Chapter 2

The Voice of Dissent: The Rise of the Anti-Martial Race Ideology

There was a group, I label as the ‘Anti-Martial Race School’, which in reaction to the 1857 Mutiny chalked out policies that were diametrically opposed to those of the Martial Race theory. While the Martial Race theorists were for inducting only particular groups from a narrow tract of the subcontinent, their opponents proposed the broadening of the social and territorial bases of the army. In contradiction to the current historiographical consensus, I argue that the spokesmen of the ‘martial races’, from the last two decades of the 19th century onwards, did not have a complete monopoly over the army. There were challenging voices, which opposed the operation of the Martial Race ideology.

Standard works on the British Indian Army mainly focus on the Martial Race theory, thus neglecting the nuances of the Anti-Martial Race lobby’s recruitment programme. K.M.L. Saxena’s book is the only work, which focuses on the Indian Army’s post 1857 recruitment policy. He writes that to destroy nationalism in India, the imperialists balanced the Indian soldiers along various caste and religious lines. This is a mechanical interpretation of British policy. To search for national consciousness in the second half of 19th century is an anachronism. After all the different communities like the Brahmans, and the Sikhs possessed different languages, religions and cultures. So I agree with Cynthia H. Enloe that the ethnic cleavages in the Indian society were real. But while Enloe emphasizes the role of social division in the formulation of the Martial

Races concept, this chapter shows how the Raj systematically structured such differentiation in constructing the Balanced Recruitment formula. This recruitment strategy was the direct response to the challenge of preventing another mutiny in the Bengal Army, in the immediate aftermath of 1857. This enlistment policy accommodated and accentuated a sophisticated balancing structure by inducting various heterogeneous groups. David Omissi in his book states that the post 1859 Bengal Army’s social composition was an intermixture of accident and a ‘Divide and Rule’ policy. This view is similar to Philip Mason’s interpretation that the post Mutiny Bengal Army’s composition was ad hoc. I argue that balanced recruitment, which was dominant between 1859 to 1880, was the end result of a detailed blueprint which emerged after hectic debates among the imperial elites.

I

The Evolution of the Balanced Recruitment Strategy

The core of the Balanced Recruitment principle could be traced back to the pre 1857 days. The doctrine which denied any linkage between the recruits’ martial instincts and their socio-cultural and occupational backgrounds, heredity, diet and climate, evolved parallel to the Bengal School and the Selective Enlistment School. This Anti-Martial Race ideology operated both in the Bombay and the Madras armies. There was a lobby

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in the Madras Army, which pursued what can be termed as an ‘Open Door’ policy as regards enlistment. In 1798, General Harris of the Madras Army challenged the Selective Enlistment School. Harris argued that though the south Indians were inferior in size and appearance compared with the Purbiyas, the former were hardy, thrifty and lacked religious prejudices. Thus the southerners made better soldiers than the Purbiyas. This doctrine also disregarded the criterion of height. Even in the prestigious cavalry regiments, men of very short size were taken. In 1839, the general orders of the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army laid down that Indians of all castes were eligible for recruitment. The Tamils of Trichinopoly, the Telugus of the northern Circars and the Muslims from Karnataka were enlisted to maintain a rough balance. 5

The Bombay Army maintained a bipolar balance between the Hindustanis from north India and the Konkanis from western Maharashtra. In 1830, there were 10,015 Konkanis and 12,476 Hindustanis. Before the Third Maratha War, there were only 4000 Hindustanis in the Bombay Army. At that time a tripolar balance existed in the Bombay Army between the Hindustanis, Deccanis and the Konkanis. But during the war, extra manpower became necessary and the British were unwilling to recruit the Konkanis as many of their brethren were in the Peshwa’s Army and had sympathy with the Maratha Confederacy. Hence the British turned towards the Hindustanis. By 1824, the numbers of the Hindustanis had jumped to 7465 men. John Malcolm warned Bentinck, the supporter of the Purbiyas, against further increasing the number of the Hindustanis as the balancing game would be upset. Malcolm concluded that the three presidency armies must have different social and regional compositions to prevent any unified combination

against the British. A tripolar balance also existed in the Punjab Frontier Force. Just before the 1857 Mutiny, it had 14,692 Sikhs from central Punjab, 30,188 Muslims from Punjab and Western Uttar Pradesh and 7,566 Hindus of mixed castes like Ahirs and the Gujars from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

In the pre 1857 Madras and the Bombay armies, the Anti-Martial Race ideology scored a victory due to certain factors. Awadh and Bihar were under the jurisdiction of the Bengal Presidency, so the Bengal Army had the first choice in these areas. As a result, it monopolized the ‘better’ variety of Purbiya recruits leaving the ‘second grade’ materials for the other regional forces. Some Purbiyas who joined the Madras Army deserted because of the high cost of living in the Madras Presidency. The Bombay Army enlisted the Purbiyas from Mhow. Most of them joined with the aim of saving some money. After few years service, they deserted. The Punjab Frontier Force was deployed along the northwest frontier. The Purbiyas were not willing to serve in a hostile terrain so far away from their home. All these factors prevented a predominance of the Purbiyas in these armies, which in turn saved these forces from the blast of 1857.

The Anti-Martial Race theory existed in the first half of the 19th century. Why have scholars missed this point? Perhaps this is because their assumptions demand that military studies must contribute to the understanding of the broader issues. So those who have concentrated on the pre 1857 Indian Army are obsessed with linking the army’s recruitment programme with the ‘big event’- the 1857 Mutiny. 1857 was accepted by all

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6 Minute by Malcolm, 27 Nov. 1830, Parliamentary papers, (1867), p. 175.

7 Supplementary report, p.4.

8 Dodwell, Sepoy Recruitment, pp. 15-16; Supplementary report, p. 46; Minute by Malcolm, Parliamentary papers (1867), pp. 175, 177.
the scholars as a landmark as regards the shift in the theory of recruitment policy. But they neglect that the Mutiny was no break as far as recruitment in the Bombay and Madras armies and the Punjab Frontier Force was concerned. These forces continued to absorb a motley collection of communities from a wide region, as they had done before 1857. They followed this policy till the 1880s. Scholars miss this point because they give the lion’s share of attention to the Bengal Army, whose organization was in shreds in 1857. Eric Stokes implied that the sepoys were peasants in uniform. This encouraged historians to link the army’s social composition with the agrarian uprising of 1857. As a result a simplistic picture emerged. The Bengal sepoys were seen to have rebelled because the high caste peasants of Awadh rebelled.9

There is a tendency among all the scholars10 who have worked on the pre 1857 Bengal Army to link the faulty British recruitment policy of enlisting the high castes with the 1857 uprising. So they introduce the notion of inevitability. This approach is consistent with the social scientists searching for long term structural factors especially as the role of chance is caricatured as the ‘Cleopatra’s nose’ approach to history.11 The Chaos theory influenced by Quantum mechanics argues for a more pluralistic approach.


In other words, Clio occasionally plays dice as the course of history is occasionally shaped by the contingent.\(^\text{12}\) If the Bengal Army rejected its homogeneous recruitment policy in favour of the balancing strategies adopted by the other regional forces, then the ‘winds of madness’, which blew in May 1857 might have been averted.

In the summer of 1857, the Bengal Army disintegrated. This was one of the turning points in the history of the Indian Army. About 70,000 soldiers turned their muskets against their white masters and 30,000 troops of dubious loyalty deserted.\(^\text{13}\) This catastrophe triggered off a grand debate among the British about how best to construct a polyethnic army for the future. In the Mutiny’s aftermath, the imperialist’s opinions were divided. One group was for minimal trusting of the Indian military manpower. At the other end of the spectrum, there was a minority section, which aimed to acquire the trust and confidence of the Indians by increasing the concessions, which were allowed to them. This group, which wanted to accommodate the brown soldiers on favourable terms, can be labelled as the ‘liberal’ lobby. But the majority view was for striking a compromise formula between the two widely divergent viewpoints. The general aim was to reduce overdependence on two groups from north India: the Purbiyas and the Hindustani Muslims,\(^\text{14}\) but the British could not agree on the quantum of the intake of the other groups from a wider area. This was because their interpretation of the response of the various Indian communities during 1857 differed. Secondly, the British


\(^{14}\) These two groups constituted 62% of the pre 1857 Indian Army. See table 1 of p. 48.
policy makers agreed on the utility of the white forces to deter the brown soldiers. Lord Clyde, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1857-60) voiced the general opinion, when in 1859 he said ‘...increased vigilance and maintaining awe of European troops... had become essential after 1857’. However the British faced the same dilemma which the Dutch faced in Indonesia. European soldiers were necessary for ‘frightening’ the colonial soldiers but acquiring an adequate number of white soldiers remained a problem.\textsuperscript{15} The British had to decide on the size of the white forces, which they could maintain in India as this influenced the number of Indians they needed to enlist.

George Clerk, a civilian bureaucrat, argued that the intensity of the 1857 outbreak was directly proportional to the paucity of the white soldiers.\textsuperscript{16} Among the British there was much disagreement as evident from table 2 about the proportion of British troops required to hold the Indian troops in check. Pradeep Barua erroneously states that the Peel Committee reached a consensus of deploying 1 European soldier for 3 Indian soldiers.\textsuperscript{17} As regards regional deployment of the British soldiers to balance the Indians, the political and military circles failed to generate a consensus. This was because the social composition of each of the 4 regional armies was different. John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of Punjab, Brigadier General Neville Chamberlain and Lieutenant Colonel Herbert B. Edwardes, officers of the Punjab Frontier Force,


constituted a lobby, which I term as the 'Punjab School'. This lobby claimed that the Punjabis were the most martial, Hindustanis were a bit less so, and the Madrassis were the least warlike. So they demanded 1 British soldier for every 2 Sikh or Pathan soldiers, 1 British soldier for every 3 Hindustani soldiers, and 1 European soldier for every 4 Madrassi soldiers.\(^{18}\) For Bengal, Punjab and the Northwest Frontier Province, Lieutenant General George Pollock demanded 27,000 Europeans to balance the 60,000 Indians required to police these areas. Previously, 80,000 Indians were required but Pollock considered this figure as too big to be safe. The upper limit of the European soldiers for these areas was fixed by Clerk. He wanted 60,000 British troops. For the Bengal Presidency, Major David Baird calculated a total of 50,000 Europeans. Captain G.F.S. Browne of 24\(^{th}\) Madras Infantry reduced this figure by 10,000. Pollock wanted 12,000 Europeans for balancing 50,000 Indians policing the Bengal Presidency. Before 1857, there were 100,000 Indian troops in this presidency. He claimed 20,000 Europeans for Punjab to balance the 30,000 strong Punjab Frontier Force.\(^{19}\) Bartle Frere, the Commissioner of Sind demanded 12,500 white troops to balance 37,500 Indians in the Bombay Army.\(^{20}\)

\(^{18}\) *Supplementary report*, pp. 8, 14, 30.

\(^{19}\) *Peel committee*, pp. 1-3, 30-34, 38-40, 46.

\(^{20}\) *Supplementary report*, pp. 45, 47-48.
Table 2: Balancing Schemes proposed by the Officers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Person</th>
<th>Ratio of European to Indian Soldiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonel Burlton</td>
<td>1: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain G.F.S. Browne</td>
<td>1: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant General George Pollock</td>
<td>1: 4 (excluding artillery which he wanted to be manned completely by the Europeans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1: 3 (including artillery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pollock’s balancing scheme does not take into account the irregular forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir George Clerk</td>
<td>1: 4 (including the regular and the irregular sepoys units but excluding police)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1: 3 (including only the regular sepoys units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lowth Harington</td>
<td>1: 3 (including only the regular sepoys units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major David Baird</td>
<td>1: 1 or if it was not possible then 1: 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Peel committee, pp.1-3, 30-4, 38-40, 46.*
In the 1880s, General George Chesney formulated a new scheme for regional balancing. He wanted the white soldiers’ proportion to be highest in the Punjab Army. In the Punjab Army, he demanded 1 European for every 1.5 Indian soldier buts for the Madras and Bengal forces, 1 Britisher was adequate for balancing 2 Indian soldiers. What was the reasoning behind Chesney’s scheme? We may guess that, in the 1880s, unlike in 1859, not the Bengal Presidency but the region west of Sutlej was considered to be strategically most vital. The Punjabi Army at this time was considered as the shock troops of the Indian Army. Finally, the imperial belief was that the striking power of the army was directly proportional to the number of white soldiers present.21

There was similar disagreement about the number of white soldiers required for holding India as a whole just after 1859. Browne wanted a maximum of 200,000 white troops. The majority opinion, as supported by Baird, Major General H. Hancock of the Bombay Army and Clyde considered 80,000 as adequate.22 Even in the 1890s, one of the principal proponents of balancing, Lieutenant M.J. King-Harman of the 2nd Battalion of 4th Gurkha Rifles harped on the 80,000 figure as adequate.23 After the Mutiny, the government accepted the ratio of 1 European for 2 Indian soldiers. The empire deployed 60,000 British soldiers in India. The size of the Indian military manpower stood at

21 General George Chesney, *Indian Polity: A View of the System of Administration in India* (1894, reprint, New Delhi, 1976), p. 249; Memorandum on the visit of the Commander-in-Chief to the trans Indus frontier, para 16, Lieutenant Colonel H.W. Norman, Secy. to the India Govt. Fort William, 14 Jan. 1863, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

22 Peel committee, pp. 1-3, 30-34, 38-40; Hancock report, pp. 9, 31.

130,000 men.\textsuperscript{24} The proportion of roughly 1 European to 2 Indians continued in the British Indian Army till 1912, as evident from table 3.

\textsuperscript{24} Menezes, \textit{Fidelity and Honour}, p. 189.
Table 3: Changing Proportion of the British and Indian Soldiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>British</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1772</td>
<td>Madras Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bombay Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bengal Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>Indian Army (including the irregulars)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indian Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Indian Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Indian Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Indian Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Indian Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Indian Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The British policy makers agreed to keep the European troops as a separate contingent, for both racial and pragmatic reasons, instead of mixing them up with the Indian soldiers within the regiments. If the European soldiers were permanently attached with the Indian regiments, the Punjab School warned, then the sepoys would catch the 'vices' of the European privates due to close association. Actually the officers of the 'native' regiments were very possessive of the Indian soldiers they commanded and they were unwilling to share power with the commanders of the British units, who they were sure would dominate, if the Indian units were amalgamated with the white units. Brigadier J. Christie, commander of the Dinapore division during 1858, claimed that if the European cavalry troopers were mixed with the light irregular Indian cavalry corps, then the Indians’ mobility, which was their chief advantage, would get reduced as the European troopers would need commissariat stores.25

The white troops were outnumbered by the Indian troops. The dominant imperial view as propounded by Clyde was as follows 'We should never rely upon.....any of their supposed feelings, but place it altogether out of their power to do serious mischief'.26 But how was this to be done? Superior firepower was one of the crucial factors which enabled the numerically inferior British to overwhelm the 1857 rebels.27 So one way of deterring the numerically superior Indian soldiers was to deny them sophisticated modern weapons and entry into the scientific branches like the sappers and the miners.

25 Supplementary report, pp. 32, 309.

26 Peel committee, Appendix 57, para 42.

This was the policy followed by the Portuguese and the French in maintaining their empires in Africa vis-a-vis their ‘native’ troops. Pollock stressed that this policy would prevent the Indian soldiers from learning the superior tactics of offence and defence. But this was a double edged policy. This would undoubtedly raise the Raj’s internal security but it would reduce the Indian empire’s external security. If two thirds of the army (colonial soldiers) were armed with second grade weapons, then the Indian Army’s military efficiency was drastically reduced. But officers like Lieutenant Colonel Wyllie emphasized that the post Mutiny strategic demand of the Indian Army was to police India. The Indian Army was not destined to meet any foreign power but only disarmed Indians and the second grade troops of the Indian princes. So arming the bulk of the personnel with inferior arms and denying them superior training was practicable.  

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lowth Harington wanted the Indian sappers and miners to perform unskilled menial jobs like digging, etc. They were to be denied engineering jobs and prevented from entering the laboratories and the arsenals. Hancock was however against the exclusion of the Indians from the duties of artificers in the arsenals and laboratories. He feared that if Harington’s policy was followed, then many arsenals would have to close down. Hancock agreed to reduce the Indians in the sapper branch from 98 % to 87 %. To fill this gap, he wanted the raise the European contingent by 11%. For extra security, Hancock added that in the sapper and the miner


29 Peel committee, pp. 46-47.
corps, all the instructors (commissioned and non-commissioned officers) were to be Europeans.\textsuperscript{30}

The British officers concluded that the artillery was the queen of the battlefield. Long ago in 1748, the Directors had forbidden the entry of the Indians in the artillery branch. But the high cost of maintaining the European gunners in India and the lack of their availability forced the Company to enlist the Indians.\textsuperscript{31} And they also rebelled in 1857. What was shocking was that rebels managed their small stock of artillery very well. Harington after analyzing the conduct of 1857 War concluded that the Indians were overreliant on artillery support. So if the army had no Indian gunners, he asserted, the Indian infantry and cavalry would never have dreamed of rebellion. The general imperial view was that to prevent any future mutiny, most of the artillery should be concentrated in British hands which in turn would strengthen the deterrence mechanism. Baird and Browne demanded that the Indians should not be allowed to become gunners and not even drivers of the gun carriages. They could only be gun lascars for menial jobs like washing the guns etc. However Clyde warned against the danger of mixing the European gunners with Indian gun lascars. This would harm combat effectiveness, as the gunners due to their professional expertise would always look down upon the lascars.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} Hancock report, pp. 21, 26-27.

\textsuperscript{31} R.C. Batalia, \textit{The Evolution of the Artillery in India: From the Battle of Plassey to the Revolt of 1857} (New Delhi, 1998), pp. 180-81, 335.

\textsuperscript{32} Peel committee, pp. 31-32, 39, 47, Appendix 58, para 38.
Clerk advocated a liberal policy. He linked military balancing with the broader political aspect of imperialism. From the narrow military perspective, he argued, the military officers' programme of excluding the Indians from the scientific branches of warfare was perfectly consistent. But this was inconsistent, he claimed, with the broader 'civilizing' mission of the Raj. The Indians were trained in European literature and science. Their loyalty could only be won by trusting them. This was necessary since India could not be held by brute force alone. If the British were able to win the Indians' confidence by trusting them, said Clerk, they would be able to command zealous service from them. For winning the Indians' confidence, he wanted their entry in the higher branches of warfare. In the artillery, he wanted to retain the pre Mutiny formula of 3 Europeans for 5 Indians. However, in the battle winning 6 pdr. horse artillery, Clerk decided to have European numerical dominance i.e. 2 Europeans for 1 Indian, for security reasons. With the passage of time, he was ready to devolve the vital task of guarding frontier outposts to the Indian artillery.33

Hancock came up with a compromise formula. He demanded British dominance not only in the horse artillery but also in the foot and siege artillery. In the artillery, he wanted to cut Indian manpower by 25% and to raise the strength of the European contingent from 41% to 66%. The Indian manpower thus reduced could be deployed in the unhealthy regions, so as to save white men's lives. During the hot and rainy seasons, small infantry detachments needed artillery support. Hancock wanted such arduous

33 Ibid., pp. 38-39, 46.
duties to be performed by the Indian artillery. Each Indian artillery battalion was to be composed of 6 guns and 150 men (gunners, drivers and lascars).  

In the end, Clerk’s broad-minded policy was not implemented and Hancock’s compromise formula won the day. Before 1857, there were 5950 Indian gunners, lascars and drivers. In 1859, Hancock wanted their numbers to be reduced to 2,900. By 1912, the army possessed 3876 Indian gunners and 4000 Indian sappers and miners. Though the size of the Indian artillery remained small, their loyalty was crucial. So balancing them by recruiting diverse groups became an important plank of the British recruitment policy. Hancock pointed out warningly, that from 1837 onwards, all the Bombay Army’s gunners had been Purbiyas. Dependence on a particular group from a narrow region was considered dangerous. So Hancock demanded that the Purbiyas were to be controlled by recruiting men from west India. For the Punjab Frontier Force artillery, the Punjab School recruited 3 distinct communities from 3 distinct regions (Sikhs from the Sutlej area, Punjabi Muslims from west Punjab and Hindustanis from Uttar Pradesh). For the Bengal Army’s artillery, they proposed the replacement of the north Indian high castes (whose preponderance they considered one of the primary reasons for 1857 Mutiny) with the Anglo-Indians, low castes and Muslims from the bazars and the cantonments at Meerut and Kanpur. The British were hoping to create a rural-urban divide between the gunners and the infantry and the cavalry as the latter 2 branches enlisted men from rural

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34 *Hancock report*, pp. 18, 21.


backgrounds. The Punjab School’s gameplan for the Bengal Artillery was that 3 religious groups should balance each other. But the crux of the problem for the British was how to disaggregate the manpower pool of the Indian infantry and the cavalry.

Even though a large number of the sepoys rebelled in 1857, the British could not totally forego Indian manpower. John Jacob in June 1858 summed up the position by writing ‘We cannot hold India by an army...composed of English soldiers, and ...to attempt to do so must be attended with speedy and utter ruin.... England could not supply the number of soldiers... required for the purpose of maintaining such an army’.38

Beside the demographic limitation of Britain, Jacob pointed out the political compulsions of recruiting indigenous troops. He continued:

And... it is clear... that, if we could command even such a host of Europeans as the grand army with which Napoleon invaded Russia, the attempt to coerce India with such forces would only end in more complete and hopeless failure. The mere brute force of hundreds of thousands of men becomes powerless before that of hundreds of millions of such people as the nations of India. The whole force of the Mogul empire was never able to subdue even one of these nations, the Rajputs.39

The questions before the British were, then, which ‘nationalities’ to recruit, in what proportions and how to organize them. 1857 slowed down the growth of a pan-Indian Army within the colonial context. Clyde voiced the post Mutiny policy. He asserted ‘...the distinct organization I believe to have been a benefit. If we had possessed

37 Anon, Manual for Bengal and Punjab Cavalry (Calcutta, 1893), p. 103; Supplementary report, pp. 20-21, 24, 273-75.

38 General John Jacob’s letter to Colonel Durand, 7 June 1858, quoted in Hancock report, p. 18.

39 Ibid., p. 19.
one army in 1857, instead of four armies, we should have lost India'. The Secretary of State Charles Wood emphasized territorial balancing. He wanted the regiments to enlist from particular districts to prevent the growth of clan feelings, which he considered to be the root cause of the 1857 Mutiny. He considered this scheme to be more useful than trying to balance various castes within the units. In the aftermath of the 1857 disaster, the imperialists agreed, for political if not for military reasons, to have separate regional armies each with a separate organization and distinct social compositions and territorial bases. Segregation was considered necessary to prevent the growth of a sentiment of unity among the colonial soldiers, and to utilize the local armies against each other if necessary. The vexed question, which the policy makers faced, was how to organize enlistment in the regional forces.

The balancing was effected at two levels: among the various armies, and among different groups within the regiments. Clerk, an advocate of centralization from the top, pursued the line that the detailed modalities for balancing within each army were too serious a business to be left to the regimental colonels. So the army H.Q. should fix the regulations as regards balancing, which the regimental commanders must follow.

The question then arose as to whether to go for general service corps or local units. Browne demanded that every Indian should be enlisted for general service, which

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40 Peel committee, Appendix 58, para 20.

41 Ibid., pp. 8, 28; Charles Wood to the Governor General, no.73, 8 Feb. 1861, Military despatches of the Secretary of State, N.A.I.

42 Peel Committee, p. 40.
would provide the government maximum flexibility in arranging deployment to suit the balancing principles. To prevent the growth of territorial ties, he was against stationing soldiers in their recruiting grounds. He wanted the Madras Army, which recruited from the Madras Presidency, to garrison the Bengal Presidency and the Bengal Army, which enlisted from its own presidency, to police the Madras Presidency. Deployment of subject peoples away from their recruiting zones, in order to prevent any bonhomie between the civilians and the troops, was a policy followed by the European powers even at home. During the First World War, the Alsatians and the Lorrainers who were recently bought under the German empire were stationed not in northern France but in eastern Europe.

Harington spearheaded the dissent. He claimed that the imperial policy of recruiting men from a particular area for general service and then deploying them into another corner of India was unworkable. He pointed out that some communities were unwilling to serve in all parts of India. He said that the Sikhs would not serve in Bengal and, when they were posted there, they deserted. Harington actually was making a case for maintaining local irregular corps for particular regions.

Frere pointed out that the characteristic qualities of the different groups ought to be encouraged: the lack of overall assimilation among the groups within the units would

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43 Ibid., p. 35.


45 Peel committee, p. 48.
prevent any mutiny from becoming wholesale. As regards the deployment and organization of the different groups in the regiments, the Punjab lobby argued that the general service corps containing all the ‘races’ and ‘tribes’ (mixed indiscriminately and eligible for service anywhere) should not be raised because if the inhabitants of different regions and communities remained together for a long time, then they would lose all their distinctions and a corporate sense might develop among them. They feared that it might take an anti-British colour.  

Clerk supported Harington’s and the Punjab lobby’s proposal. The problem with Browne’s scheme of having four distinct territorial zones for the four regional armies (Bombay, Bengal, Madras armies and the Punjab Frontier Force) was that the different communities were not evenly distributed throughout India. For example, the Muslims were concentrated in some pockets, so if different regiments of a particular army were assigned a region within that army’s territorial boundary then there was a high probability of ethnic imbalance, which in turn would neutralize the whole logic of balancing. Clerk gave the example of the Guides Corps of the Punjab Frontier Force. The Guides were assigned to Peshawar valley (within the region west of the river Sutlej demarcated for the Punjab Frontier Force’s recruitment) which had a concentration of Muslims. So the Guides got mostly Muslims and few Sikhs, as the latter were concentrated in central Punjab. So instead of the regional armies recruiting from 4 distinct areas, Clerk wanted the recruitment area of all the armies to be the Ganga valley and west India. The voice of disagreement was from Lieutenant Colonel E.B. Johnson,

46 Supplementary report, pp. 14, 57.
the officiating Adjutant General. In 1862, he asserted that some regions like the western half of north India, where the rebellion was intense, should be excluded as the army’s enlistment zone.47

However, the general opinion was that no area should be totally neglected. Hugh Rose, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1860 to 1865, pointed out that for a broad based balancing, a particular presidency army might recruit part of its manpower from another presidency. He wanted the Bombay Army to balance the Marathas from Maharashtra, its own territory, with the Hindustanis recruited from north India, the Bengal Army’s recruiting ground, and the south Indians, drawn from the Madras Army’s enlistment zone. Rose pointed out that if the Bombay Army’s recruiting were confined within the Bombay Presidency, then enough communities would not be available for balancing. Further, an adequate number of Marathas would not be available to balance the other communities in the other regional forces.48 Hancock stated that every presidency army should enlist three-fourths of its personnel from its own presidency and the rest from other presidencies for greater social and territorial heterogeneity. In the end, Hancock’s scheme was accepted, and with minor modifications continued till 1878. Following Hancock’s policy, the Bombay Army recruited 29% of its manpower from the Bengal Presidency and the rest from Bombay


48 Menezes, Fidelity and Honour, p. 534; Supplementary report, p.71.
Presidency in 1879. The Eden Commission in 1879 reintroduced Browne’s plan. It wanted the three presidency armies to enlist from their own presidencies.\textsuperscript{49}

The next tricky question, which the British had to solve, was how to establish a balance between the four regional armies and especially what to do with the big bad wolf: the Bengal Army. Pollock was nervous about the Punjab Frontier Force’s size. He considered 80,000 Punjabis (mostly Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims) too big a figure for security reasons. So he proposed cuts. In order to maintain four equal sized armies, Clerk wanted to raise the size of the Madras and the Bombay armies. But the problem still remained, because Bengal Army had to be very big, as its duty was to police the Bengal Presidency, which in fact was the biggest presidency. Clerk added a new dimension in the debate by injecting the political dimension of balancing. He wanted to reduce the size of the Bengal Presidency by transferring areas in central India (Nagpur, Saugor and Bundelkhand), as well as Burma to the Madras Presidency and Rajputana to the Bombay Presidency. These areas were to be garrisoned by the Madras and the Bombay armies respectively.\textsuperscript{50} Hancock also agreed with Clerk’s proposal of reducing the Bengal Army’s size, by cutting down its responsibility, through reducing the Bengal Presidency’s size. Hancock added that the Bengal Army, being spread over a wide area in north and central India, could not be supervised efficiently. So it should be concentrated for proper surveillance by transferring large chunks of central India.


\textsuperscript{50} Peel committee, pp. 3, 39-40, 44.
(regions south and west of Chambal) to the Madras and the Bombay armies. The Bengal Army should only guard the region from Cuttack to Gwalior. This plan, claimed Hancock, had a further advantage. By deploying men from south and west India (who constituted the Madras and the Bombay armies) into large parts of north India, the north Indians (Hindustanis who had rebelled in 1857) could be kept under check. 51

The Anti-Martial Race lobby’s ideologues pointed out that the domination of the Bengal Army by one group, the Purbiyas, resulted in the catastrophe in 1857. So their aim was to make this army’s composition cosmopolitan. Pollock’s policy was to establish a balance within the Bengal Army by enlisting 2 different groups- Punjabis and Hindustanis (north Indian Hindus and Muslims) and deploying them in different areas (Punjabi units in Punjab and Hindustani units in North India). 52 The Punjab School hit upon the idea of balancing the Hindustanis in the Bengal Army with the Sikhs and the Pathans, groups which fed the Punjab Frontier Force. The lobby, which included Frere and Rose, I term as the ‘Sind School’, altered the geographical locales and wanted to balance the Purbiyas with the inhabitants drawn from Konkan and Sind. Christie focussed on balancing within the cavalry corps. Overdependence on either the high caste Hindus or the Muslims of a particular region was equally dangerous for him. He argued that, before the 1857 Mutiny, Muslims from Awadh and Haryana joined the irregular

51 Hancock report, pp. 30-31.

52 Peel committee, p. 8.
cavalry units of the Bengal Army. He wanted to establish equilibrium by enlisting the Shekawatis from Rajasthan and the Marathas.  

What actually happened? The Bengal Army’s recruiting ground, instead of being limited to only Hindustan, also came to include Punjab- and recruitment from Punjab went on increasing with the passage of time. In the 1860s, most of the regiments included Purbiyas, Hindustani Muslims, Jats, Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims. The balancing policy worked well in the Madras Army, where 3 groups from south India, and the other castes enlisted from outside the Madras Presidency, prevented the domination of any single community from a particular area as is evident from table 4. Browne in 1859 warned the authorities that the number of the Deccani Muslims ought to he decreased as they constituted four-fifths of the Madras cavalry. Their proportion in the infantry remained one-third, and hence manageable. Table 4 shows that by 1894, in accordance with Browne’s suggestion, the size of the Muslim contingent in the Madras Army was reduced from 58% to 41%. The territorial balancing in the Madras Army is shown in table 5. Within the Madras Presidency, 4 regions supplied recruits, which ensured balancing. Hindustan played a marginal role in this balancing scheme.

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53 Supplementary report, pp. 14, 27, 29-31, 45, 50, 308-09.

54 Lieutenant F.G. Cardew, A Sketch of the Services of the Bengal Native Infantry to the Year 1895 (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1971), pp. 329-31, 405-09.

55 Peel committee, p. 35.
Table 4: Social Composition of the Madras Army

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>1859</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1876</th>
<th>1878</th>
<th>1879</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1894</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deccani</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamils</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telugus</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustanis,</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Castes and Christians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Regional Composition of the Madras Army, 1878-1894

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>% of Recruits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruits</td>
<td>1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichinopoly</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore and</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceded Districts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North India</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Omissi writes that the British recruitment policy in the 1860s was to divide the Indian Army into 4 main components, which were recruited from different areas. In the north, he continues, the Hindustanis balanced the Punjabis; and the Bombay and Madras personnel balanced the Bengal Army. But no such coherent all India doctrine actually existed among the Anti-Martial Race lobby. The Punjab School filled up the Punjab Frontier Force with the Pathans and the Sikhs, and wanted the Purbiyas in the Bengal Army to be balanced with the Punjabis. The Sind School wanted the Bombay Army to procure manpower from west, central and north India and the Madras Army followed the pre 1857 mixture of enlisting men from south and west India.

The principle of balancing various groups within the military to some extent was present in the 18th century Rajput Army. The Maharanas recruited various clans like the Chauhans, Rathors and the Solankis to prevent any of them becoming very powerful.

The Raj, like the Dual Monarchy, was an alien regime, which ruled over a polyethnic society. So the Anti-Martial Race lobby, while constructing a multi-ethnic army, tried to maintain a tripolar balance in the 1880s among the Punjabis, Deccanis and the Hindustanis by absorbing them in the following percentage-19.5%, 25%, and 42%. The rest were a motley mixture from various regions. Similarly the Habsburg Army before 1914 maintained a tripolar balance among the 3 major ethnic communities: the

56 Omissi, Sepoy and the Raj, p. 10.


58 See table 1 of page 48.
Germans, Magyars and the Czechs by absorbing them in the following percentages—26.7%, 22.3%, and 13.5%. The rest came from minor groups like the Ruthenians, Poles etc.\textsuperscript{59}

What about the inter and intra ethnic interactions among and within the regiments— the basic building block of the Indian Army? Each infantry regiment had about 800 to 1000 men divided roughly into 8 to 10 companies.\textsuperscript{60} In the pre 1857 era, the social religious and territorial base of the Bengal Army regiments was very narrow. The infantry regiments were a monopoly of the high castes (Brahmins and Rajputs from Awadh), with a few Ahirs. The low castes were not allowed entry. The cavalry regiments were composed of Muslims from Rohilkhand. In the 1850s the authorities attempted a half hearted policy of balancing the high caste Hindus in the infantry with the Sikhs. The Bengal units stationed in Punjab were ordered to fill up the vacancies with Sikhs, who were to vary between 100 to 200 men per regiment.\textsuperscript{61} However the quantum of Sikh recruitment was inadequate to balance the Purbiyas. When the Bengal Army was cut to ribbons in 1857, then the British got a free hand to reorganize the regiments on new ethnic lines.


Not unity but diversity became the post Mutiny imperial maxim. Clyde formulated the new principles in the following words: 'A craving for uniformity has already done much mischief in the native army. What seems to be wanted is not uniformity, but dissimilarity. We should therefore have corps of all races and under different systems.' 62 The general opinion was that all the units should be multi-ethnic. But how were the various ethnic groups to be arranged?

One lobby argued for a general mixture even within the companies. Wyllie wanted all the 'races' to be distributed promiscuously within the companies, thus resulting in the general mixture units. 63 Lieutenant Colonel R.H. Gall of the 14th Kings Light Dragoons wanted different groups from separate areas to be mixed up within the risalachs (equivalent to companies) of the irregular cavalry. He was sure that the lack of sympathy among men of dissimilar social and territorial backgrounds would prevent mutiny. 64

The case for class company regiments was put forward by Browne. He wanted a regiment to have different groups; but there should not be any mixture within the companies. He was apprehensive that a general mixture would reduce the sense of distinct ethnic identities of various groups thus disturbing the whole logic of 'divide and rule'. His model was Colonel Coke's Rifle, which was raised in 1849 with separate Afghan, Pathan and Sikh companies led by Indian officers of the same ethnic groups.

62 Peel committee, Appendix 58, para 21.

63 Ibid., p. 27.

64 Supplementary report, p. 273.
Browne asserted that this system would create a competitive spirit among the distinct racial companies; also, the Indian officers of the same community understood their men better. For similar reasons Christie was also against homogeneity in the risalahs. He demanded each risalah should have a distinct ethnic group drawn from a particular district to prevent Muslim domination in the cavalry regiment.

The Punjab School demanded that some regiments should be homogeneous i.e. they should draw a particular group from a particular area. Such units were called class regiments. The rest of the regiments should be heterogeneous, with a mixture of class company and general mixture regiments. For the class company regiment the Punjab School proposed the following proportions: 4 Muslim companies, 4 Sikh companies and 2 Rajput companies or 5 Muslim companies, 3 Sikh companies, 1 Hindustani company and 1 Hill Rajput company or 5 Sikh companies, 3 Muslim companies 1 Hill Rajput company and 1 Hindustani company. The basic principle was that in a particular regiment, any group would not be allowed to exceed 50% of the personnel strength. In a similar vein, Clerk agreed that the guiding principle should be that no community from a particular locality would be allowed to dominate in a particular regiment. He wanted half the regiments to be of general mixture and the rest to be class company units.

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65 Peel committee, p. 33; Field Marshal Earl Roberts, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* (London, 1897, reprint, 1898), p. 68.

66 Supplementary report, pp. 309.

67 Ibid., pp. 27-28, 30-31.

68 Peel committee, pp. 40-41.
In the end, the Punjab School’s scheme won the day, in a somewhat modified form. In 1864, of the 19 Bengal cavalry regiments, 3 were class regiments (one was composed of the Hindustani Muslims, another of the Jats and the third was composed of trans Indus tribes) another 6 were of general mixtures (Sikhs, Jats, Rajputs, Brahmins mixed in the troops or risalahs) and rest were class company regiments. Of the 50 Bengal Army infantry regiments, 16 were class company units, 6 were class regiments and the rest were general mixture regiments.69

The two most crucial dimensions of ethnic balancing were caste and religion. DeWitt C. Ellinwood argues in an essay that the British initiated the social and religious manipulation of the Indian soldiers, which he terms as ethnic policy, in the 1890s, with the onset of the Martial Race theory.70 From the following pages it will be clear that disaggregating Indian military manpower on the basis of social and religious identity, and then altering the proportion in the army to suit the imperial needs, was very much a feature of the British Indian enlistment policy from 1859 onwards.

A fault line appeared among the imperialists as regards their perceptions of the effects of various religions on the different groups’ temperaments. The minority view was that there was no link between the different faiths and the various communities’ sense of loyalty. But the majority opinion was that religion and loyalty were intermixed.

69 Cardew, Bengal Native Army, pp. 329-31.

Harington represented the first group. He said that there was no intrinsic connection between the religion a group followed and the mentality of its members. So religious identities should not guide enlistment. He claimed that the 1857 Mutiny did not occur due to any religious factors. Faith was used as a medium to legitimize the grievances, which he identified as non-religious (like the annexation of Awadh, withdrawal of family pension from many soldiers’ families etc.). 71

But the dominant faction linked up religion with the recruitment programme, because they believed in the religiosity of some groups. Clerk, one spokesman of this lobby, argued just the opposite of Harington’s line. Clerk claimed that the religious fanaticism of the high caste Hindus encouraged them to rebel. 72 All the advocates of this lobby agreed that no particular religious groups were to be allowed to dominate the army. But there was much disagreement among them concerning which religious groups were most dependable.

Following the assumption that the members of the same religion would be loyal to each other, Browne wanted the Indian Christians for the crucial job of driving the artillery carriages. The perceptions of the British about the performance of the various groups during 1857 influenced their balancing paradigm. To strengthen his case, Browne claimed that the Indian Christians remained loyal in 1857. Toeing this line, Hugh Rose ordered that Indian Christian drummers and bandsmen of the disbanded regiments, and those Anglo-Indians who wanted to join the army in such posts, were to be inducted as

71 Peel committee, p. 50.

72 Ibid., p.38.
sawdiers. The Punjab lobby contended that, if adequate numbers of Indian Christians were not available, then the Karens of Pegu were to be utilized, because they had embraced Christianity. Traditional enmity existed between the Burmese and the Karens. And the Burmese were enemies of the British. For the Raj, the enemy's enemy was friend. So the Karens were a favoured group. The Punjab lobby felt that if the Asian Christians were scattered indiscriminately, then they would lose their distinct Christian ethos, and the main purpose of recruiting them would be lost. So they wanted separate Christian regiments, which should also include pastors, to strengthen the ethos of Christianity within the units.

One aspect of the imperial plan was that the innately disloyal traits of the high caste Hindus were to be checked by balancing them with an antagonistic religious community, other than the Indian Christians. Browne said that the priestly class among the Hindus (Purbiyas) in the Madras Army, unlike their counterpart in the Bengal Army, did not rebel. The secret was that the high caste Hindus of north India in the Madras

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74 Supplementary report, p. 72.

75 Constance M. Wilson, 'Burmese-Karen Warfare, 1840-1850: A Thai View', in Ellinwood and Enloe (eds), Ethnicity and the Military, pp. 18-51; Supplementary report, p. 27.
Army, were balanced by the Deccani Muslims.\textsuperscript{76} So this scheme was provided as a prescription for the Bengal Army. For some, Muslims emerged as the most favoured potential candidates. Wyllie wanted to balance the ‘treacherous’ and ‘fanatical’ Brahmins with the Muslims. He assured his superiors that Pan-Islamism was a myth and the Muslim soldiers of the Indian Army would certainly fight other Muslims.\textsuperscript{77}

Besides the Hindus and the Muslims, the other religious community that attracted much imperial attention was the Sikhs. Baird wanted the Sikhs in greater proportion than other religious groups.\textsuperscript{78} But this line of thinking was challenged by some of his colleagues. Browne and Clerk sounded a note of caution. For them, the priestly Hindu class who had recently mutinied, was the immediate danger. But, they claimed, the so-called ‘loyal’ Sikhs posed the greatest potential danger. Browne said that favouring them was dangerous, as it would result in overdependence on them in the long run, just as the British were overdependent on the goodwill of the Purbiyas in the 1850s. He continued that the Sikhs had no intrinsic loyalty to the Raj. They joined the British banner for pay, plunder and hatred for the Hindustanis. Many British officers reported that the Sikhs had told them half-seriously and half-jokingly, ‘The time will come when we will settle with you; we hated the Hindustanis and we killed them. The Raj will be yours tomorrow, but who can say whose it will be in another two years’? Browne

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Peel committee}, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p. 27.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 30.
supplemented this grim warming by saying that he himself had conversed with the Sikhs and their opinion was that, it was a matter of chance who had the upper hand. If any Punjabi chief rebelled, Browne asserted that the Sikhs would rise in mutiny.\textsuperscript{79} Clerk ended the debate by saying that an equal proportion should be maintained among the different religious groups from different areas—Sikhs from central Punjab, the Punjabi Muslims from west Punjab, priestly Hindus from north India.\textsuperscript{80} Ultimately Browne and Clerk’s suggestions were implemented. Only under the aegis of the Martial Race ideologues, did the share of the Sikhs and the Punjabi Muslims become disproportionate.\textsuperscript{81}

But how did the British actually implement balancing of the religious groups at a micro level? Major General J. Hope Grant, who commanded the Awadh Field Force during the Mutiny, favoured a bipolar balance within the irregular cavalry regiments. His scheme was that the Pathans of the Indus frontier were to balance the Sikhs within each unit. He was against considering the Muslim community of northwest India as a monolithic entity. He implied that the mentalities of the Muslims varied with region. The Yusufzai tribe among the trans Indus Pathans hated the Punjabi Muslims of western Punjab and considered them inferior. So he was also ready to experiment with a tripolar religious balance within each regiment with the Sikhs of central Punjab, the Punjabi

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 34. The quotation is from the same page.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p. 39.

\textsuperscript{81} See table 1 of page 48.
Muslims of Jhelum-Chenab area, and the Yusufzais from the border. 82 Clyde’s principle was lack of uniformity. Any uniform plan for organizing the religious groups was dangerous in his eyes. He pointed out that Hindu regiments must balance the Muslim regiments. The Hindu regiments may be monocaste units or multicastré units (composed of Brahmins and Rajputs, but organized in separate companies). He was also for mixing up the Hindus and the Muslims within the regiments. The religious elements of a particular unit were to come from a particular district and in some cases also from different areas. 83

Let us glance at how the religious balancing occurred in reality. In 1883, the 17th Bengal Infantry, a class company regiment, had 3 Hindustani Muslim companies which were balanced by 5 Hindu companies (2 Brahmins and 3 Rajputs). This was a case of bipolar religious balance. The 22nd Infantry Regiment of the Bengal Army exemplified a tripolar balance. Within it, there were 4 Sikh companies, 1 Brahmin company and 3 Punjabi Muslim companies, balancing each other. 84 The tripolar religious cum territorial balance was exemplified in the 37th Madras Infantry Regiment, which was a microcosm of the other units of the Madras Army. This unit had 8 companies. Of them 5 were composed of Hindus enlisted from Masulipatnam, Madura and Trichinopoly. The

82 Supplementary report, pp. 274-75.

83 Peel committee, Appendix 58, para 4, 8, 14.

84 Cardew, Bengal Native Army, pp. 406-07.

Civilizing the Savages: Marginal Groups in the Army

Next came the troublesome question of caste. The British accepted the caste as one of the principal determinant of the Indian society, which could not be ignored in constructing an Indian Army. Frere represented the minority position, when he asserted

\begin{quote}
Race, caste and tribe should be used in case of a soldier as a matter of identification like his father’s name or surname. Any good recruit should be taken...The native soldiers should be treated as men with feelings, passions and prejudices...and not as mere machines or animals obeying some invariable instinct of caste or race.... Race alone to which we are now trusting will be a most fallacious guide. Not only shall we dismiss many good and useful soldiers and retain many bad and traitorous one, but we shall perpetuate a false and dangerous principle.\footnote{Supplementary report, p. 65.}
\end{quote}

This is probably the most open challenge to the Bengal School’s preference for the high castes and Roberts’ later dalliance with the martial-unmartial division of the Indian ‘races’. Harry G.W Smith voiced the dominant imperial opinion in 1859 when he said ‘...the subject of caste is a matter of utmost importance to the future army of India’.\footnote{Peel committee, p. 8.} So the British policy makers spent much ink over the caste question.

When the Pandies turned their muskets against their masters, the British, while trying to absorb the shock, overreacted. In a fit of revenge, some officers who operated
in Hindustan enlisted the low castes to teach the ‘disloyal’ high castes a lesson. After the Mutiny, the army became a peace-keeping force and was reduced to half of its pre 1857 size. The British then had to decide whether these low status groups had to be integrated on a regular basis and, if so, upto what extent. From the British officers’ discourse, we can reconstruct the varying imperial images about those who were at the lower strata of the ritual hierarchy. The imperial positions on low caste enlistment were conflicting. One group was for their exclusion. But the majority opinion was to recruit them for ending the high caste monopoly in the army.

Baird was against the inclusion of the low castes, because in his view the sweepers and the water carriers of Punjab fought badly in 1857. He claimed that the high caste soldiers should get the real credit because they valiantly led the newly-raised low-caste levies during the Mutiny.

The lobby for the inclusion of the low castes experienced the emergence of 2 factions which I term as the Gradualists and the Moderates. The Gradualists were for the slow and limited inclusion of selected fringe groups. They were cautious in their approach, so as not to threaten existing social reality: they did not want to alienate the high and the middle castes. The Radicals were for the unlimited entry of the marginal groups, and that too in the major branches of the army. They were for radically and quickly changing the Indian social structure through recruitment and service in the

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88 Chesney, _Indian Polity_, p. 224.

89 _Peel committee_, p. 32.
armed forces. Their policy could be termed as ‘Active Recruitment policy’ as opposed to ‘Passive Enlistment policy’ of the Gradualists or the Moderates.

Lieutenant Colonel W. Mayhew, the Adjutant General of the post Mutiny army was an advocate of the Active Enlistment policy. He wanted the army to function as a motor of social change. Mayhew argued that the socially degraded groups, who lacked self esteem due to their lower position, could and should be improved, by recruiting them and then disciplining them. It was hoped that this scheme would transform their nature. Mayhew accepted that the low castes were ‘ignorant’ and ‘barbaric’; but he held that in the army, as they would interact with the high castes on the basis of equality, their sense of inferiority would disappear. The army’s appreciation of merit would implant self-respect among the low castes, and they would try to emulate their betters and get a chance to prove themselves. The Adjutant General continued that the low castes’ personal hygiene would improve due to the military discipline. Captain E. Hall, commandant of the Aligarh Levy argued in a similar tone that though the Chamars were given to drugs and liquor, once within the army, the habits would change and they would become good soldiers. To cap it all, Charles Wood, wrote from London that low castes had performed well. Wood warned that in the mixed regiments, the low castes would be depressed due to interaction with the high castes. So, for him the solution was to set up low-caste regiments where, with the support of the British officers, all the marginal groups would develop proper self-confidence.  

90 Lieutenant Colonel W. Mayhew, Adjutant General of the army, to the Secy. to the India Govt. H.Q. Calcutta, Progs. no. 547, 29 Sept. 1860, Captain E. Hall, commanding Aligarh levy, to Major of Brigade, Saugor dist., Kishengarh, Progs. no. 7, 6 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860, N.A.I.; Wood to the Governor General, London, no. 73, 8 Feb. 1861, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.
The Gradualists were against allowing entry to all the low castes. Brigadier F. Wheeler, the spokesman of the Gradualist section of the low-caste lobby, divided the low castes into lower and lowest castes. For him, the Jats, Ahirs, Gujars and Lodhs were the lower castes, whom he considered to be disciplined, and hence eligible for enlistment. He believed that though the lowest castes like the 'Bhungies' were loyal they could not command obedience from others. Hence, Wheeler regarded them as ineligible for enlistment. Frere was also against the recruitment of the lowest castes like ‘Maugs’ and the ‘Mehters’, who were hereditary hangmen and sweepers. Similarly, the Punjab lobby was against including the Mazbi Sikhs, who were sweepers and the Mosulles, who were hereditary Muslim sweepers. While they agreed that in theory they ought to rise above casteism, in India caste was a social reality, as the Indians themselves maintained the caste system. If the lowest castes were allowed to join the army, then the British feared that the high and middle castes would avoid the army. And this would jeopardize the balancing game. The Punjab School warned that the high castes would tolerate to serve with the Shudras (who joined the Punjab Frontier Force), but not with the lowest castes, because the Shudras’ position was higher than the lowest castes like the Mehters. Secondly, they feared that the lowest caste officers would have no influence over the high caste privates. The imperialists’ were convinced that the marginal groups were themselves not ready to challenge the social order, even with the sahibs backing. The

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Punjab lobby cited an episode in 1857: When a high caste Bengal Army regiment mutinied, the low caste camp followers and the sweepers followed them.92

But how could the tyranny of the high castes be challenged? The Punjab lobby hit upon the idea of creating some exclusive low caste regiments and gradually some mixed regiments were to be raised, where some high castes would join for the want of employment. Slowly but steadily, some lower castes should also be inducted in the high caste regiments. This would give rise to voluntary association among the castes. However, they cautioned, if lower castes were suddenly forced upon the high castes, the result would be chaos.93

The Punjab lobby also wanted to recruit the lower castes, but for purely pragmatic reasons. It pointed out that low castes would remain loyal to the British because in the new order they would gain power and status, while if British rule was replaced by a high caste regime then they would again sink back to their deplorable position. They further argued that if commissioned grades were opened to the low castes then they would be more loyal, as this move would inculcate the ambition and the desire for upward mobility among the low castes.94

Lieutenant Colonel H. Bruce, chief of Awadh Police and Colonel E. Darvali, commander of the 3rd Bengal European Regiment belonged to the Radical section.

92 *Supplementary report*, pp. 29, 71.

93 Ibid., p. 29.

94 Ibid., p. 22.
Unlike Wheeler, Frere and the Punjab School, they supported the enlistment of even the lowest castes like ‘Domes’ and ‘Pasees’. 95

Some elements of the Martial Race paradigm seeped within the Gradualist’s framework. The Gradualists, who were for selective enlistment of the low castes, linked soldiering capacities with occupations. Wheeler believed that agriculture bred the best warriors. This was similar to the pre 1857 Bengal Army officers and the later Martial Race ideologues assumption that agriculturists were the best soldiers. 96 So Wheeler wanted to enlist those low castes that were engaged in agriculture. After taking into account India’s social dynamics, Wheeler was against recruiting those low castes that were engaged in occupations hated by the high castes. 97

Bruce and Hall challenged the connection between war-making capacities and occupations. They argued that sweepers, watermen and even looters could become soldiers. Bruce did not care about whether the caste Hindus hated any occupations. He said that the Bhungies were hated by the high castes because they were hereditary sweepers. But still they should be recruited. Military service, he asserted would raise the Bhungies’ status in the Indian society. Not only for symbolic functions, but also for pragmatic reasons, Bruce wanted low castes from diverse professional backgrounds. He


97 Progs. no. 548, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.
wanted the Pasees (a low caste of north India) in the prestigious sapper corps. Their hereditary occupation was mining. Bruce wanted to utilize their specialized professional skill in blowing up fortifications with mines during the sieges.  

Similarly the advocates of Bheel recruitment belonging to the Radical section pointed out the strategic advantages which the Raj would derive by enlisting the tribes who existed outside the domains of Hindu society. Major General John Malcolm and A.H.M. Simcox argued that if the Bheels were not recruited then they would become marauders which in turn would cause a large-scale law and order problem for the British in central India.  

Lieutenant H.L. Showers felt that the Bheels should first be inducted in the local corps, and if provided further financial incentives, the Bheels would then be willing to serve even in the northwestern frontier. This was a radical policy statement indeed: no other officer came up with the idea of pitting central Indian tribes against the Pathans and the Afghans of the Indus frontier.  

The Gradualists, like the Bengal Army officers of the pre 1857 era and the Martial Race ideologues, rejected those groups which did not follow high caste dietary preferences. Wheeler was against enlisting the Kunjurs (lowest caste) as their staple

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98 Progs. nos. 7, 549, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.


101 Alavi, Sepoys and the Company, pp. 76-77, 79; Lieutenant General W.H. Goodenough and
diet was considered horrendous by the established norms of high caste society. But Hall and Bruce rejected this connection between 'proper diet' and service in the army. 102

The personal hygiene of the recruits was considered vital by the Martial Race theorists and the pre Mutiny Bengal Army officers. 103 Wheeler argued that the Bhungies were dirty, consequently had skin diseases, and so they should be excluded. But Mayhew and Bruce were confident that military service would reform their habits. 104

Both the Gradualists and the Radicals agreed that low castes had innate martial qualities but differed on the question of how quickly the qualities could be used. The Gradualists, led by Brigadier M.G. Dennis, argued that traditions and customs were social realities, and hence it would be time-consuming to transform the low castes' current status, into a higher ascribed status provided by the army. He wanted protracted social engineering before the low castes could function as soldiers. But the Radicals led by Major A.J. Austen, commanding at Nagode, Major General J.F. Bradford commanding Meerut division, and Bruce argued not only that the low castes were ready-made soldiers, but that they were better soldiers than the high castes.


104 Progs. nos. 547-49, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.
Dennis argued that since the low castes hated the high castes, the former were more anxious to prove their loyalty and capability in the eyes of the British. Further, he believed that the low castes had more endurance, and were hence capable of laborious tasks. As they had no caste bias, they were willing to work in the entrenchments and fortifications unlike the Brahmins etc. But, he warned, generations of servitude had created in their minds the conviction that they were inferior to the high castes. This was proved by the fact that despite assurances of support from the British officers, they submitted to the higher castes in the army. Dennis concluded that it would take time, under benevolent British patronage, to convert them into fighting materials by enhancing their morale and inducing self-respect. 105

The Gradualists within the Anti-Martial Race camp demanded social engineering, with the aid of imported institutions, to transform the promising raw materials into proper soldiers. Rose pointed out that, like the low castes, other marginal groups like the Bheels and the Gonds were unwilling to join the army because service meant going away from home. He concluded that these ‘savage’, ‘alcoholic’ and ‘polygamous’ tribes could be converted into soldiers by military training. This could be provided within a quarter of a century with the aid of the Grenz Regiments utilized by the Austrian Army to coopt and discipline the frontier tribes. The Grenz Regiment was both a social and a military institution since it not only socialize the tribes but also transform them into soldiers. Both the Punjab lobby and Rose accepted that since the ‘aboriginal races’ like the Santhals and the Bheels would not like to serve far away from

105 Brigadier M.G. Dennis, commanding at Allahabad, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Kanpur, Progs. no. 551, 1 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.
their home for a long period, their recruitment could only be gradual. Within the Grenz Regiments, they would slowly appreciate military service and probably go to any part of India for duty.\textsuperscript{106}

From the opposite end of the spectrum, Austen provided empirical data to show that even in the immediate context, low castes had proved to be far better and more loyal than the high caste personnel. One Havildar Bindha of Bhalleca caste remained loyal, when his high caste colleagues in the 11th Regiment of the Bengal Army rebelled in 1857. Then Havildar Girwar, a Lodh of 1st Punjab Infantry, performed extremely well in the siege of Delhi.\textsuperscript{107} Bradford stated that from the target firing practice and drill, it was evident that the low caste privates performed better than the high caste rank and file. He continued that the low caste commissioned and non-commissioned officers were much better than their high caste counterparts.\textsuperscript{108}

Bruce asserted that the low castes were better soldiers than the high castes because the latter’s ritualized lifestyle impeded their capabilities as soldiers. They spent one-fourth of the day in cooking, another one-fourth in eating etc. So the high castes were effeminate and the middle castes were also influenced by such customs. Hence

\textsuperscript{106} Supplementary report, pp. 27, 71-72.

\textsuperscript{107} Major A.J. Austen, commanding at Nagode, to Captain C. Harris, commanding the Bijnore Levy, Progs. no. 547, 1 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

\textsuperscript{108} Major General J.F. Bradford, commanding Meerut, to the Adjutant General, Meerut, Progs. no. 552, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.
Bruce shot down Darvali’s plan of creating an alliance between the middle castes and the low caste to tide over emergencies.\footnote{Progs. nos. 549-50, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.}

Hugh Rose and Mayhew rounded off the discussion by saying that recruitment should be guided by egalitarianism. Low castes were to be given an equal opportunity to join the army, as they were also the Queen’s subjects.\footnote{Progs. no. 547, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.}

What was the actual brassstacks of low caste enlistment? Stephen P. Cohen, in one of his articles, suggested that during a crisis, the intake of the low castes increased, and in peacetime their induction decreased.\footnote{Stephen P. Cohen, ‘The Untouchable Soldier: Caste, Politics and the Indian Army’, \textit{JAS}, vol. 28, no. 3 (1969), pp. 453-68.} He does not provide any figures to back up his claim. But my statistics show that Cohen’s model is correct. In 1858, when the British were in a deep crisis, the low castes constituted 18% of the Indian Army. In 1885 their share was reduced to 8% and it further declined to 1.5% in 1912. The absolute numbers of low castes on those dates was 17,309, then 10,000 and finally 2000 in 1912.\footnote{Army commission, vol. 1-A, Minority report, p. 156; Peel committee, Appendix no. 22, Sept. 1858.} One thing is clear. The discussion about such marginal groups was intense just when the crisis was over and before the retrenchment began to occur. We could hazard a guess about why the low castes failed to gain a substantial foothold in the army, despite having the support of the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State. One reason may be factionalism- the split between the Gradualists and the Radicals within the low
caste lobby and the second factor was Indian reality. Even in the pre British armies, the low castes always occupied a fringe position. Kolff argues that many low status groups gained Kshatriya status after joining the precolonial armies. What Kolff overlooks is the fact that this sort of upward mobility occurred only in the infantry but never in the elite branch, the cavalry.\footnote{Kolff, \textit{Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy}, pp. 157, 196; S. Inayat Ali Zaidi, 'Ordinary Kachawaha Troopers Serving the Mughal Empire: Composition and Structure of the Contingents of the Kachawaha Nobles’, \textit{SIH}, vol. 2, no. 1(1980), pp. 57-68; Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, \textit{The Art of War in Medieval India} (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 57-61, 94-104.}

II

A Critique of the ‘Racial Decline’ of the Madras Army.

By the end of the 19th century, the Martial Race theorists argued that due to the ‘racial decline’ of the Madrassis, the Madras Army was getting ineffective. In 1882 Field Marshal Roberts, the father figure of the Martial Race ideology, linked the degeneration of the South Indian recruits with ecology (the hot climate and absence of a frontier in the south).\footnote{Brian Robson (ed), \textit{Roberts in India: The Military Papers of Field Marshal Lord Roberts, 1876-1893} (Stroud, 1993), p. 264.} His formula was to reduce the Madras Army’s size and to replace the Madrassis with the northwestern ‘martial races’. Roberts underestimated the internal security threat and overestimated the danger of external threat. He claimed that the real danger was a Russian-sponsored Afghan invasion, which could only be countered with the ‘martial races’. Due to the development of communications, he stressed that the
British Indian troops could be transported quickly to meet any local internal threat. So Roberts was against maintaining a balance between the four regional armies.  

Many officers both inside and outside the Madras Army, who constituted the Anti-Martial Race lobby, opposed the Martial Race ideologue’s plan tooth and nail. The opponents of the Martial Race theory argued that the recruitment should not be restrictive, because to revert to overdependence on a few groups from a narrow region was impolitic. Moreover, to deny entry to various indigenous groups in the army on climatic and racial grounds, they claimed was mistaken.  

Lieutenant F.G. Cardew challenged the Martial Race theorists’ assumption that the Pax Britannica had reduced the warlike spirit of the Madrassis by inducing their youth to lay aside the sword for the ploughshare. King-Harman wrote in 1891 in the service press ‘There is no conducive proof that the much maligned “Pax Britannica” has in any way reduced the warlike spirit of these warlike races which have hitherto been enlisted in our Indian Army’.  

Another officer, Major E. G. Barrow pointed out the basic fallacy of the Marital Race paradigm by denying the bipolar Oriental-Occidental divide. In 1891 he commented:

It is doubtful if we are fully justified in saying that the ‘Pax Britannica’ has wholly destroyed the warlike spirit of the peoples who have most

115 Roberts, Forty One Years, pp. 499, 530, 532-34.


profited by it, and though the ploughshare may offer to many greater attractions than the sword, it by no means proves that the former warlike spirit of the people has been deadened thereby, any more than we can assert that the industrial activity of England has destroyed the stubborn tenacity which distinguished the soldier who fought under Marlborough or Wellington.\(^{118}\)

Captain E.K. Molesworth of the Royal Engineers, by comparing Oriental with the Occidental military history, attempted to challenge the Martial Race paradigm. In 1913, he wrote: ‘Long peace need not make a man inefficient for war any more than twenty campaigns could make a soldier of the Frederick the Great’s mule’.\(^{119}\)

Lieutenant R. M. Rainey, commander of the 12\(^{th}\) Burma Regiment Madras Infantry in 1891, blamed the faulty British policy and not the south Indian society, for the Madras Army’s ills. Any army will fare badly if suddenly brought out of the cupboard and thrown into battle. It was the Raj’s fault, he claimed, in not allowing the Madras Army to participate in the controlled warfare of the northwest frontier and for not allowing full participation in the Second Afghan War. The result was that the Madras Army’s British officers lost all skills.\(^{120}\)

Cardew opposed the notion, prevalent among the military circles, that the Madras cavalry (composed of the Deccani Muslims) had degenerated. About 11,000 Muslims from Karnataka and Mysore were in the Madras cavalry in the 1890s. Their families had supplied recruits for generations. He asserted that individual instances of personal bravery were many. The Madras cavalry was allowed to operate only in the

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Burmese jungles and it was unfair, argued Cardew, to expect any cavalry to perform well in the swampy jungle tracts.  

Rainey argued that the Madras regiments lacked fighting spirit, not because of the recruits, but due to the general mixture of the various ‘nationalities’ within the regiments, which prevented the growth of a regimental *esprit de corps*. The Tamils, Telugus, and the Deccani Muslims were mixed together within the companies. As these groups had different cultures (customs, languages etc), group loyalty could not be constructed from this motley collection. In the regiments, different groups spoke in different languages; and the British officers were not language specialists. This created confusion in command on the battlefields. Rainey claimed that in the Bengal Army, if the Jats, Gujars and the Hindustani Muslims were mixed together within the companies, then there would be only confusion and anarchy resulting in militarily ineffectiveness of these regiments. In a sense Rainey was right, because the trend was towards class regiments. Between 1864 and 1883, mixed regiments were replaced by class regiments in the Bengal Army. Rainey’s solution was that the Madras Army should go for class regiments (Tamil regiments, Telugu regiments etc.) or if that was not possible, then at least for class company regiments. This, he claimed, would create a regimental ethos, which in turn would give rise to a healthy inter-regimental rivalry, thus raising the army’s military effectiveness. These mid-level officers were aware of military developments in the wider world. From the early 18th century onwards, the Prussian Army adopted the canton system, which linked the different regiments with specific

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localities. Rainey proposed that the Madras Army should also experiment in establishing territorial loyalty through a similar scheme, so that every regiment would recruit from a particular locality, just like the Prussian Army.\textsuperscript{122}

Major General H.W. Norman pointed out the increasing administrative inefficiency, which led to the rotting of the Madras Army. He claimed that the Madras Army was not combat worthy because it had the largest number of old men. Norman was sure that the soldiers had a shelf life of 15 years of service, after which they became useless. Table 6 prepared, from the data supplied by Norman, shows that the Madras Army had the highest number of aged personnel, while the Punjab Frontier Force, generally regarded as the most effective militarily\textsuperscript{123} had the lowest percentage of long service personnel.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} Cardew, \textit{Bengal Native Army}, p. 410.
\end{itemize}
Table 6: Soldiers who took Pensions at Different Periods of Service (1870-75)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>After 15 years of Service</th>
<th>After 16-20 years of Service</th>
<th>After 21-25 years of Service</th>
<th>After 26-30 years of Service</th>
<th>After 31-40 years of Service</th>
<th>Above 40 years of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengal Army</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab Frontier Force</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay Army</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras Army</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Minute on the organization of the native army of India, Ch. 5, Pension system, para 18, Norman minutes, N.A.I.
Norman tried to grapple with the question of why the Madras Army, unlike the Punjab Frontier Force and the Bengal Army, kept so many old men in its ranks. His view was that, Punjab and the western part of north India being agriculturally prosperous, jobs were available. Recent researches support Norman’s contention. Most of the soldiers who joined the Punjab Frontier Force and the Bengal Army were younger sons of small farmers. During famines, they joined the army and after a short period of service, they went back to their villages and became agriculturists.\textsuperscript{124} From other sources, we know that the death of the elder brothers also forced such soldiers to seek voluntary discharge.\textsuperscript{125} On the other hand, concluded Rainey, the Madrassi soldiers were far poorer. Further, living conditions were costly in the Madras Presidency. While the Madrassi soldiers had to support their relations, the relatives of the north and northwestern troops partly supported the latter in financial terms.\textsuperscript{126} Lieutenant Colonel F.W. Tyrrell, commandant of the 37th Grenadier Madras Infantry Regiment, pointed out in 1881 that the Deccani Muslims, who constituted one third of the Madras Army, were declining, not for racial but for other reasons. Due to the influence of Islam they lacked the desire to acquire Western education. As the army in the post 1859 era was especially geared for enlisting English educated soldiers, these Muslims were at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the other groups. The decline in the prosperity of the peninsular Muslims begun


\textsuperscript{125} Bingley, Jats and Gujars, pp. 97-98.

\textsuperscript{126} Rainey, ‘Madras Army’, pp. 80-81.
with the collapse of Tipu’s Mysore. With the army job market collapsing due to the slow reduction of the Madras Army from the 1880s, and government favouring the northwesterners over the southerners, the latter were in dire straits. 127 So for the Punjabis, military service was a strategy to tide over temporary agrarian disasters 128 while for the Madrassis, army service was a long term solution for unemployment. Further, the call of clan feeling and the attraction of tribal freedom encouraged the tribesman of the Punjab Frontier Force to take early discharge. Voluntary discharges were more or less absent in the Madras Army. 129

Another reason for the relative greyness of the Madras Army was that its soldiers remained loyal during 1857. The middle-aged soldiers of the 1850s were all old men by the 1870s. On the other hand, as the Bengal Army rebelled, the army reorganized in 1859 was able to recruit young men. And due to a quick turnover (a high rate of discharge), the Bengal Army had few long service jawans. The Punjab Frontier Force, being newly enlarged, had no long service soldiers. So in the 1870s, the Madras Army had 2.5 times more soldiers with 30 to 40 years of service behind them. 130


128 The Sikhs like the Purbiyas joined the army as part of their multidimensional strategy to tide over temporary agrarian downswings. Kolff, Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy, pp. 1-31, 193-99; R.G. Fox, Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 43-45.

129 Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 5, Pension system, Discharges without pension, para 10, Ch. 2, para 63,66, Ch. 3, Madras Army, para 38, Norman minutes.

130 Ibid. Ch. 5, para 15, 19.
These officers concluded that for continuation for the divide and rule policy, the Madras Army should not only be maintained, but rejuvenated. They wanted the old troops to be deployed in the veteran corps, destined not for field but for garrison duties. The real problem, they claimed, was in getting effective British officers. They were not willing to join the Madras Army due to the lack of the career prospects it offered. This was because this army was never used in field duties, regiments were broken up and the Madras Army's British officers were discriminated against compared to those from the Punjab Frontier force and the Bengal Army. Even Kitchener accepted that no efficient British officer was willing to join the Madras Army. They would rather join the commissariat. 131

Conclusion

The Anti-Martial Race lobby made an attempt to integrate the groups on the fringe of society like the low castes. Their broad-based egalitarian policy, of including as many communities as possible, was an imperial attempt was to make the military force socially and territorially diverse, and thus to give as wide a base as possible to the colonial state. The Balanced Recruitment policy of the Anti-Martial Race lobby, despite having strands of divide and rule, was somewhat uncolonial as the attempt in the long run was to create an army which would be representative of the indigenous society. And this policy had both an indigenous as well as a European base. The Anti-Martial Race lobby's attack on the Martial Race paradigm regarding the Madras Army shows that not all the British

131 Rainey, 'Madras Army', p. 86; Chesney, Indian Polity, pp. 233-34, Kitchener to Roberts, Simla, Q/6, Q/10, 12 March 1903, 10 May 1903, Kitchener papers, Reel no. 2, M/F, N.A.I.
officers were 'racist'. Historians miss this point because they concentrate on the private papers of those, like Roberts, who was at the highest echelon of the military bureaucracy.

The proponents of the Anti-Martial Race ideology somewhat modified the Martial Race ideology itself. The greatest proponent of the Martial Race theory after Roberts, Major G.F. MacMunn accepted, unlike his illustrious predecessor, that many south Indian 'races' were indeed 'martial'. What effect did the Anti-Martial Race ideology have on actual recruitment? Even in 1912, 34% of the recruits came from the 'unmartial races'. This by itself was no mean achievement. With the advantage of hindsight we can say that a broad based enlistment policy, as proposed by the Anti-

132 The historians like Peter Robb and S. Bayly while emphasizing the racial strands of the Martial Race ideologues' thinking, miss the counter discourse of the Anti-Martial Race camp. Peter Robb, 'Introduction: South Asia and the Concept of Race', and Susan Bayly, 'Caste and "Race" in the Colonial Ethnography of India', in Robb (ed), The Concept of Race in South Asia (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 1-76, 165-218.


Martial Race ideologues, would have saved the Indian Army from the chaos and confusion in 1914-1915 when selective enlistment, as propounded by the Martial Race ideologues, failed to meet the huge vacancies in the ranks caused by the demands of Totaler Krieg.