim seats, yet Khizr Hayat Khan was able to form a coalition ministry with the help of Congress and Akalis. The Unionist Party gave whole-hearted support to the British during the total period of the War as it remained in power from 1937 to 1946. It helped raise a nearly a million recruits for the Indian Army. It organised savings and ‘Grow More Food’ campaigns on a massive scale. Such a notable contribution to the War effort undermined their popularity. Consequently, the Muslim League surged ahead. The Muslim League officially opposed the War efforts but encouraged the Muslims to join the army implicitly. In fact, the War turned a blessing in disguise for the Muslim League. It developed only during the war to a party of the Muslim masses. The Britain could court on a largely cooperative attitude of the Muslims and depend on a ‘calculated loyalty’ of Jinnah. For Winston S. Churchill, the Muslim League and the Congress, ‘the great Indian political parties were ‘either activity hostile or gave no help’. The British War efforts found no serious threat in the Punjab. The Sikhs found an opportunity to enter into the army. The loyalist Sikhs came forward. This was important as in the wake of the Gurdwara Reform Movement (1920-25) the proportion of the Sikhs in the army had been reduced from 20 per cent to 13 per cent. The Indian National Congress did not support War efforts of the British, it rather resisted it. However, the influence of the Congress on the Army was minimal. It began individual Satyagraha in 1940. It too launched Quit India Movement in 1942. Its major leaders were arrested: The Ahrar and the Khaksar parties sided more with the nationalist viewpoint, but as they were not very powerful, their resistance did not cause much harm to the War efforts of the British. The Communist considered the War as ‘imperialist’ one. Communist cells ‘incited labour unrest exploited local grievous and spread alarmist rumours in their attempt to disrupt mobilization efforts’. The Hindu Mahasabha was not very effective in this province. It never openly opposed the War efforts of the British. For the Sikh leaders, the War created ‘a crisis of conscience’. On the question of War efforts, however, the Sikhs were divided. Some of their leaders wanted to give whole-hearted support to the British War efforts whereas some others took part in the Individual Satyagraha and the Quit India Movement. On the whole, the British were able to get a good number of recruits for their army especially in the Punjab. Certain Sikh Rajas liberally contributed to the War funds. The titled gentry of the Chief Khalsa Diwan
promptly declared their support for Britain. The Akalis were ‘the most confused’. They had suffered at the hands of the British, yet they wanted increased numerical strength of the Sikhs in the armed forces. Thus, they pressed for more Sikhs recruitment. The Maharaja of Patiala organized Khalsa Defence of India League ‘to step up recruitment’. Thus, the Sikh politician had to be both ‘a political guide and a recruiting agent’. Moreover, the outbreak of War and the preparedness of the Congress to appease the Muslim League for the large cause of freedom deepened the crisis in the Sikhs politics.

It is interesting to note that the Communists proclaimed that the British were fighting an Imperialist War, so they resisted and firmly opposed the British War efforts. On June 23rd, 1941, Adolf Hitler, German Nazi dictator attacked the USSR. Joseph Stalin welcomed the German challenge. He offered a mighty resistance. In the early stages of the War, Indian Communists changed their policy as well as attitude. They declared that with the German attack upon the USSR, it had become ‘a People’s War’ and gave full assistance to the Allied Powers thenceforth. On the other hand, the All India Muslim League was not very strong; it got merely two seats in the 1937 elections in Punjab. Gradually, the League started gaining more popular support. The Sikander-Jinnah Pact further enhanced its influence. On March 23rd, 1940, a Resolution demanding separate state was passed in the Muslim League session held in Lahore. The arrest of many Congress leaders during the Individual Satyagraha and Quit India Movement created a vacuum and the Muslim League greatly succeeded in increasing its influence. So far as the War efforts were concerned the Muslim League did not oppose it, rather it tried to criticize the Congress on all issues.

Thus, the Imperial War provided more graphic picture of ruthless exploration of resources and people of India by Britain. In relation to the world conflict, which S. Churchill never considered Indian Army, ‘swollen one. However, its impact on the colonial economy in India was tremendous state starved’ the Indian lower classes and satisfied the sectional interests of the Indian upper classes. The War eroded the hold of the Colonial State in India. It buckled the systems of local British control in the Punjab. As the War came to an end in Europe, India and the Punjab as well continued to suffer shortages, inflation, and black market. With the military demand down industrial activity suffered ‘considerable decline.’ Handloom industry suffered from the paucity of yarn.
Concerns manufacturing surgical instruments were paralyzed due to fall in demand and export restrictions. The industries of the Punjab had to pass through a phase of acute strain. In distress, workers were thrown out of employment. Moreover, Imperial War and its contingencies to recruit men and requisition food grains turned the Unionist formation interventionist eroding its base among the rural populace manifested in the elections of 1945-46. Retrospectively, the War experience assumes significance in the traumatic times of 1947. It has been established beyond doubt that the retrenched military men who were well-acquainted with the use of weapons, took leading part in the communal riots during the partition of the Punjab in 1947. Deadly weapons and military uniforms were easily available which created traps for the fleeing refuges to the both sides of the borders. Military style organization added ferocity to the partition violence. Thus, the contradictions the Imperial War unleashed culminated in the partition of the Punjab in August 1947 with colossal human and material loss and vivisection of Indian body politic.
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