government in their private correspondence urged the acceptance of the Re 1 = 16 d. sterling ratio, thus favouring the Indian millowners' case against the express wishes of the home authorities. Likewise, in 1927 the Finance Minister of the Viceroy's Council, Sir Basil Blackett, resisted the pressure of the Secretary of State to accept the Re 1 = 18 d. ratio. Eventually the latter, Birkenhead, bludgeoned Blackett and Irwin into submission by sharply reminding them of his superior authority: 'frankly that particular department (Finance, GOI) of your government is at times apt to take the bit between its teeth in a way that makes harmonious cooperation between the government of India and the Secretary of State in their official capacity very difficult, and I thought it wise to call attention very clearly to the constitutional position.'

We have thus a picture of a very complex game. A large number of pressure groups were participating, each trying to obtain decisions favourable to itself. The outcome of the process of interaction between the decision-makers in the bureaucracy and the pressure groups was affected by the cross-pressure of competing interests and by constraints external to the particular relationship between each pressure group and the government. Thus the outcome was not exactly predictable, but some outcomes were always more probable than others: British interest groups stood a better chance of obtaining decisions favourable to themselves.

The awareness of this reality informed the approach of Indian pressure groups. They could not fail to see that the dice were loaded. At the same time they obviously could not have believed, unlike some latter-day historians, that all British policies were simply dictated by British interests. The memorials and deputations and press propaganda, and associated activities in the legislature and the public arena were useful up to a point. Beyond that point, political agitation or alignment with a political party held a promise.

III

The ideology of economic nationalism had, since the late nineteenth

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35 Governor Sir Leslie Wilson wrote to Birkenhead in London and to Reading in New Delhi urging change in a policy established since 1898. Cf. Gordon, p. 195 and f.n. 236.

century, paved the path in the direction of the indigenous business interests' alignment with the National Congress. But that path was not equally easy for all. Middle-class and working-class interests were not so inconsistent with the kind of agitational politics the Congress had launched since 1919. For capitalist interest groups such politics was fraught with many threats: (a) In the short run, association with the Congress and agitational politics would cost businessmen the government's goodwill; (b) Further, interest group leaders tended to lose their position as brokers of influence as a result of being superseded by more influential political leaders with a mass base; (c) In the long run, the effect of agitational policies on the politicization of the masses, particularly the industrial labour class, could be disastrous.

Therefore the dilemma of Indian capitalist interests was that political agitation in conjunction with the Congress was likely to be costly, while it could extract from the government concessions beyond the range of interest-group manipulations. The dilemma of such interest-group leaders is clearly reflected in the private letters of Sir P. Thakurdas. On the one hand he felt that 'the Government of India were listless and will not attend to genuine and apparent grievances'. On the other hand he disliked what the Congress had brought about: 'the non-cooperation movement ... has given the masses the very dreary and dangerous satisfaction of resting content with destructive work.'³⁷ Or, as his friend Sir Pheroz Sethna put it more frankly, 'the Gandhi crowd are really endeavouring to upset all law and order.'³⁸ Moreover, Thakurdas knew very well that 'the commercial community [were] not at all organized for political party propaganda'.³⁹

The task of Thakurdas or Birla, opinion leaders in business circles, was to slowly build links with the national political party and at the same time distance themselves sufficiently from it to leave room for manoeuvre. The game was one of calculated brinkmanship: to wheedle concessions from the government by pressure-group tactics if possible; to point to the threat of agitational politics under Congress leadership to ensure more concessions; and,

³⁸Sir Pheroz Sethna Papers (NMM), Sethna to Srinivasa Sastri, 16 Dec. 1921.
³⁹See n. 36 above.
only as a last resort, to align openly with the Congress to struggle for still more concessions. This is not to say that individually business leaders were not patriotic; indeed some were closer to the Congress than others; yet despite the heterogeneity of attitudes to the Congress it is possible to identify a general pattern.

In the early 1920s, the attitude to the Congress in Bombay business groups was sharply divided. Some sections, small merchants in particular, showed marked sympathy to the Non-Co-operation and Boycott Movement. On the other hand many of the industrialists were very wary of the disruptive potentials of the movement. (Since I have written elsewhere about this phase and the role of the Anti-Non-Co-operation Society, I shall not go into details here.) The outcome was an ambivalence towards the Congress after the collapse of the 1920–1 struggle. However, in the middle twenties the tone towards the Congress began to change. For one thing the boycott of foreign goods had gained for Indian mills a larger share of the home market; moreover, the Congress in its periods of quiescence was not as much a threat as it was in periods of political turmoil; and, above all, the Congress, particularly the more moderate leaders, were useful allies in the Indian business groups' struggle to gain concessions.

The Congress was persuaded by Manu Subedar, S. R. Bomanji, H. P. Thackersey, etc. to back the Bombay businessmen who had suffered from the collapse of the rupee in December 1920. The growing demand for a Re 1 = 16 d. sterling ratio became in the middle twenties another subject of lobbying. Thakurdas himself took the lead. Among the Swarajists there was one section favouring the Re 1 = 16 d. ratio, and another quite undecided about it, but eventually Motilal Nehru backed Thakurdas and there developed between these two a close relationship. It is well known that Gandhi included, among many other old-standing economic demands of the Congress, the Re 1 = 16 d. ratio in his famous Eleven Point Charter to Viceroy Irwin in 1930 on the eve of launching Civil Disobedience. He also included protective tariff against

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42 O. Matthen, p. 461.
43 Correspondence between Thakurdas and Nehru in P.T. 40/II and III.
foreign cloth and measures for the protection of Indian coastal shipping interests—both longstanding Bombay pressure group demands. However, as soon as the Civil Disobedience Movement began, the fears of some business groups surfaced again. The boycott issue was particularly acrimonious, especially because pickets and hartals affected Indian and foreign cloth sales indiscriminately. The fear of the impact of political turmoil on urban workers was another factor. In 1930–1, according to one view, the pressure of the industrial capitalists was a major cause of the hasty truce Gandhi concluded with Irwin to terminate the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Simultaneously the Congress also tried to bring under its flag the urban workers, particularly those in the organized sector. Their leaders like N. M. Joshi or R. R. Bakhale were close to the Congress to begin with, but contact with the mass of the workers began from 1919. In part this was the achievement of the Tilakites in Bombay, especially Joseph Baptista (referred to earlier as the leader of the Municipal Reform Association). The latter’s Mill Workers’ Union, the activities of the Home Rule League workers among the mill-hands, and the textile mill strike of 1919, caused the Government intense concern. In 1919–21 Gandhi addressed a number of meetings of mill-hands and their participation in hartals was so enthusiastic that Gandhi was compelled to discountenance their violent activities (riots in mill areas on the occasion of the arrest of Gandhi on 11 April 1919 and the visit of the Prince of Wales on 17 November 1921). In 1920 the National Congress adopted at the Nagpur session a resolution, the first ever, addressed to the problems of industrial workers. It was no more than an expression of sympathy and an assertion of their legitimate trade-union rights. However, the more significant fact was the link between the Cong-

Indian Textile Journal, July 1930.

Sumit Sarkar, 'The Logic of Gandhian nationalism', Indian History Review, 1976, no. 1. It is possible that Sarkar exaggerates the degree of influence the business leaders exercised on this question.


ress and the newly-founded All India Trade Union Congress (1920). The AITUC was dominated for the major part of the decade by nationalists, and even after the split between them and the Red TUC they continued to have a hold over a large chunk of trade unions. However, the rise of the Workers’ Peasants’ Party and the communist activists in the labour front from 1927–8 did dislodge the Congress from the commanding position it had on the all-India labour scene in the early twenties.48

Just as labour leaders found it necessary to organize an all-national apex body in the AITUC, business leaders were led by the logic of the new politics of the post-1919 period to form the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (FICC, later known as FICCI). In 1923 G. D. Birla wrote to Thakurdas: ‘I have been watching very closely the activities of the Associated Chambers [the European ASSOCHAM] for the past few years and I feel that their strong organisation will be very detrimental to Indian interests if steps are not taken immediately to organise a similar institution for Indians.’49 Their joint efforts led to the foundation of the FICC in Madras on 27 December 1927, thus enabling Indian interests to offer a counterweight to the organized British business lobby. In parleying with the Congress as well as the British Indian government, the FICC had a far better bargaining position than individual pressure groups could ever hope for.

Some of the interest-group leaders in the business world wanted to go a step further and sponsor a political party. Those who were not happy with the ‘extremist’ methods of mass agitation practised by the Congress and were apprehensive of the ‘socialist’ elements in it tended to think on these lines. For example in 1929 Sir Dorabji Tata felt that ‘our political leaders have failed to safeguard the interests of the country, have failed to stand up against the Red leaders of disruption’, and desired a ‘strong capitalist organisation’ for political intervention.50 On the other hand more cautious and


49 G. D. Birla to P. Thakurdas, 7 Dec. 1923, P.T. 42/III.

50 M. M. Mazumdar, Secretary to D. Tata, to P. Thakurdas, 22 May, 3 July, 24 July 1929, P.T. 42/II.
possibly nationally inclined business leaders rejected this as counterproductive to their purposes. Thakurdas was keen not to alienate the Congress party which, he thought, was already favourably disposed on the issues of tariff protection, rupees sterling ratio, etc. Birla said as much and went further: ‘a purely capitalist organisation is the last body to put up an effective fight against communism... What we capitalists can do... is to cooperate with those who through constitutional means want to change the government for a national one.’ Later, in 1934, when the socialist presence in the Congress was more visible, Birla thought: ‘Vallabhbhai, Rajaji and Rajendra Babu are all fighting communism and socialism. It is therefore necessary that some of us who represent healthy capitalism should help Gandhiji as far as possible and work with a common object.’

The National Congress was a complex organism, not simply a tool of Indian capitalists. The Congress response to the latter (and to other pressures) was conditioned by two constraints—quite apart from its ideology and the integrity of its leadership, factors we ignore for the present. These were, first, that the promotion of special interests could undermine the general social support needed by the Congress to preserve its bargaining position vis-à-vis the government. Second, that the Congress was an umbrella under which various shades of political opinion were accommodated, and it could not therefore take up issues likely to be internally divisive with the same enthusiasm as issues that united all sections of Indian opinion against imperialism.

For this reason particular interests often found it difficult to obtain the support they sought from the Congress. For example Gandhi and Motilal Nehru were, at least upto 1928, doubtful if the Bombay industrialists’ demand for the revision of the rupee-sterling ratio was truly a ‘national’ cause. There was a doubt that wages would suffer if the ratio was lowered from 18 d. to 16 d., and K. T. Shah, Sapurji Salklatvala, Wadia, etc. argued this vehemently. ‘An alliance between the Congress and capitalists who are bent on profiting by the suffering of the nation is an impossible one’; said Motilal

51P. Thakurdas to M. M. Mazumdar, 7 July 1929, P.T. 42/II.
52G. D. Birla to Thakurdas, 30 July 1929, P.T. 42/V.
53G. D. Birla to Thakurdas, 3 Aug. 1934, P.T. 42/IV.
Nehru. And about the same time we find the General Secretary of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, writing to a labour spokesman: ‘The Congress is not a labour organisation. It does not pretend to be one. To expect it to act as a pure labour organisation is a mistake.’ Such an idea of the Congress being ‘above interests’, almost as if it was the state, is expressed clearly in 1927: ‘Congress should aspire to act not as a propagandist for one particular view of national salvation, much less for any particular interest in the country. It should be ... taking upon itself the duty and responsibility of reconciling as far as possible the growing conflict of different interests in India.’ It is not my contention that the Congress did indeed attain this position of being supra-class and above all interests. Business interests stood a fairly good chance of recruiting Congress support on most issues—currency, tariff protection, legislation for relief or protection to shipping, representation in decision-making bodies, etc. Nevertheless it was equally important for Congress to be seen as a supra-class entity, an arbitrator or mediator, a consensus-making body. Thus the Congress could lead a struggle of the people as a whole and prepare itself to take over the successor state in the post-colonial period.

IV

I have tried to map the complex interaction of three structures—the interest representation system the colonial state provided, the interest group that increasingly played a salient role in influencing decision-making, and the political party that emerged in course of the anti-colonial struggle. It is possible that in our historiography the conventional separation of so-called specializations (‘constitutional history’, ‘economic history’, ‘political history’) comes in the way of understanding the articulation of these different structures. I started with the simplest of these structures, formal representation in legislature, and saw how informal processes and structures came into play, the national political party being the most complex of

54See O. Matthen, pp. 462, 488–9, Motilal Nehru to Lalji Naranji, 21 April 1928, P.T. 40/IV.
55AICC Papers (NMM), no. 16/1929, J. Nehru to D. B. Kulkarni, 10 Sept. 1929.
all. In handling the question of class, right from the nineteenth-century discussions on the constitution of the legislative bodies, the basic digit of discourse was 'interest representation'. This was a surrogate for class (and caste/community/ethnic) representation in the task of designing a system of separate electorates for the horizontally and vertically divided colonial society. However, interest representation ensured a presence in the legislature for Labour and Capital, it did not secure influence. The organization and techniques of pressure groups were looked at to understand how influence on the decision-making process was secured. The distribution of 'influence' was naturally uneven. Although the colonial state operated under some constraints which made it difficult for British interests to get all that they wanted, by and large British pressure groups stood a better chance than natives. Ultimately, political pressure of a different order, through the agency of a national political party, could decisively change the structure as a whole to bring to Indian interests (especially to the capitalists) the influence that would extract concessions beyond the range of the proto-political pressure game. At the same time participation in the new political game cost business interests the goodwill of the government in the short run, and in the long run the threat of the politicization of the working class. Further, the national political party was not exactly an instrument for business interests, it had its own constraints. The period 1919–31, between the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and the Non-Co-operation Movement at one end and the Civil-Disobedience Movement at the other, witnessed the working out of a new system of relationships between the colonial government, the interest groups, and the Congress party. This was a prelude to the politics of the successor state after decolonization; 1947 saw the start of another game.
Nationalist Historians' Interpretations of the Indian National Movement

BIPAN CHANDRA

Three major aspects of the Indian national movement around which many of its features can be woven are: the role of colonialism and its contradiction with the Indian people; the development or making of India as a nation; the interests represented by the national movement and its social or class character. Over the last 100 years three major schools of historiography have emerged, each providing its own distinct, identifiable analysis of these three aspects. These schools may be described as imperialist, nationalist and Marxist. Though there is obviously a great deal of divergence among individual historians and writers constituting a school, the underlying common approach to these three aspects marks it as a distinct school.

Another interesting feature of the historiography of Indian nationalism is the close resemblance or even wide coincidence between the historiographic practice of the three schools on the one hand, and the actual thinking and practice of colonial rulers and administrators, the national movement, and the Communist Party on the other. In fact, quite often, the three schools represent historiographic theorization of the concrete political and ideological practices of the imperialists, the nationalists and the communists. I shall here examine the nationalist historians' interpretation of the Indian national movement.

On the academic plane the nationalist school had till 1947 very little to contribute to the study of the national movement. Since the colonial authorities frowned upon and penalized any expres-
sion of anti-colonialism, Indian academic historians confined the historiographic expression of their nationalist feelings to the glorification of genuine or spurious heroes and heroic ages of the ancient and medieval periods. It was left to political leaders such as Lajpat Rai, Surendranath Banerjea, R. G. Pradhan, Subhash Chandra Bose, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, C. F. Andrews and Girija Mukerji to write about the national movement, the two exceptions being Gurmukh Nihal Singh and M. A. Buch, and even they did not go beyond 1919. Buch, moreover, worked in the Indian state of Baroda ruled by the liberal Sayaji Gaekwad. Even after 1947, however, the nationalist school has failed to make a major contribution at the analytical or historiographic level.

At the broad, integrative level, some distinguished work has been done through the series of volumes on the history of the freedom struggle in Maharashtra, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad and Assam; but the contribution has been basically empirical in character. R. C. Majumdar's work is marred by communal intrusion and a failure to understand the nature of modern Indian sources. Tara Chand's work is weakened by his eclectic effort to accommodate diverse approaches in a hotchpotch and undigested fashion. Only his first volume, which deals with developments until 1857, and the economic chapters in Volumes II and III, merit serious consideration. The best work of a general nature in the nationalist genre is Bisheshwar Prasad's small volume, Changing Modes of Indian National Movement, but because of its size it is empirically weak. Some other writers on the national movement who take the objective validity of nationalism as their point of departure, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, A. R. Desai, Hiren Mukerjea and S. Gopal, really belong to the school of historians who are Marxists or on whom Marxism has had a strong impact.

The Role of Colonialism

A distinguishing feature of the Indian national movement from its beginnings in the 1880s is that it was based on a full understanding of the exploitative and underdeveloping character of colonialism. The central or primary contradiction between the Indian people and

1This is so partially because he was one of the very few professional historians who had actively participated in the national movement. (For full bibliographical references see the end of this essay).
colonialism or the colonial state was clearly perceived first in the
economic sphere and then gradually in the political, cultural and
social spheres. From Dadabhai Naoroji to Tilak to Gandhi to
Nehru the national movement was based on the growing recogni-
tion of the character of colonialism and this central contradic-
tion; and the appeal of the movement to the intelligentsia as well as the
masses was made on this twin basis. For example, a detailed study
of the economic policies of the Moderates has come to this con-
clusion:

The important point is that by posing the main economic issues
in such a way as to highlight the clash between the economic
interests of India and Britain, pointing out that the most
important political and economic aspect of the Indian reality
was that India was being ruled by a foreign power for the
purposes of economic exploitation . . . and pointing out that
control over political power was essential for the implementa-
tion of nationalist economic demands, they created a situation
in which antagonism between the rulers and the ruled went on
developing and a struggle for political power and independence
became more or less inevitable. Once the main issues of dispute
between the alien rulers and the nationalist movement were
posed in this way, once the main contradiction of British rule
in India was seen clearly the correct working out of political
tactics and strategy was only a matter of time.2

In 1906 Tilak advised: ‘If you forget your grievances by hearing
words of sympathy then the cause is lost. You must make a perma-
nent cause of grievance.’3 And Gandhi wrote to the viceroy in 1930:

And why do I regard the British rule as a curse? It has im-
poverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive ex-
ploration and by a ruinously expensive military and civil
administration which the country can never afford. It has
reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations
of our culture. And, by the policy of cruel disarmament, it has

2Bipan Chandra (1966), p. 757. And in 1905 Dadabhai Naoroji asserted:
‘Without self-government the Indians can never get rid of their present drain,
and the consequent impoverishment, misery, and destruction. No palliative
of any kind whatever, no mere alteration and tinkering of the mechnical
machinery of administration, can and will do any good at all. The drain can
only be stopped by the Government, by the people themselves . . . . Self-
government is the only remedy for India’s woes and wrongs.’ Speeches, p. 671;
quoted in Bipan Chandra, p. 697.

3Tilak, p. 46.
Nationalist Historians on the National Movement

... degraded us spiritually.... If nothing is done to end the process of exploitation India must be bled with an ever increasing speed.4

The Independence Day Declaration of 26 January 1930 proclaimed:

The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually.... We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country.5

In this understanding of the basic causation of the national movement as the central contradiction, nationalist historical writing, especially before 1947, was not as advanced as the movement itself partly for the reasons given above and partly because the cognition of this contradiction, by leaders as well as followers, was a prolonged historical process. While showing an awareness of the nature of colonialism and its economic impact, liberal nationalist writers tend on the whole to base themselves on the Whig view of history and see the national movement as a result of the spread and realization of the idea or spirit of nationalism or liberty.6 Thus, Lajpat Rai located the movement in ‘the desire for liberty’7 and feelings of ‘shame and dishonour’, ‘degradation and fall’, and ‘the sense of humiliation and shame’;8 Andrews and Mukerji in ‘the awakening of this new spirit’, the ‘new ideas of human progress’, ‘the spread of English liberal ideas’, the deep influence of ‘the ideas of freedom and individual liberty’, ‘the contact of the best minds of India with the West’, and ‘the supreme desire for freedom and social justice’;9 R. G. Pradhan in the ‘sentiment of nationality’ and

5Quoted in P. Sitaramayya, pp. 615–16.
6Just as the Whig school saw the modern historical development in Britain as the march of the idea of progress and, in particular, the process of democratization as the realization of the idea of liberty or of the principle of constitutional liberty.
7To quote him more fully: ‘The miseries of the motherland had given an impetus to the idea, but the idea itself stood on higher ground.... It was not the redress of grievances that filled the mind of the people, but the desire for liberty’, Lajpat Rai, p. 32.
8Ibid., pp. 85–8.
9Andrews and Mukerji, pp. 17, 21, 67, 109, 113, 158, respectively.
‘national spirit’;¹⁰ and M. A. Buch in the birth of ‘pan-Indian political consciousness’, the educated Indians’ response to ‘the new ideas so eloquently preached by men like Burke and Macaulay’, and the tradition of liberty... transmitted by English education.’¹¹ According to the Report of the Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee set up by the National Congress in 1931: ‘The soul of India was yearning to find some avenue of self-expression and self-assertion, and the Indian National Congress afforded her such an opportunity.’¹² R. C. Majumdar too writes that ‘far more important in its ultimate effect was the development of a passionate yearning for liberty and ardent patriotic feeling among the English-educated youngmen in Bengal.’¹³

Bisheshwar Prasad gives uninhibited expression to this approach. The eighteenth century Indian rulers’ resistance to British rule was a manifestation of the ‘spirit of freedom’ which did not die with the establishment of rule. ‘The loss of freedom and the spectre of domination by the alien... rankled in the hearts of the people’ and led them to repeatedly arise in rebellion against the British. This ‘craving for freedom’, this ‘spirit of freedom’, this ‘longing for freedom’, this ‘keenness to fight for freedom’ let to numerous revolts until 1857. It was this spirit which ‘first unfolded itself in the sphere of social and religious reform’. After 1857, ‘the feeling of resentment of foreign rule was seeking new channels of expression.’¹⁴ Some of the other nationalist historians also dwell at length on the extent of popular armed opposition to British rule before the foundation of the Congress; but they see it as a struggle against

¹⁰Pradhan, p. 1.
¹¹Buch, pp. 147, 160–1.
¹²Report of the Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee, p. 185. The Report had a 228 page historical section. Subhas Chandra Bose also wrote in the same vein: ‘Faced with the menace of being swallowed up by a new religion and culture, the soul of the people revolted. The first embodiment of this revolt was Raja Ram Mohon Roy...’ p. 33. Also see pp. 24, 32.
¹³Majumdar, vol. 1, p. 324. Also see ibid., book II, chapter I.
¹⁴B. Prasad, pp. 9–10, 12–3, 17–19, 27, and 35 respectively. Tara Chand provides an exception in this respect. Under the impact of Marxist thinking he fully accepts the central or basic role of the colonialization of the Indian economy, its subordination to the metropolis as well as its stagnation and underdevelopment in the growth of the central contradiction between the Indian people and colonial rule. He also sees the stage by stage growth of the national movement. See Tara Chand, vol. I, chapters 9, 10; II, p. vii; chapters 7, 11 (see, in particular, pp. 347–8, 430, 469, 473–4, 491, 530, 532, 567ff.); III, chapters 1, 2, 3 (see, in particular, pp. 42, 130, 289); IV, p. 571.
foreign domination and not as the beginning of a nationalist or anti-imperialist struggle.¹⁵

For some, mostly early writers who echoed the Moderates, the idea of nationalism and the spirit of liberty were imported from the West and imbibed mostly through modern education.¹⁶ For others, mostly later writers, these ideas were either indigenous to Indian history and culture, or the Indian people, like all other people, possessed an inborn or inherent desire to rule themselves.¹⁷ Most writers stride both views with an eclecticism which marks much Indian history writing.¹⁸

The increasing militancy of the national movement in its later phases is then explained by better ideas and a greater spirit of freedom,¹⁹ or by better leaders who possessed greater zeal, sturdier patriotism and a greater will and capacity to undergo suffering and make sacrifices;²⁰ such leaders apparently had a greater capacity to propagate the idea or spirit of freedom, often by a better definition of the goal of the movement and the national ideal.²¹ Better ideas and better leaders are seen to be so because of their inherent character and not because they better represented certain social needs and forces. This view also leads nationalist historians to over-emphasize the role of the great leader.

Nationalist historians ascribe the chief cause of the birth and spread of the national movement to two intellectual and cultural

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¹⁶Several authors approvingly quote A. O. Hume’s statement that nationalist feelings were the result of the ‘ferment due to the creation of western ideas, education, invention and appliances’. See for example, Buch, p. 170; Report of the Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee, pp. 175, 185. B. Prasad, p. 39. Also see R. C. Majumdar, I, pp. 290, 312, 321–5, 338–9, 350–1; II, pp. 161–2. A. C. Mazumdar, pp. 3–4. Gurmukh Nihal Singh adopts the ‘factors’ approach but assigns the most important role to the ‘inspiration of political ideals of the west.’ (p. 106).

¹⁷Andrews and Mukerji, p. 131; Buch, p. 266; Pradhan, p. 2; B. Prasad, pp. 10–13, 17–19, 27, 59.

¹⁸For example, R. C. Majumdar, whose own view was the first one, quotes Aurobindo Ghose, Lajpat Rai, Tilak and B. C. Pal approvingly for the second one. Majumdar, I, pp. 423–40. Also see p. 89.

¹⁹Pradhan, pp. 57–8, 84; B. Prasad, pp. 54, 69; R. C. Majumdar, I, pp. 419–20, 422ff., 446–7.


²¹Lajpat Rai, pp. 131–2.
forces. One was the spread of the ideas of nationalism and freedom basically through education; education either enabled the imbibing of ideas from the west or enabled the inborn urge to freedom to realize itself. The second force was an awakening represented by religious and social reform movements. Vivekananda and Dayananda, in particular, were given credit for arousing militant nationalist feelings. Nationalism, particularly its extremist variant, was also generated, it was said, by the rediscovery and revival of interest and pride in the glories and greatness of India’s past. This view led many historians to describe the militant nationalist phase as cultural conflict, anti-westernism, cultural nationalism, religious nationalism, the religion of patriotism, or nationalism marking a ‘return of spirituality upon life’.

Without providing a detailed critique of this approach, it must be pointed out that it certainly gets its causation of the national movement wrong. Education or religious and social reform movements do not, in fact cannot, create an ideology—not to speak of a movement—in a social vacuum. A large number of educated people were, until the 1920s and later, not nationalists but part of the colonial state apparatuses and the colonial structure of exploitation.


23Andrews and Mukerji, for example, wrote: ‘If great personalities had not arisen, one after the other, proclaiming a religious message to the whole of India, the National Congress movement on an all-India basis would never have become possible’ (p. 18). Also see pp. 83 and 156. These authors devoted six full chapters to ‘India’s Religious Renaissance’. Also Sitaramayya, pp. 17, 21–2; G. N. Singh, pp. 106–8, 142; Lajpat Rai, p. 109; S. C. Bose, pp. 33ff.; B. Prasad, p. 27; R. C. Majumdar, 1, pp. 328–9, 335–7.


28B. Prasad, p. 59; A. Tripathi, p. 17; R. C. Majumdar, 11, p. 140.

29A Tripathi, p. 2. Tara Chand also takes note of the intermingling of religion and nationalism during the nationalist phase but he views it very critically and argues that it proved harmful to the nationalist cause. See III, p. 164.
Even later, it was the taught (the students) and not the teachers of western thought who were active nationalists. The best students, who wrote good essays in western history, philosophy or political thought in their examinations, usually ended up in the civil services. Nor were the most active religious and social reformers and revivalists active in nationalist politics. It was the objective central contradiction that produced nationalism and propelled forward the national movement. Given this contradiction Indians would, in the absence of modern education, have gone to other sources in their hunt for ideas and ideologies. In real life ideas, indigenous or foreign, float around, but their acceptance or rejection and the degree of their prevalence or isolated existence depend on the objective or given social, economic and political conditions. Under Indian conditions, English ideas were available and so they were adopted. The fact is that ideas, having originated historically, become available as a stock. It is the social reasons for their adoption and spread which have to be studied, though superficially of course they appear to spread on their own steam. The reasons why people go in search of new ideas as tools of analysis, and the mechanisms for their spread, are more important than the mere fact of their spread. After all Indonesia had barely 750 students in all its post-school educational institutions; and in China it was traditional Confucian intellectuals such as Kang Yuwei and Liang Qichao who initiated the modern national movement. Nationalist historians are quite right in emphasizing the role of ideology in the mobilization and even politicization of the people. However, this was a function not of the stronger inherent force of nationalist ideology but of its better representation of the colonial reality. In the history of Indian nationalism English education and religious reform and revivalism

30The heightened role assigned to Bankim, Vivekananda and Dayanand as initiators of nationalism by historians has been to some extent due to Aurobindo Ghose's glorification of their role after he had effectively abandoned nationalist politics and the critique of colonialism and adopted a vicarious nationalist position. Ghose's view was further reinforced by V. Chirol's and the colonial administrators' strong attack on the Arya Samaj and the revivalists as fountainheads of 'sedition'. The latter, too, had to find a culprit other than colonialism for it. Amales Tripathi has to some extent been able to see Ghose's and Chirol's role in propagating the myth. See pp. 37-9. Similarly Bankim Chandra, in his changing conception of the nation, reflected rather than created the political activity of his contemporary nationalists. Cf. ibid., p. 4.
are important because they provided some of its important ideological and programmatic elements, while reform movements and notions of past glory and greatness were often not the creators of nationalism but one of its expressions.\textsuperscript{31}

Most nationalist historians had a tendency to adopt the ‘factors’ approach, i.e. ascribe the origins of the national movement and its development to a large number of factors or causes, often without adopting any hierarchy of causation, or differentiating between causal factors and symptoms on the one hand and the aids, instruments and channels through which nationalism was propagated on the other. The overriding causal factor which emerged was the spirit of freedom. After Gurmukh Nihal Singh, and as a result of his work, this ‘factors’ approach became the staple of all textbooks on modern Indian history.\textsuperscript{32} The most prominent such factors, other than those brought out earlier, were Lytton’s reactionary regime, Ripon’s liberal measures, the Ilbert Bill controversy, the international situation, the press, modern literature, the government’s poor response to nationalist pressure, Curzon’s regime, economic exploitation, poverty and economic discontent. Most historians also traced at length the growth of racial cleavage or the feelings of racial superiority among Englishmen in India, and the official policy of racial discrimination which led to ‘bitterness, hostility and fear’ among Indians.\textsuperscript{33} These historians were not wrong in strongly emphasizing racialism. The reaction to racialism provided an important emotional factor which united diverse social strata among Indians, and gave their feelings a certain edge.

Despite their Whig approach, nationalist historians differ from liberal imperialist administrators and historians in that with them the Whig or liberal idealist approach acquires a strong anti-imperialist edge. In particular, during the 1930s and after, nationalist writers increasingly incorporated an economic critique of colonialism. Imperialist historians—liberal, conservative or neo-imperialist—

\textsuperscript{31}Amales Tripathi and Tara Chand are able to comprehend this aspect to a certain extent. See Tripathi, chapter 1 and pp. 46, 65; T. Chand, ii, chapter 9 and pp. 430, 529; iv, pp. 570–1.

\textsuperscript{32}G. N. Singh, pp. 106ff., 133ff., 339ff. Also see R. C. Majumdar, i, pp. 340ff.

\textsuperscript{33}A. C. Majumdar, pp. 27, 244; Andrews and Mukerji, pp. 73–8, 85ff., 91; Buch, pp. 149–51, 164–5; G. N. Singh, pp. 106, 110, 139; B. Prasad, pp. 34, 56; R. C. Majumdar, i, pp. 353–7; T. Chand, ii, pp. 478 ff.; Nanda, Gandhi, pp. 144–5.
never do this. Even though nationalist historians do not directly point to the central contradiction, they do—echoing the early and contemporary nationalist critique—bring out the role of economic domination and exploitation by the imperialist power, the harmful economic impact of colonial policies, and the consequent economic discontent among the Indian people. Thus their analysis partakes of the materialist, anti-colonial approach. After talking at length about the idea of liberty, they recognize and point to the materialist roots of nationalism, just as earlier the Moderates had pointed to the central contradiction even while remaining broadly within a liberal idealistic ideological, and moderate or even semi-loyalist political, framework.34

Apart from the need to understand the reality, nationalist leaders and historians needed the materialist explanation of imperialism and nationalism for two broad political reasons: first, to understand and explain to others why the very country from which the idea of liberty was imported was opposed to that very idea of idea in India. They had to square the idealist explanation of the rise of nationalism with the fact that the ‘fathers of the ideal’ were opposed to its implementation in India. Second, nationalist leaders had to bring broader social strata into the movement. They knew from their practice that a mere propagation of the idea of freedom could not bring the mass of people, including large segments of the intelligentsia, into the movement. Therefore the historian had to explain the spread of this idea among the masses. This explains in part why, since the 1880s and in particular after 1919 when the national movement became a mass movement, nationalist agitation and propaganda were based primarily on an economic critique of colonialism and its impact on the material condition of the people.

Nationalist historians also take note of the culturally and morally destructive role of colonialism and of the sense of humiliation

34 Andrews and Munkerji, pp. 85, 88, 137, 158–62; G. N. Singh, pp. 106, 108, 137–8, 339ff.; Buch, pp. 148–9, 207ff., 320; Sitaramayya, pp. 138ff.; B. Prasad, pp. 12, 21–2, 34, 52–3, 96; R. C. Majumdar, pp. 352–3; A. Tripathi, pp. 107ff. See, for example, B. Prasad, p. 96: ‘The movement was directed against the system, the exploiting imperialism of the British, which had brought poverty to Indian people and enervated them.’ I have already pointed out that Tara Chand fully accepts the primary role of imperialism and economic exploitation in the causation of the national movement. See n. 14 above.
aroused among the Indian people. Many of them quote Gokhale’s or Gandhi’s well-known remarks in this respect. They also point to the increasingly repressive character of the colonial regime and the growth of Indian nationalism as a reaction. They do not view the imperialist regime as creating new opportunities and arenas for nationalist activity. Instead they take note of its unresponsiveness to nationalist opinion, its increasing recourse to repression, the suppression of civil liberties, and the consequent Indian response of heightened nationalist activity. Similarly they see the constitutional reforms as the rulers’ response to nationalist pressure and as an effort to conciliate the more moderate sections of the nationalist movement. On the other hand nationalist participation in the constitutional processes is seen not as an effort to grab positions of patronage and the loaves and fishes of office, but as part of the tactic of using legislatures to strengthen and spread the national movement and secure much needed relief to people in a few fields.

Above all—and this demarcates them from imperialist historians—nationalist historians, even the most Whiggish, accept that colonialism was an enemy to be overthrown and that nationalism and the anti-imperialist movement were a basic, determining force in the contemporary social development of India. This also means that

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36Buch, p. 203; B. Prasad, p. 53; Nanda, Gokhale, p. 95; T. Chand, II, pp. 572–3.
37B. Prasad, p. 115.
41This is true even of such a strong critic of the National Congress and Gandhi as R. C. Majumdar. See, for example, II, pp. 33–4, 51.
they treat the national movement as a historically legitimate movement. Thus, following in the footsteps of the national movement, they highlight the main contemporary social problem—the national struggle of the Indian people against imperialism—though they do so at an idealistic, Whig plane. They recognize at least the ideological reflection of material reality, which is certainly more scientific than ignoring reality at all levels—as is true of recent versions of the imperialist school of historians who claim to use more modern and sophisticated techniques and approaches of enquiry and analysis.

With all their weaknesses, nationalist historians do enable the reader to see the nationalist movement as popular, anti-imperialist and aimed at national emancipation. This is quite distinct from explanations of narrow self-interest or drive-for-power or division-of-spoils-based politics. They are able to see the difference between a popular movement involving the basic social issues of the times and directed at overturning the colonial state and its economic structure on the one hand, and the mere management of politics by a structured and stable class society and polity on the other. They recognize the difference between a movement that shook an empire and the management characteristic of eighteenth-century British politics, or the Tammany Hall-style politics of New York or Chicago or Haryana.

The role of ideas and thought in a popular movement, i.e., a political trend that moves the people and is aimed at changing the world, is naturally quite important. Men and women make history not only because of material forces and interests but also through and because of ideas, although their belief in these ideas may be due to material interests. To turn a well-known phrase around,
material forces have to become ideas and ideologies in order to be effective enough to move people, to politicize and mobilize them—and to transform society. Ideas are then to be seen as the embodiment of material historical forces and not as ‘a front for material interests’. An emphasis on ideas and ideology does bring out the active role of men and women in the making of their own history, even though it tends to miss the point that they do so within the broad parameters of given economic, social and political conditions. For this reason, and because even in their own right ‘ideas have consequences’ and do ‘catalyse social change’, they have to be taken seriously; the study of the intellectual origins and components of a movement is a legitimate study, provided it is not seen merely or primarily as a ‘movement of ideas’. Moreover, a movement to change the world which is initiated by the intelligentsia and whose mass-politics phase is preceded by hard theoretical analysis of economy and society is bound to acquire an intensely ideological character. Even otherwise, nationalist or anti-imperialist politics tend to be highly ideological. These ideas have to be taken seriously because the intelligentsia, acting as nationalist leaders, perceived politics in ideological terms and often meant what they said. A near parallel would be the revolutionary Social Democratic politics and movement in Tsarist Russia which were founded by the radical intelligentsia and preceded by a thorough-going analysis of Russian economy and society. The opposite case is exemplified by the labour movement in Britain.

The highly ideological character of the national movement often led many of its leaders and participants, as also the undiscerning historian, to see their activity not as the embodiment of material interests but as an expression of ideological currents. And the wide and growing prevalence of nationalist ideology or any of its particular versions—extremist or Gandhian—has been seen as the result of its inherent force and not of its better representation of the colonial reality. But the opposite error of disregarding ideas and ideologies, of seeing them as a cover or smoke-screen or front for crass

45See George H. Nash, p. 303.
46By Neil Hardinge. See, in particular, vol. I, introduction, chapters 2, 4 and 11, and vol. II, introduction. An example similar to that of India’s, of the refusal to take the ideology of a moment seriously, is provided by western scholars’ treatment of Lenin’s politics. Ibid.
individual or sectional interests, of taking the mind out of history, is perhaps worse. This neglect of ideology has another negative aspect. It leads the historian to ignore the traditions and values of democracy, civil liberty, secularism, humanism and reason which were embedded in the national movement from its inception and which, as a valuable legacy to succeeding generations, are fully taken note of by nationalist historians.

A further reason for the nationalist historian’s predilection for the Whig or idealistic approach was that contemporary national leaders undertook the task of creating and building a united national-popular movement among a people deeply divided by language, religion, caste and class. Only an overarching ideological umbrella which emphasized common national interests and ideology vis-à-vis colonialism could enable them to do this. This was particularly important because an unalloyed appeal to the material interests of people would inevitably have brought out the deep social cleavages in a society which for centuries was riven with social and class contradictions in both its urban and rural sectors. An emphasis on nationalist ideology helped paper over the internal contradictions within the anti-imperialist camp—after all, the love or ‘inherent’ urge for freedom affected the rich and poor alike. The nationalist leadership also emphasized the role of ideology because inspiring ideologies are inevitably needed to create a psychological atmosphere of sacrifice once a movement enters its militant phase and needs immense material sacrifices from its followers and cadre. Men and women give their lives for religion, homeland, community, nation, democracy or socialism, but not for higher wages, lower taxes, more and better jobs, or greater business opportunities. This contemporary bias for an ideological appeal was later imbibed by the nationalist historian who also shared the aversion for a class analysis of society and politics.

Many nationalist writers before 1947 took recourse to the Whig approach when discussing the causation of the movement for another reason: while the actual national movement attacked colonialism frontally, and for that reason fully brought out its central contradiction with the Indian people as well as its exploitative character, nearly all pre-1947 nationalist writers on the national movement either belonged to the conservative wing of the movement (e.g. A. C. Mazumdar, R. G. Pradhan, S. N. Banerjea (at the time of writing his autobiography)) or were, because
of their employment, vicarious nationalists. They therefore accepted nationalism in its spiritual love of freedom form and not in its anti-imperialist form. This enabled them to join or support the national movement without making a basic critique of colonialism. This also made their pro-nationalist approach acceptable or at least respectable to the colonial authorities who, when they had to, swallowed nationalism when it became a force to reckon with in this form. While conservative imperialists used the Whig approach to denigrate the national movement as based on an exotic ideology which was a foreign implantation or a hot-house plant, liberal imperialists used it to accommodate the liberals, i.e. the right wing of the movement. Both branches of the colonial school of administrators and historians used the Whig approach to explain a phenomenon whose existence they could no longer deny but whose material roots in their own rule they could not accept. An added advantage was that this approach suggested that the reach of the movement was limited only to those who could grasp the idea of nationalism, i.e. to the narrow stratum of educated Indians. This also undermined the legitimacy of the national movement as one which represented the mass of people. It was legitimate only to the extent of the social role of this stratum, which could be small (conservatives) or large (liberals), but not as an expression of the interests of the Indian people as a whole. After 1947, or even a little earlier when the success of the national movement had become certain, the Whig interpretation enabled the liberal imperialist historian and statesman to hail the movement as 'our contribution' and the proud result of 'our ideas' having fructified. The much maligned Macaulay once again emerged as a semi-hero for having initiated the march of 'our ideas'.

Nationalist historians on the other hand have had little difficulty in making a sharp economic and political critique of colonial rule. The few historians who still rely entirely on the earlier Whig approach differ little from the imperialist version of the Whig approach. They may at best be described as shame-faced nationalists who like to keep their bridges with the colonial school of historians open.

In recent years, communal writers at the journalistic and political plane have been using the 'spiritual' approach to denigrate the

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47 For the concept of vicarious nationalism, see my essay in Romila Thapar.
liberal-democratic and Marxist approaches, claiming that their own approach is inspired by Indian history and culture and is therefore indigenous as compared with the 'foreign-inspired' rational, secular and economic nationalism of the former.

The nationalist historical approach has also been deeply influenced by the contemporary Whig approach towards the study of British history and politics. The basic (Whig) notion—that British democracy evolved as a result of the march of the idea of liberty—was adapted to explain the rise and growth of Indian nationalism as the march of the same idea of liberty in the colonial context. The only issue of debate has been whether the idea was indigenously born or was the result of the study of British history and literature. Added to this historiographic influence has been a certain proclivity inherent in the historian’s craft towards exaggerating the role of ideas. Historical actors as well as historians comprehend social reality through ideas and concepts. Moreover, the interests and motives of people are refracted through ideas: when they analyse, theorize, organize, agitate and create propaganda, they do it through the oral and written word and the arrangement of ideas. They easily begin to believe that it is not reality which has given birth to ideas, but the other way around. Once a social and political tendency acquires a well-formed ideology or is articulated through powerful ideas which grip a people, its material base tends to be forgotten or ignored by both contemporaries and latter-day scholars unless they make a conscious effort at a comprehensive social analysis and succeed in penetrating the veil of ideas and ideologies. It is surprising that while so many among the leaders of the actual movement did this successfully, few of the historians have been able to do so as well. Modern education and thought did play an important role in the rise as well as the determination of the ideological and political character of the national movement, though not as a causative factor. They enabled the nationalist intelligentsia to give the movement a modern secular, rational, democratic, humanistic and civil libertarian direction, though within a bourgeois economic developmental perspective. The nationalist intelligentsia used modern knowledge to analyse colonialism and understand the central contradiction of colonial India. Moreover, the existence of a large

*"We must distinguish here between the roles of an educational system and modern ideas, between the ability to read, write and think, and the tools of analysis and ideological elements which were often acquired outside the educational system."
educated stratum and the character of modern economic and political thought imbibed by it played an important role in determining the direction of the national movement, the character of its leadership, its programme, and its strategy and methods of struggle. The homogeneity of education and modern thought create a relatively homogeneous intelligentsia and political leadership with a common intellectual and political outlook on a nation-wide basis. Thus, from the early Moderates to the later left-wing groups, leaders felt at home with each other intellectually, socially and even culturally.

India, a Nation-in-the-Making

Colonial India has to be studied as a nation-in-the-making, both as an objective process and as the subjective cognition of this process. Furthermore, the national movement was the process through which the Indian people were formed into a nation and a people. Apart from the development of a common economy, etc., as brought out brilliantly by A. R. Desai in his pioneering work, The Social Background of Indian Nationalism, it was the existence of a common oppression by a common enemy and the struggle against it which provided important bonds uniting the Indian people. Perhaps no nation or people could have been formed without such a struggle, though the struggle itself was inherent in the nature of colonial domination. Looked at from this point of view, the nation was not a datum prior to the national movement. A nation is a process of becoming and a national movement is the process through which the people or population of a colony are formed into a nation or a people, and through which they acquire a vision of their society as a nation and of themselves being a people or a nation. Without the anti-imperialist struggle the people of a colony are just inhabitants of a ‘geographical expression’ or a region on the map. Nation, contradiction with colonialism and nationalism are not given directly to a people’s consciousness; they are not perceived empirically or directly through their senses by the people. Under colonial conditions these acquired the status of anti-imperialism and a nation-in-the-making as a result of the political and ideological practice of the national movement.\textsuperscript{50} Thus the strength and weak-

\textsuperscript{50}Cf. A. Przeworski, pp. 27–32.
nesses of the process of a nation-in-the-making in India are in part a reflection of the strength and weaknesses of the national movement. The anti-imperialist struggle was both a product of this process and an active element within it. National consciousness motivated nationalist struggle and this struggle spurred on consciousness. For this reason, as also because of the central contradiction discussed above, the ideology of nationalism was not just an instrument of mass mobilization but represented something real in the life of the people. Only because of this did it succeed in arousing, organizing and mobilizing them; and of course this ideology was itself formed in the course of the political struggle.

The founding fathers of the Indian national movement readily accepted that India was not yet a formed nation but one that had only begun the process of becoming. In fact they saw their own role as that of initiating and promoting this process of unification; they also saw the anti-imperialist struggle as a part of this process. When their contemporary imperialist writers justified British rule by asserting that India was not a nation but a geographical expression and a conglomeration of races, religions, castes and regions, they readily agreed. But unlike the former, who maintained that it was not possible for India to become a nation, they declared that this precisely was happening—partially as a result of the colonial impact—and that their own work would hasten the process. This in fact was claimed as a major achievement of the early political associations and the National Congress. Thus, for example, Anand Mohan Bose observed in the Report of the Indian Association in 1883: ‘It has now been demonstrated ... that the people of the different Indian provinces have learnt to feel for one another; and that a common bond of unity and fellow-feeling is rapidly being established among them.’ In his Presidential Address to the first session of the Congress in 1885, W. C. Bonnerjee laid down the following as one of the four basic objectives of the Congress: ‘The eradication, by direct friendly personal intercourse, of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices amongst all lovers of our country, and the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in their beloved Lord

\[\text{S. Gopal (1978), pp. 4–5; T. Chand, II, p. 556; III, pp. v, 12, 29.}\]

\[\text{See, for example, statements quoted in Buch, pp. 258–60.}\]

\[\text{Quoted in S. N. Banerjea, pp. 80–1.}\]
Ripon's ever memorable reign. The *Sudharak*, edited by Agarkar and Gokhale, wrote in its issue of 28 December 1891: 'Congress is established to make India truly a nation.' In his Presidential Address to the Congress in 1891, P. Ananda Charlu described the Congress as a 'mighty nationaliser' and declared this to be its 'glorious' role. The spirit of the entire process of a nation-in-the-making was finely expressed by G. K. Gokhale in the preamble to the Constitution of the Servants of India Society founded by him in 1905. A new 'stage has been reached in the work of nation-building in India... The growth during the last fifty years of a feeling of common nationality, based upon common traditions and ties, common hopes and aspirations, and even common disabilities, has been most striking.

Nationalist historians have also taken full note of the process of India becoming a nation and of the early nationalist leadership's awareness of this process. For example, M. A. Buch wrote in 1938 that the early Congress leaders 'dreamt of an Indian nationality more as an ideal in the process of realisation than as a fact already accomplished.' And: 'The basis of their whole world was the belief that there had arisen or there was in process of formation a new entity called the Indian nation.' Earlier, in 1915, A. C. Mazumdar accepted that until recent times Indians had no 'idea of a united nationality' and that its people formed 'a vast heterogeneous population' consisting of many 'races' and peoples whose 'hereditary tradition was one of mutual distrust.' It was the chief mission or ideal of the Congress to create a homogeneous nation out of this heterogeneous mass. Furthermore, the Congress was increasingly fulfilling this mission and a nation was in the process of being 'made.' In 1925 Surendranath Banerjea titled his autobiography *A Nation in Making*, and the spirit of the title pervaded the entire work. He pointed out that one of the three major objects of the Indian Association, founded in 1876, was 'the unification of the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interests and aspirations.' Early nationalists were determined to unite the various Indian provinces 'through a sense of a common grievance

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54 *Congress Presidential Addresses*, p. 3.
56 Gokhale, p. 1230.
57 Buch, pp. 259 and 230, respectively. Also see p. 273.
58 A. C. Mazumdar, pp. 7, 39, 97, 147, 153–5, 159, 163–5.
and the inspiration of a common resolve.\textsuperscript{59}

Tara Chand is so keen to bring out the historical character of the creation of the Indian nation and nationalism that he devotes the opening chapter of his four-volume work, \textit{Freedom Movement in India}, to showing that ‘the emergence of national societies in Europe constitutes the most recent stage of social development’ dating back only to the eighteenth century. While agreeing that ‘the transformation of India and the growth of national consciousness were a consequence of the impact of the West’, he reiterates that ‘in the West itself nationalism was a recent phenomenon.’\textsuperscript{60} ‘The foundations for the unity of the Indian peoples’ were laid by ‘the combined economic and political change’ and ‘the idea of a people distinct from other peoples and of a territorial community comprehending all groups and communities thus emerged.’\textsuperscript{61}

Even R. C. Majumdar, whose nationalism is permeated with chauvinism and communalism, says that ‘there was no conception of Indian nationalism at the commencement of British rule.’ Even in Bengal, where nationalism grew earlier than in other parts of India, ‘the horizon of the Bengalis, like the peoples of other Provinces of India, was limited by the frontier of their own country, and they felt no concern for the rest of India.’ This was because of historical traditions, backward communications and the multiplicity of languages. Thus, he concludes, ‘the conception of India as a common motherland was still in the realm of fancy. There was no India as it is understood today. There were Bengalis, Hindustanis, Marathas, Sikhs, etc. but no Indian, at the beginning of the nineteenth century.’\textsuperscript{62} He also comes to the conclusion that it was the political work of the Congress which ‘gave a reality to the ideal of Indian unity.’\textsuperscript{63}

More recently B. R. Nanda, the biographer of Gokhale, has referred to ‘the evolution of an Indian nationality’ under the impact of the colonial economy and administration.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{59}Banerjea, pp. 42, 44. Also pp. 51, 62, 85, 87–8.
\textsuperscript{60}Tara Chand, vol. 1, p. 8. Also see p. 41.
\textsuperscript{61}Ibid., vol. II, p. 171. Also see ibid., pp. vi, 513, 558–9, 582, 607; iii, pp. v, 42; iv, p. v.
\textsuperscript{63}R. C. Majumdar, p. 417.
\textsuperscript{64}Nanda, pp. 480–1. Amales Tripathi makes the same point through quotations from Vivekananda and Tilak; pp. 30, 50.
Another set of nationalist writers and historians, brought up in the days of a well-formed nationalist movement and in some cases participants in it, were to take for granted the process of the making of the Indian nation and, reacting to imperialist jibes, to declare that India was always a nation. They were to claim that ‘India had had for centuries a unity of spirit and continuity of culture and the men who were giving renewed articulation to this were but revivifying a dormant cohesion and not struggling to create something novel’, and that ‘changing circumstances were enabling fresh expression of a perennial feeling.’

Lajpat Rai was one of the first to make such an assertion. Being one of the most well-read nationalist leaders, he was fully aware of the historical dimensions of the problem. He had said in 1908:

India was hitherto said to be only a geographical expression. It has now begun to aspire under the guidance of an all-wise Providence to a unified political existence and to a place in the comity of nations... It is true that communities are divided from communities, sects from sects and provinces from provinces by differences of religion, language and customs. The wave of Western civilisation, however, with its unifying influences is levelling down these differences and creating a community of interests and feeling which is the precursor of a new dawn in our life.

However, in 1916, in his Young India, after arguing that even European states were formed as modern nation states only in recent centuries, he maintained that ‘fundamentally India has been a nation for the last 2,000 years, in spite of the fact that at times it has been divided into several kingdoms and principalities, sometimes under a common empire and at others independent of each other.’ The more recent awakening in India was based as much on the Western impact as on ‘the Indians’ love of country, of religion and nation, which had received a temporary check by the crushing defeat of the mutineers in 1857...’

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64S. Gopal (1978), p. 5.
65*Speeches and Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 144-5.
66*Young India*, p. 38. Earlier in this work he had made it clear that his ‘sole object in referring to the past history of India’ and in asserting that India was and had always been ‘a political unity’ was to counter the contemporary imperialist denigration of Indian nationalism as illegitimate and without a foundation in reality. Ibid., pp. 32-5.
67Ibid., p. 108.
R. G. Pradhan also adopted a similar position. While the birth of 'a sense of common nationality and of national unity that embraced the whole subcontinent of India' was 'a phenomenon so unique in the long and chequered history of India', the people were not 'utterly innocent of the sentiment of nationality and of unity before the advent of the British'. They had evolved 'from remote ages' the sense of territorial unity, of 'their possessing a common fatherland'. Twice, once under Asoka and again under Samudragupta, they had enjoyed political unity. Above all, 'cultural unity, which gave them a common intellectual life, and bound them together with common social, moral and religious ideals, had been their great distinguishing mark.' Only, while 'the sentiment of nationality and of unity had always been more or less present', it received 'such general expression and attained such breadth and intensity' under British rule and a result of 'the new forces that came in its train'.\footnote{Pradhan, pp. 2–3.}

Similarly, in his \textit{Indian Struggle}, Subhas Chandra Bose asserted that despite seemingly 'endless diversity', India possessed 'a fundamental unity'. The positive, unifying factors were its character of being a geographically 'self-contained unit' and the development of 'one common culture and tradition'. In the ancient period the latter were the result of Hindu religion, 'the most important cementing factor', while after the coming of Muslims 'a new synthesis was gradually worked out'.\footnote{Bose, pp. 10–11. Bose added:}

> Though they [the Muslims] did not accept the religion of the Hindus, they made India their home and shared in the common social life—their joys and their sorrows. Through mutual co-operation, a new art and a new culture were evolved which was different from the old but which nevertheless was distinctly Indian . . . . with British rule, however, there came a new religion, a new culture and a new civilization which did not want to blend with the old but desired to dominate the country completely . . . . The result of this was that the Indian people began to feel for the first time in their history that they were being dominated culturally, politically and economically by a people who were quite alien to them and with whom they had nothing whatsoever in common.

\footnote{Ibid., pp. 11–12.}
'craving for freedom', or 'the longing for freedom'.

All the processes leading to the formation of the Indian nation or people were prolonged, slow, partial and differential. They were differential in all aspects—in respect of economy, culture, and political consciousness and integration. This was also the case with the process of the cognition by the people of these processes and of the central contradiction. The partial and differential character of these processes created detours, divisions and deviations which can also be best studied in the context of the process of the nation-in-the-making rather than as aspects of the denial of the process, or as separate nationalisms or sub-nationalisms. At the same time the process was capable of being interrupted precisely because of its slow, partial and differential character.

Nationalist historians have, unlike the founding fathers of the national movement, tended to ignore the complexity of this historical process. Nor have they made a thorough analysis of what impeded this process, except for blaming British rulers and communal and casteist leaders. This may be briefly illustrated by an analysis of their treatment of the rise and growth of communalism in modern India. The failure to provide a rounded analysis of its socio-economic roots, the reasons for its growth and its complex relationship with nationalism and nationalist ideology have been one of the major weaknesses of nationalist historical writing. Nor has this school been able to analyse the different elements of communal ideology as this has concretely evolved in the Indian context. The result has been that many nationalist historians have themselves fallen prey to some of the elements of communal ideology. For example, most of them accept the basic communal digits or the heart of the communal approach when they accept that Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs constituted structured communities because of their religions, that Hindu or Muslim communalists worked for Hindu or Muslim interests—which therefore existed on a communal basis—and that communalists were representatives of their particular 'communities'. These historians then set out to criticize communalists for being narrow-minded because they excluded the interests of the followers of other religions; but communal leaders are freely accepted as Muslim leaders, Hindu leaders, and so on. In particular, the poli-

31B. Prasad, chapter 1.
32Tara Chand is, to some extent, an exception in this respect. See vol. III, pp. 43–4, 130–1.
tics of the Muslim communalists are freely described as Muslim politics and expressions of the Muslim mind, Muslim demands, Muslim interests, etc.\textsuperscript{73} Most nationalist historians clearly bring out the role of the colonial government and policies in promoting and exploiting communalism.\textsuperscript{74} There is, however, seldom any critical evaluation of nationalist approaches to the communal problem\textsuperscript{75} except, as in the case of R. C. Majumdar, from the communal point of view. Majumdar in fact adopts a totally communal approach towards the problem and talks of Hindu nationalism and Muslim nationalism. He should perhaps be seen more as a communal than a nationalist historian, at least in this respect.\textsuperscript{76}

\textit{Whom Did the Movement Represent}

Both the impact of colonialism on different social classes, strata and groups and their disillusionment with colonialism occurred in a differential and uneven manner. This does not mean that there were in India separate class national movements or nationalisms—for example, bourgeois nationalism, peasant nationalism, working-class nationalism, middle-class or petty-bourgeois nationalism, or feudal nationalism. Nor does it mean that the national movement and nationalism were the prerogative of only one class or section—the

\textsuperscript{73}S. C. Bose, pp. 48–9, 169, 374, 403, 405; \textit{Report of the Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee}, section B, chapter 2; G. N. Singh, pp. 184, 197–8; Andrews and Mukerji, pp. 170–5, 248; Nanda, \textit{Gandhi}, chapters 29, 42; Gokhale, chapter 28. R. G. Pradhan, Bisheshwar Prasad and Tara Chand are exceptions in this respect, though Tara Chand sometimes falls prey to this tendency. See, for example, vol. III, pp. 132–3 and chapter 5.


\textsuperscript{75}The two exceptions are the \textit{Report of the Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee}, which criticized the Hindu tinge in the national movement (pp. 193ff.), and Tara Chand, who does so and also develops a wider critique of the nationalist approaches (II, pp. 369–70, 429; III, pp. 132, 146–7, 164, 207, 388; IV, pp. 109–10, 574).

middle class or the bourgeoisie or Hindus. Whatever the extent of the actual disillusionment or participation in the actual movement by different social classes or strata or groups at any particular stage, the movement represented the interests of the Indian people as a whole vis-à-vis colonialism. Thus, to recapitulate, the national movement has to be studied as representing the valid or legitimate consciousness of the objective reality, i.e. of the developing identity in real life of the common interests of the Indian people for modern social, economic, political and cultural development, and in particular against the common enemy, foreign imperialism, and of the need to unite against it in a common struggle.

Nationalist historians rightly see the national movement as a movement of Indian people in both senses of the term. It represented the contradiction of the entire Indian people with colonialism, that is, the entire Indian people—all classes and strata constituting it—suffered from colonialism and needed to overthrow it; and it was waged by the Indian people as a whole and not by a particular class, class fraction, stratum or group. At the same time, while the national movement represented the interests of the people as a whole vis-à-vis colonialism, it did so from a class point of view, i.e. as a movement of the people it had simultaneously a class character.

A major weakness of nationalist historians surfaces at this stage. Just as the actual national movement tended to ignore or underplay internal contradictions, class differentiation and class consciousness with a view to promoting national unity in the anti-imperialist struggle, so have nationalist historians tended to ignore the differential impact of colonialism on different social classes and to neglect the study of class differentiation, class consciousness and class behaviour and their impact on the ideology and class character or class content of the national movement. They have seen all Indians victims of colonialism, as also its opponents in the same manner and to the same extent, at least in the long run. They have assumed that the national movement had a ‘pure’ national character which had little to do with, or which stood above, class interests and class outlooks. While this assumption is most often made implicitly, sometimes it also finds overt expression, especially when discussing the Gandhian period. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, for example, wrote:

The Congress then is a National organization that knows no difference between British India and Indian India, between one Province and another, between the classes and the masses, bet-
ween towns and villages, between the rich and the poor, between agricultural and industrial interests, between castes and communities, or religions.\footnote{Sitaramayya, p. 30. He was here echoing Gandhi’s speech at the Round Table Conference in 1931: The Congress ‘is what it means,—National. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interest. It claims to represent all Indian interests and all classes.’ Quoted in ibid., p. 30. A. C. Mazumdar asserted in 1915 that the Congress had ‘never passed a single resolution advocating the interests of any particular community, or of the classes against those of the masses.’ (p. 152). Also see Nanda, \textit{Gokhale}, p. 485; B. Prasad, pp. 114–16.}

This weakness is, however, more complex than it appears. For what is involved here is also the historiographic question of how to analyse the class character of a movement. Nationalist historians ignored the class content of the movement but not the questions of its changing social base and the class or social origins and life-style of the leaders of the movement. In other words, while open to a Marxist critique they are not open to a simplistic critique based on old or new elite theories relying on an analysis of the social origins of the leaders, or the extent of popular participation in the movement.

This comes out clearly in their treatment of the first or Moderate phase of the national movement. They recognize, as the Moderate leaders had done, the narrowness of the social reach of Moderate politics. They accept that nationalist ideas and movements had encompassed not the masses but only a tiny minority, i.e. the narrow social stratum of the educated, and even more that Moderate politics were geared to the politicization and mobilization of the newly-educated middle classes or the educated elite. They also accept that nationalist leaders were mostly middle-class men—lawyers, doctors and merchants. In his \textit{Young India}, Lajpat Rai, one of the first nationalist historians of the movement, frankly argued:

The desire for political independence, the sense of shame and humiliation born of being a subject race, of being a political \textit{pariah}, must from the nature of things be confined largely to the educated middle class. Even the masses could not be expected to take a deep interest in the movement for political independence. . . . They are easily confused on fundamental issues. This is true even in Europe and America. . . . The masses are easily led astray by governments or by classes in league with governments. In every country it is the educated middle class that leads
the movement for political independence or for political progress.

At the same time, said Lajpat Rai, 'the fate of the movement for liberty' depended on their character and 'the extent and amount of their influence over the masses.' Hence, his criticism was not that the nationalist movement was led by 'the English-educated Indians' but that the leaders made no attempts 'to reach the masses and carry on the propaganda among the people.' He sometimes put this critique quite strongly:

The movement was neither inspired by the people nor devised or planned by them. It was a movement not from within. . . . The movement lacked the essentials of a popular movement. The leaders were not in touch with the people. Perhaps they did not even want to come in touch with them. Their propaganda was confined to a few English-educated persons, was carried on in English and was meant for the ears of the authorities rather than for the people. The leaders always felt shy of the masses, made no efforts to reach them, and systematically discouraged the younger men from doing the same . . . While the people were expected to add to the spectacular side of the show by their presence in large numbers, by crowded meetings, by cheers and applause, they were never given a hand in the movement.

Lajpat Rai also criticized the life-style of the Moderate leaders: 'The leaders failed to inspire enthusiasm among the people, either because of their failure to make sacrifices, or on account of the triviality of their sacrifices. Their ordinary life, their income, their prosperity, and their luxuries were in no way affected by the movement.' Why did the Moderates not appeal to the masses? Lajpat Rai had three sets of tentative answers: failure of character, fear of suppression, and the objective fact that the country was not ready. They were 'too lazy to court' popular support or 'too self-centred to run the risk involved therein'; they thought that 'they were not sufficiently strong and that the movement stood the chance of being suppressed'; 'Or, to be charitable, they thought that the country was

78Lajpat Rai, Young India, p. 91.
80Ibid., p. 130. He added: 'There were only two exceptions to this, viz., Dadabhai Naoroji and Gokhale.'
81Ibid., p. 180. Also: 'They had certain political opinions, but not beliefs for which they were willing to suffer . . . . they were not prepared to bear persecutions, or suffer for their cause' (p. 124).
82Ibid., p. 128.
not prepared for an intense movement and considered it better to have something rather than nothing. They perhaps wanted to educate the country in political methods and bring about a political consolidation of all the national forces, before undertaking an intensified movement.\textsuperscript{83}

Surendranath Banerjea too, in his \textit{A Nation in Making}, repeatedly pointed out, often with pride, that the early nationalist associations and political activity were representatives of the educated middle class.\textsuperscript{84}

The theme of the middle-class base of and representation by the Moderates was to become the staple of nearly all later nationalist historians. Andrews and Mukerji were to write in 1938: ‘The strength of the All-India movement lay in the newly educated middle classes. . . . The national movement, thus begun by the Congress, represented both the social aspirations of the middle classes in India and also the supreme desire for freedom and racial justice.’ And again: ‘At this time the Congress leaders were chiefly concerned with obtaining political favours for their own educated classes and rebutting the insult and contempt which was levelled at them by Englishmen, who treated them as social inferiors.’\textsuperscript{85} R. G. Pradhan, M. A. Buch and P. Sitaramayya followed suit.\textsuperscript{86}

Bisheshwar Prasad also enthusiastically accepts this interpretation, including its reincarnated version of the elite theory. Discussing the politics of ‘Divine Dispensation’, he argues that while the old middle class was reacting violently to colonial rule a ‘new class’, a ‘new elite, the rising urban middle class’, which was impressed by the prospects of ‘political union of the country’, law and order, equality before the law, the new non-arbitrary judicial system, the industrial economy and the democratic structure of British polity was emerging in the Presidency towns. This class ‘came gradually to the forefront and assumed leadership of the Indian community, in its thinking and actions.’ However its influence was for a long time ‘limited to the metropolitan towns and the western-educated

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., pp. 124–5.

\textsuperscript{84}Banerjea, pp. 41–2, 60–2, 73, 82, 85–6, 98, 106, 145 and so on. Also see A. C. Mazumdar, pp. 8, 30, 41.

\textsuperscript{85}Andrews and Mukerji, pp. 158 and 160. They added, quite wrongly, that ‘there was extraordinarily little thought of the exploitation which was going on all the while and the ever-increasing misery and poverty of the common people.’ Ibid., p. 160. Also see pp. 97, 109–11, 114, 131, 145, 150–1, 157–61, 190.

\textsuperscript{86}Pradhan, chapter 2, pp. 74, 93; Buch, pp. 165, 167; Sitaramayya, p. 97.
community, professional class and the newly emerging affluent middle class'. On the other hand the countryside 'remained unaffected by the new ideologies'. It was 'the ideas and methods adopted by the new class' that 'governed the character of national or freedom struggle.'\(^8^7\) Also, therefore, the national movement in this phase promoted political consciousness among the middle classes. Moreover, the failure of the Revolt of 1857 'left the field clear for leadership to be assumed by the Western-educated community which composed the new middle class'. This new class also opposed during the 1870s the political tendency represented by the landlord-dominated political associations because it sought an 'outlet for its feelings'. In particular, its sentiments had been hurt by its exclusion from the higher and respectable administrative posts. Later, the Congress was founded in 1885 to put before the Government 'the sentiments and views of the educated middle class'. The resolutions passed at its first session 'vividly demonstrate its preoccupation with matters affecting the interests of the new middle class'. In the later years 'it was largely the professional classes, lawyers and others, belonging to the educated middle class, which exhibited interest in the infant political body.'\(^8^8\) In general, concludes Bisheshwar Prasad, 'political consciousness was infinitesimal and confined to a small class of Western-educated Indians. They had no roots among the large mass of the population, and little was done by the Congress leadership to educate the people and derive strength from their support.'\(^8^9\) Amales Tripathi refers to the Moderates as a 'respectable bourgeoisie' who were 'as a class economic beneficiaries' of the Raj.\(^9^0\)

A recent historian of the Moderate era, B. R. Nanda, also points to the narrow social base of the Moderates and their social origin in the new 'educated class',\(^9^1\) as also to the elite character of the Moderate leadership; only he uses the concept of the elite more

\(^{87}\) B. Prasad, pp. 24–6. Also see p. 42.

\(^{88}\) Ibid., pp. 32–41.

\(^{89}\) Ibid., p. 47. Echoing Lajpat Rai he added: 'The educated middle class was enamoured of office and had not yet cultivated the virtues of sacrifice; and by its training and new cultural traditions which it had adopted, was largely isolated from the vast mass of the people' (p. 48). Also see pp. 70–1.

\(^{90}\) Tripathi, pp. x and 46 respectively. Also see p. 87.

\(^{91}\) Gokhale, pp. 55, 484, 492. In an earlier work, Nanda had suggested that the middle classes formed the social base as well as constituted the leadership of the movement until its Gandhian phase. Gandhi, pp. 141, 143–4, 149, 151.
correctly in terms of its sociological usage, i.e. he uses it not as a blanket term but in the specific sense of 'the educated elite'.\footnote{Gokhale, pp. 14, 43. Also see pp. 45, 55, 158, 326.} Accepting the evaluative standard of social origin and life-style, he also tries to argue that at least G. K. Gokhale, the subject of his biography, could not be said to be opposed to the masses and favourable to the upper classes. 'That he should have always felt an affinity with the unprivileged millions among his countrymen is not surprising; he had himself sprung from them. In his youth, he had known the pinch of poverty, and all his adult life he had lived simply, almost austerely... The sadness of an Indian village... was never very far from him.'\footnote{Ibid., p. 478. Andrews and Mookerji wrote similarly about Dadabhai Naoroji: he was 'a prophet who felt the wrongs and the sorrows of the poor as his own' (p. 212).} Tara Chand also accepts that in the Moderate phase the national movement affected the middle class strata of society and represented their urges and demands.\footnote{Tara Chand, vol. II, pp. vi, 109, 211, 461, 467, 525, 527; III, pp. 42, 127, 130. Following B. B. Misra quite closely, Tara Chand defines the middle class as consisting of zamindars, landlords, moneylenders, merchants, bankers, industrialists, professionals, government servants, and the educated. Zamindars, landholders, well-to-do peasants, moneylenders, and merchants are also described as 'rural capitalists' or 'agrarian middle class': II, chapter 3; III, p. 70. He also states at least in one place that 'the bourgeois class... led the struggle for freedom': III, p. 69.}

Nationalist historians accept the narrow or limited social character of the early nationalist leaders in terms of their middle-class social base and their middle-class life-style and social origins, but not in terms of the political representation of the people or by the politico-economic content of the movement they led. The latter two are seen in terms of the interests of the Indian people \textit{vis-à-vis} colonialism. The middle-class leaders are seen as patriotic intellectuals and as spokesmen of the Indian people. The phrase 'educated Indians' or 'educated middle class' suggests a social stratum; but in colonial conditions and because of education this stratum was seen as having the particular role of formulating the nationalist ideology, taking it to the people, creating an organizational structure for its spread, creating a movement for its realization, constituting a leadership for the movement, and in general representing the interests of the Indian people before and against the colonial administration. Educated Indians as intellectuals had acquired the capacity
to analyse colonialism and its consequences, and their life-conditions compelled them to do so. It was, therefore, argued the nationalist historians, their peculiar task to acquire this understanding and then spread it among the mass of illiterate and ignorant people who could not go beyond the perceived, empirical reality, but who were the chief victims of colonialism. Some nationalist historians use the words ‘intelligentsia’ or ‘intellectuals’ explicitly to describe the early nationalist leaders; others mean the same by the phrase ‘educated Indians.’ For the later period Subhas Bose highlighted the role of students and youth in taking the movement forward, without seeing them as components of the middle class. As intellectuals, or as a stratum of the educated, the early leaders are not seen by most nationalist historians as an interest group fighting politically for their own demands, but as men of dedication and patriots who evolved a critique of colonialism and colonial policies and in general developed politics from a patriotic or national and democratic point of view. Similarly, the intellectual stratum is seen as comprising the spokesmen or leaders of the silent majority of the Indian people. In fact, these were two of the basic assumptions which, even when not explicitly articulated, permeate the entire approach of nationalist historians.

Nationalist writers also note that even when the national movement was limited by its narrow social base and failure to reach and incorporate persons following certain religions or belonging to

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95 This is the entire spirit of their writing; but see S. N. Banerjea, pp. 200–1; Buch, p. 149; Lajpat Rai, p. 91; Pradhan. p. 16; Sitaramayya, chapter 6; Nanda, Gokhale, p. 48; T. Chand, II, pp. vi, 109, 262, 348, 461, 567.

96 Buch, p. 255; Pradhan, pp. 16, 18, 45; Andrews and Mukerji, p. 131; B. Prasad, pp. 31, 37; Nanda, Gokhale, p. 138; T. Chand, II, pp. 262, 536, 567; III, p. 44.


99 Nanda, Gokhale, pp. 27, 42, 69, 148, 480–1, 484–5; B. Prasad, p. 42; Lajpat Rai, p. 91; Buch, pp. 149, 320; Pradhan, p. 16; T. Chand, II, pp. 545, 549, 552; III, p. 42.

100 S. N. Banerjea, p. 145; A. C. Mazumdar, pp. 29, 141, 144–6, 152; Pradhan, pp. 18, 21–2; G. N. Singh, p. 114; Andrews and Mukerji, pp. 143ff.; Buch, p. 255; Nanda, Gokhale, pp. 69, 208, 481–2; T. Chand, II, pp. 109, 461, 492, 522, 551–2; III, p. 44.

Lajpat Rai, p. 158; A. C. Mazumdar, pp. 206, 209, 213–4; S. N. Banerjea, pp. 190, 196–9, 232; Pradhan, pp. 70–1, 79–80; T. Chand, III, pp. 319–20, 326, 339; B. Prasad, pp. 64, 72–3, 76–9, 82–3; R. C. Majumdar, II, pp. 17, 19–20, 51, 366–7, 386. Interestingly Tilak, on the other hand, asserted as late as 1907 that the movement did not extend beyond the educated middle class. Tilak, pp. 69–73, 382.

The Indian Struggle 1920–1934, pp. 74, 103, 120. When discussing the weaknesses of the Non-Co-operation movement, he did not include limitations of class or social base among them. Pp. 104–5.


B. Prasad., p. 77.

Ibid., p. 83. Here he makes a very common though erroneous assumption.
The people thus brought in 'new motivations and impulses which influenced the character of freedom fight.'\textsuperscript{107} Under Gandhi's leadership, politics become based on the people.\textsuperscript{108} At the same time, politics were also now for the masses. 'Politics was ennobled by directing it to the service of the people; and masses became the architects of national destiny'. 'This was the purpose of non-cooperation or Satyagraha', declares Prasad.\textsuperscript{109} A little later he reiterates that in the Gandhian era the movement had little upper-class bias or class content: it was now a movement for the masses. Gandhi's political struggles and methods were 'designed for bringing real Swaraj for the peasant, the labourer and the common man, to make him economically and socially free, rather than restore political power to the upper classes.'\textsuperscript{110} Unlike many other authors, Prasad suggests that there was a non-Gandhian wing in the Congress which represented the educated middle class. To the latter 'Swaraj signified end of British rule and assumption of power by them.' In their conception of Swaraj, 'no fundamental change was involved in the structure of society, its economic organisation or ideological basis. The masses, peasantry and labour had no place in their scheme of power-sharing.'\textsuperscript{111} Gandhi, says Prasad, was totally different. 'His Swaraj was the 'poor man's swaraj, of the downtrodden and the destitute.'\textsuperscript{112} He also asserts that the Congress ministries of 1937–9 that taking up general national or anti-colonial economic demands does not amount to imparting an economic content to the movement. That is done only when class or sectional or 'corporate' demands of the peasants or workers are taken up. He and other nationalist historians also assume that the common people—the masses—take active part in politics only when their own economic or corporate interests are involved and not on the wider basis of politics or ideology. Surendranath Banerjea, for example, gave uninhibited expression to this view: 'The masses do not actively associate themselves with any public movement unless their own particular interests are vitally concerned.' The Swadeshi movement became popular among the masses, he adds, because it 'appealed to their personal interests. They had sense enough to perceive that the movement, if successful, would herald the dawn of a new era of material prosperity for them' (pp. 200–1). Tara Chand makes a similar assumption in III, pp. 126–7.

\textsuperscript{107} B. Prasad, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., pp. 93, 117; and, in fact, the entire fourth chapter.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p. 95. Also see pp. 114–15.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., pp. 116–17. Also see pp. 109–10, 133.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 128. Also see p. 139.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p. 128. Prasad quotes Gandhi: 'Mere withdrawal of the English is
worked for the 'people's welfare' but had to face 'the uncompromising opposition of vested interests.'\textsuperscript{113}

P. Sitaramayya had also claimed earlier that the Congress of the Gandhian era stood above classes, representing equally the interests of all classes and the rich and the poor alike. But above all it represented the poor.\textsuperscript{114} It was labouring 'for establishing village leadership.'\textsuperscript{115} Throughout his work, Sitaramayya emphasizes the need for basing the freedom struggle on the masses, especially the rural masses.\textsuperscript{116}

One of the reasons why nationalist historians are not able to correctly locate the social or class character of the national movement lies in their effort to do so on the basis of its social base and the social origins and life-style of its leadership. Consequently, they cannot see the bourgeois aspects of the movement in the Moderate phase, when the capitalist class constituted neither the main nor even a major social base of the movement, and when its leaders were not capitalists in social origin or life-style. Therefore they are only able to characterize it as a middle-class movement. Similarly, during the Gandhian phase the masses undoubtedly constituted the main social base of the movement; its leaders did not come from the capitalist class; their life-style often approximated that of the petty bourgeoisie, while most of the nationalist cadre lived in impecunious circumstances. Clearly, then, by this standard the social character of the movement was not only not bourgeois, it was no longer even middle class.

It is therefore clear that while the social origins of the leaders, their life-style and the character of the participants do powerfully affect both the ideology and the programme and policies of a move-

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., p. 130.

\textsuperscript{114}Sitaramayya, pp. 30, 1037–8. He too quoted Gandhi: 'Above all the Congress represents, in its essence, the dumb semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land in its 700,000 villages. . . . the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interest of these dumb millions. It is, therefore, essentially a peasant organization, and it is becoming so progressively' (p. 32).

\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., 1024. Also p. 1029.

\textsuperscript{116}See, for example, ibid., pp. 1028, 1037–8.
ment, they do not go far in helping to determine its social or class character. This can be better defined by the movement’s programme and policies. Unfortunately even these would not in themselves suffice. The national movement did, from the very beginning, take up the people’s demands vis-à-vis colonialism. Later, during the twentieth century, its programme and many of its policies increasingly reflected mass concerns and were directed towards them. That it also took up the demands put forward by the middle classes and the capitalists would only go to show that it was trying to build a united front of all anti-imperialist social classes—something which all anti-imperialist movements, however radical and non-bourgeois, have tried to do—particularly in the case of an indigenous capitalist class. Not demanding an end to capitalism or their profit-taking cannot therefore be a criterion for deciding whether the Indian national movement was bourgeois or not. In fact if one goes by the letter of the programme or policy, and because the Indian national movement as a whole did not take up anti-landlord demands until 1931, its social character would have to be described as feudal, which would be absurd. Hence, while programme and policies can give valuable clues regarding the social character of a movement and are very important in its determination, they are not enough, particularly in the case of an anti-imperialist movement.

Here the decisive criterion has to be the character of the hegemonic ideology. The question we have to answer is: which ideology exercised hegemony over the movement? We can illustrate this by examining the relationship of the Indian bourgeoisie with the national movement and thus throw light on its social character. Clearly, it was not a bourgeois movement in the sense of being a movement of the bourgeoisie, or being initiated and propelled forward by the class itself, or of the bourgeoisie playing a major or dominant role either in it or in its leadership, or of representing only or even mainly the bourgeoisie’s interests in its programme or policies. The social or class character of the national movement can also not be discovered in the forms of struggle or in the fact that it made strategic retreats or compromises. It was a bourgeois movement in the sense that its dominant ideology or social perspective or social vision of a free India was broadly confined within the bounds of a bourgeois social order and the parameters of bourgeois social development. In fact even the category of a bourgeois national movement is inadequate and misleading since it traditionally tends to suggest
the former meanings or at least leaves the door open to them. The actual movement can perhaps be best described as a popular, people's anti-imperialist movement under the hegemony of bourgeois ideology. This particular description has another merit. It points to the fact, almost entirely ignored by historians of the movement, that at every stage, particularly from the late 1920s to the mid 1940s, it was open to the alternative hegemony of socialist ideas and that, in fact, serious contention for hegemony occurred between the two ideologies.117

All social classes attempt to hegemonize societies and movements, and these attempts are extremely complex. They require a subtle and many-sided analysis. The Indian bourgeoisie too worked actively, partly by supporting the movement, to ensure that the bourgeois ideological hegemony which originated and held sway during the Moderate and Extremist periods remained undisturbed during the period of mass struggles. Historians have yet to make a beginning towards an analysis of this effort and the reasons for its success.

In this respect I would like to very briefly state an alternative view of the social character of the Indian national movement. Nationalist historians are quite right in holding that it was a movement of the people in both senses: first, all of them suffered from colonialism and all of them needed to overthrow it; and second, the movement was organized and waged by the people. The movement was not initiated or organized by the bourgeoisie taken in the twentieth-century sense of the class that owned and controlled the means of production. It was initiated by the intelligentsia which first perceived the nature of colonialism and the primary contradiction. These did not present themselves to experience or observation directly, and could not be grasped directly in their phenomenal forms. They had therefore to be grasped through historical, political, ideological, and intellectual analysis, that is, theoretically and through science. Under the leadership of the intelligentsia the movement was propelled forward by the people and not by the bourgeoisie or even by the big leaders. But the intelligentsia did not function in an ideological vacuum. It understood a social situa-

117See S. Gopal (1975), and articles by Aditya Mukherjee, Sashi Joshi, Lajpat Jagga, Bhagwan Joshi, K. Gopalankutty and Mridula Mukherjee in Bipan Chandra (1983). Also see articles by Aditya Mukherjee and Bhagwan Joshi in this volume.
tion and suggested solutions only from a distinct class point of view. There is no such thing as the intelligentsia’s ‘own’ non-class or above-class social perspective. In India the early nationalist intelligentsia leadership accepted the perspective of capitalist social development. Gandhi tried to counterpose to this bourgeois perspective the perspective of a peasant-artisan utopia. The attempt was bound to fail. During the late 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, left-wing nationalists tried to impart a socialist perspective to the Congress-led movement. Such an attempt could be made realistically, in part, because the intelligentsia still constituted the movement’s leadership and the petty bourgeoisie formed a decisive element of its social base—and the two are always open to alternative hegemonies. The left attempt, however, failed and until the end the national movement remained one which represented the interests of all Indians vis-à-vis colonialism, but from a bourgeois class point of view or a capitalist developmental perspective. In other words it remained under bourgeois ideological hegemony.

*Class Adjustment*

In real life the national movement faced the task of integrating the anti-imperialist struggle with class demands and class or social struggles. The historian of the movement too is faced with the task of taking an integral view of these in his research and analysis. The problem was not and is not that of counterposing one to the other but of relating one to the other, and of integrating and conceptualizing the two in an organic manner. I accept the classical Marxist notion that in the colonial situation the first, the anti-imperialist, struggle was primary and that the second, the social, struggle was secondary. The historical task before the Indian people was to make a national and not a social revolution because colonial rule was not indigenous capitalist or feudal rule but the rule of foreign capital. This means that in the face of imperialism class struggle was not to be taken to its height or to a level of total confrontation but was to be *adjusted* with all mutually hostile classes within colonial society making concessions to one another. The classical position in this respect, though initiated by Marx and Engels and Lenin,118 was fully developed by Mao Ze Dong during

118Engels, for example, advised the Irish workers in 1872 that ‘their first and
the anti-Japanese struggle of the Chinese people:

To subordinate the class struggle to the present national struggle to resist Japan—that is the fundamental principle of the united front. . . . In a nation which is struggling against a foreign foe, the class struggle assumes the form of national struggle, a form indicating the consistency of the two. On the one hand, the economic and political demands of the classes during the historical period of national struggle should be based on the condition of not disrupting the cooperation of these classes; on the other, all the demands of the class struggle should start from the requirements of the national struggle.\(^{119}\)

And again:

It is a settled principle that in the anti-Japanese War everything must be subordinated to the interests of resistance to Japan. Therefore the interests of the class struggle must not conflict with, but be subordinated to, the interests of the War of Resistance. But the classes and class struggle do exist. . . . We do not deny the class struggle, but adjust it. . . . In order to unite against Japan we should carry out a suitable policy that can adjust the class relations.\(^{120}\)

Mao also explained what he meant by class adjustment:

The workers should demand that the factory owners improve their material conditions, but at the same time they should work hard in order to facilitate resistance to Japan; the landlords should reduce rent and interest, but at the same time the peasants should pay rent and interest to the landlords and unite with them against foreign aggression.\(^{121}\)

The real task before the historian of the national movement is therefore that of studying what happened in respect of class adjustment, i.e. to study to what extent and in what manner the social class struggles were adjusted and class compromises arrived at by the national movement in its practice. This would also throw light

most pressing duty, as Irishmen, was to establish their own national independence.’ In 1882 he argued that Ireland and Poland, as colonized nations, ‘have not only the right but even the duty to be nationalistic before they become internationalistic. . . . They are most internationalistic when they are genuinely nationalistic.’ In 1888 he suggested that the emergence of ‘a purely socialistic movement’ would have to ‘await the successful outcome of the national struggle and agrarian revolution’ (pp. 323, 332, 343, respectively).

\(^{120}\)Ibid., p. 250. Emphasis added.
\(^{121}\)Ibid., p. 263.
on the class character of the national movement. This would also then in part be evaluated, not on the basis of the subordination of the secondary social contradictions to the primary anti-imperialist contradiction which was necessary, but on the basis of the manner in which class struggle is provided for within the parameters of colonial society and the anti-imperialist struggle, and of the nature of the class adjustments actually made or proposed.\textsuperscript{122}

In the concrete practice of the national movement, the National Congress tended till 1918 to ignore the very problem of class struggle and its integration with the nationalist struggle, though it took up not only general Indian interests \textit{vis-à-vis} colonialism but also such economic issues affecting the people as the reduction of land revenue and salt tax, the reduction of liquor consumption, the raising of the lower limits for income-tax liability, the protection and encouragement of Indian industries (including handloom cloth and other handicraft industries), and the spread of education and health services.

After 1918 the Congress leadership began to take cognizance of class questions and consciously promoted a policy of class adjustment. Since 1918, Gandhi had organized trade union activities or organized and aided peasant struggles against the colonial state. The culmination was in 1930 when he suggested that the zamindars should remit fifty per cent of the rent while the tenants should pay the remainder. But in general his efforts were not geared to getting relief to the peasantry from their rent-burden.\textsuperscript{123} In the early 1920s C. R. Das built up a complex approach towards the working class; he simultaneously encouraged it to form organizations of its own and to organize trade union struggles, and opposed the ideology of class struggle. He urged the Congress to take up the work of labour and peasant organization. He advocated class conciliation and class adjustment on the basis of every class fighting for its own interests, but in such a manner that unreasonable demands were not made and the different class interests were integrated with the basic national interest in the building of a broad multi-class national movement.\textsuperscript{124} Others in the Congress were also

\textsuperscript{122}Comparative history would provide useful insights in this respect. A study of and comparison with the anti-imperialist movements of China, Vietnam and the Portuguese colonies of Africa would prove quite instructive.

\textsuperscript{123}See Bipan Chandra (1979), pp. 346–9.

\textsuperscript{124}See R. Chatterji, pp. 160–77.
beginning to see the need for this to promote the interests of labour and peasants within the framework of class adjustment. In 1926 the Gauhati Congress passed a resolution, moved by Motilal Nehru, referring to the need for 'carrying out constructive programme of the Congress with special reference... to the organisation of labour, both industrial and agricultural, the adjustment of relations between employers and workmen, and between landlords and tenants...'. In his Presidential Address to the Congress in 1928, Motilal Nehru criticized the government for supporting employers in the name of anti-communism and suppressing labour by resorting to 'shooting and violence'. He further said: 'The Congress can no longer afford to ignore these deplorable happenings and the time has arrived when the Congress should actively intervene and take steps to secure the just demands of labour and take it upon itself to strengthen their organisation as part of the work of national consolidation.'

The National Congress adopted a full-fledged programme of class adjustment, amelioration of the social condition of the workers and peasants, and of their organization for carrying out economic struggles at its 1931, 1934 and 1936 sessions. Gandhi too began to respond to the changing political climate. He still stood for class adjustment, but the centre of gravity of the adjustment he advocated was beginning to shift leftwards from his more conservative position of the 1920s. In the late 1930s he began to soft-pedal his theory of trusteeship and accepted the need for a policy of land to the tiller.

Distinct right and left wings developed in the Congress during the 1930s. While going along with the general pro-labour and pro-peasant programmatic statements of the Congress as a whole, the right wing tried to underplay them, seldom took organizational steps to implement them, and obstructed and even opposed such efforts by others. It tended to oppose all-worker peasant militancy in the name of national unity and to portray the development of class struggle as a threat to the unified national movement. Above all it was unable to conceive of national development in terms other than those of capitalist development; it therefore continued to uphold the bourgeois developmental perspective before

123 Quoted in ibid., p. 154.
124 Quoted in ibid., p. 155.
the national movement. The left wing, which had by the mid 1930s become a significant trend among the intelligentsia, the politically articulate among the workers and peasants, and the younger cadre of the national movement understood the importance and undertook the organization of the class struggles of peasants and workers, promoted peasant unions (kisan sabhas) and trade unions, and propagated ideas of land reform and socialism. The Left did not, however, fully understand how to integrate the national and class struggles in practice because of its failure to formulate and practise alternate conceptions of nationalism and the adjustment of the conflicting interests of social classes. Its efforts to do so were limited to such mechanical means as collective affiliation of kisan sabhas and trade unions to the Congress, opposition to participation in elections and to office acceptance, taking advantage of the Congress ministries to push peasants' and workers' struggles around economic demands, broad assertions that true freedom or Swaraj would mean workers' and peasants' raj, the perpetual demand for political militancy and initiation of mass movement against imperialism, and so on. The Congress right wing had little difficulty in disposing off such crude efforts.

The viewpoint of the Congress left wing is not represented among nationalist historians, who usually adopt the political-ideological position of the Congress Right and do not take up class aspects of the anti-imperialist struggle. In fact they do not possess a concept of class struggle in history and, as shown earlier, have not advanced beyond the elements of the elite concept. Often, they readily assume that class adjustments advocated or made by the Congress leader-

\[128\] In fact the Indian Left lacked a complex understanding of the class struggle itself, especially when waged on the ideological-political terrain. It understood class struggle in its most simplistic, one-dimensional and reductionist form, i.e. of conflict around economic-corporate demands and issues.

\[129\] One exception is Subhas Bose who, however, is seldom able to raise the problem meaningfully or deal with it adequately. Except rarely, he defines leftism not in social terms nor in terms of how class struggle was to be adjusted, but mostly in terms of political militancy, forms of struggle, and activism (pp. 39–40, 46, 164, 167, 218, 244–5, 283–4, 363, 409, 411), and of a purer definition of the goal of the movement in terms of full freedom (pp. 205–6, 220–2, 244–5), or, at the most, though very rarely, of a quite vague socialist vision, of post-independence India (pp. 433–4; also pp. 45, 412, 428–9, 434). Whenever he deals with the question of class adjustment, he condemns any effort to make such an adjustment as a right-wing effort which was unworkable in practice (pp. 408–9, 413–14).
ship were in the interests of the people. Consequently they do not try to ask the question or explain how and why India became a capitalist state and society in 1947.

**Concluding Remarks**

Nationalist historians have brought out some of the more important aspects of the national movement. They have perceived its foundation as the ‘also propelling’ factor in the central contradiction between the Indian people and colonialism, even though most of them have done so through Whiggish eyes. They have shown a certain understanding of the process of the nation-in-the-making, though they have failed to grasp the many complexities of the process. They have seen the national movement as a popular mass movement—a movement involving millions of Indian people fighting for national liberation from imperialism—but they have neglected a study of the differential role of different social classes and of the actual processes of mass mobilization and organization. Their major failure has been an inability to grasp the class aspects of Indian society (and the implication this had for the national movement), even while legitimately underlining the unity of all Indians in their struggle against imperialism.

Nationalist historiography of the national movement arose and developed before 1947, partly as a component of the national movement and partly to meet the challenge of contemporary imperialist efforts to legitimize colonialism. This was being done by portraying the national movement as historically illegitimate, as a creation of disgruntled educated Indians or the upper classes and upper castes, with a view to appropriating the right to displace the ‘neutral’ colonial authorities in order to be able to exploit the ‘hapless’ Indian masses. Because of the control of the colonial state over the educational system, the nationalist approach arose

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130 A. C. Mazumdar, p. 152; Sitaramayya, p. 30; Nanda, Gokhale, p. 485; B. Prasad, pp. 114–16.
131 To answer why after 1947 things have not turned out the way Gandhi desired, Bisheshwar Prasad wrote in the early 1960s that it was all because self-seekers joined the Congress and because ‘Congress leadership has turned its back to those ideals which inspired the organisation’. ‘Are We True to Gandhi?’, Enquiry, Delhi, no. 6.
132 Cf. S. Gopal (1978), p. 6; Ravinder Kumar, pp. 2–3; Bipan Chandra (1979), pp. 1ff. and 275ff.
outside the academic stream and suffered from certain technical and methodological weaknesses and ideological blindspots. Its strong point was its capacity to understand the basic historical thrust of the movement. This enabled it to occupy a far higher historiographic ground than its contemporary British imperialist academic or non-academic writing on the subject. While post-1947 nationalist academic historians have retained this positive feature or higher ground, they have failed to outgrow the limitations of the approach, especially in terms of scientific vigour. They have also tended to continue to ignore aspects other than those of national unity in confrontation with imperialism as being of little concern or significance, thus lending their writing a certain narrowness of social and political vision. Consequently they have rapidly tended to reach a historiographic dead-end—from which some of them have tried to get out without success—by trying to graft in an eclectic fashion other historiographic outlooks and more modern methodologies to their basic nationalist approach. The failure of Tara Chand’s massive effort to throw any fresh light on the national movement or to make it come alive shows that the nationalist historical approach has now to be superseded or transcended with the aid of new methods of research and a widening of the historian’s vision. But this transcendence has to be in the dialectical sense. The nationalist approach has not to be negated in toto but gone beyond by incorporating and absorbing its positive features, as for example has been done by some historians who are Marxists or have been deeply influenced by the Marxist approach. But this cannot be done by reincarnating the historiographically bankrupt and regressive imperialist approaches of yesterday—however well-researched and dressed up they are in the garb of modern methodology or spurious radicalism—which ignore both the central contradiction with imperialism and question the legitimacy as also the popular character of the actual national movement, and which tend to rationalize foreign rule by more indirect methods than in the past. These historians miss even those central historical features of the situation that were correctly grasped by nationalist historians.\footnote{For critiques of the latter-day imperialist historical writing on the national movement, see S. Gopal (1977), Mridula Mukherjee, S. Bhattacharya, Tapan Raychaudhuri, Ravinder Kumar, V. N. Datta, and Jayant Prasad.}
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The Indian Capitalist Class: Aspects of its Economic, Political and Ideological Development in the Colonial Period, 1927–47

ADITYA MUKHERJEE

One of the most striking features of post-World War I colonial India was the extent to which the Indian capitalist class constituted itself as a class. It emerged not only as an economic category with a growing independent base for capital accumulation, but was also able to organize itself on an all-India basis, successfully subordinating various intra-class conflicts as well as its short-term class interests to the long-term interests of the class as a whole. It became constituted politically as 'a class for itself' and developed a hegemonic ideology vis-à-vis other classes and the nation. The fact that the capitalist class was ahead of any other class in India in almost all these aspects played an important part in determining the nature and course of the anti-imperialist movement in India, which significantly ended with the establishment of an independent bourgeois order.

However, contemporary political analysis as well as later writings have misjudged the position of the Indian capitalist class on almost all these aspects, leading to an erroneous characterization of the class and its relationship with imperialism, the national movement and other classes. This essay will survey the existing literature, particularly the more recent works on this subject in so far as they

This essay was first read at the annual session of the Indian History Congress at Kurukshetra University in December 1982, and at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, in April 1983.
comment on some of these aspects of the growth of the Indian capitalist class. In the process I will point out my differences and suggest alternate approaches or hypotheses as they emerge from my own research.

I The Economic Bases

A colonial capitalist class cannot be characterized, nor its position derived as either national or comprador, anti-imperialist or collaborationist, simply on the basis of its economic position and that of the colonial economy vis-à-vis the metropolitan bourgeoisie and the world capitalist system, respectively. The position of the class is equally importantly determined on the basis of its specific historical evolution at the levels of its political and ideological consciousness and practice.1 There is in fact the possibility—as appears to be the case for the Indian bourgeoisie, as well as perhaps the Indian national movement—of the class and the movement being politically and ideologically very advanced, in a sense ‘overdeveloped’ or ‘overdetermined’, as compared to the ‘objective’ economic bases.

1‘... class defines itself as in fact, it eventuates.’ E. P. Thompson, ‘Eighteenth Century English Society’, Social History, vol. 3, no. 2, May 1978. See also Nicos Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, London, 1975, pp. 70–1, for a similar view. I have argued elsewhere that an objective situation of weakness of the colonial bourgeoisie may not necessarily produce a class which accepts a dependent status but, on the contrary, may produce a class which makes spirited attempts politically and otherwise to break out of its dependent status and to develop independently. The reverse may also be true where a relatively economically strong class may remain backward ideologically and politically and therefore accept a relatively greater dependent status than would a politically advanced but economically weak class. Further, if only a one to one relationship is seen, where the economic base reflects only its own image (which is in a sense predetermined) at the political-ideological level, then there is little possibility of socio-economic change on the basis of political and ideological intervention. This would be crude economic determinism. An example of how a simple link cannot be made between a weak economic position and surrender to imperialism is seen in the case of the Indian capitalist class which in the 1920s and '30s, when its position was relatively weak, remained totally opposed to foreign capital, but in the 1940s, having somewhat consolidated its economic strength and being certain of being able to use the weight of the imminent independent national state against foreign domination, became willing to make concessions and enter into agreements with foreign capital. See Aditya Mukherjee, ‘Indian Capitalist Class and Foreign Capital’, Studies in History (SIH), vol. 1, no. 1, Jan.–June 1979, pp. 106, 143–4.
To put it in other words, the process of the formation of the 'class for itself' could push far ahead of the process of the emergence of 'the class in itself'—though the former was inextricably linked up with and dialectically determined by the latter.

All this is not to deny the crucial importance of the economic position of the class *vis-à-vis* foreign capital and the metropolitan economy, but merely to put it in a broader perspective.

Recent writings of radical left scholars like Samir Amin, A. K. Bagchi, A. Gunder Frank, Hamza Alavi, Ernest Mandel, etc. implicitly assume that colonial economies or even post-colonial peripheral economies, after achieving political independence, necessarily developed in a way which led to the further structuring in a dependent fashion of these economies and their bourgeoisie, making it impossible for them to break out of this dependent status without opting out of the world capitalist system altogether. This task naturally could not be performed by the colonial bourgeoisie. This formulation is generally made on the basis of the experience of certain colonies and neo-colonies of Latin America, Africa, etc. with specific growth patterns, and then is sought to be generalized for all colonies. The study of the actual historical evolution of the colonial economy and colonial bourgeoisie (in the case of the latter, particularly its political and ideological evolution) of a country such as India, which demonstrates a different tendency, is not even attempted. Indian communist thinking since as early as the 1920s also more or less fell into the same pattern and made similar assumptions, and therefore naturally diagnosed the inevitability of the bourgeoisie's 'sell out' to imperialism, arguing that the struggle

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3 Samir Amin would see the emerging class struggle to be between the peripheral proletariat and the metropolitan bourgeoisie. The conflict of the colonial bourgeoisie with the metropolitan bourgeoisie is thus ignored, the former being seen as an adjunct of the latter. See Amin, pp. 25, 32ff.
for national liberation could, in such a situation, only be led by the working class.4

However, when we actually examine the developments in colonial India, especially since World War I, we find that there were significant changes occurring in the Indian economy and a certain measure of economic development was taking place—albeit in spite of and in opposition to colonialism—which enabled the Indian capitalist class to grow and establish a considerable independent economic base for capital accumulation even within the colonial period, and on a qualitatively bigger scale since independence.5 The economic position at least, did not appear to preclude the possibility of the emergence of a national bourgeoisie. On the contrary it pointed in the opposite direction.

Let us look briefly at some of these developments. First, a major and generally undisputed development in the Indian economy in the twentieth century was the initiation of a rapid phase of import substitution in most of the major consumer-goods industries and certain capital-goods industries,6 a process which began in the early twentieth century, picked up by World War I and the 1920s, got a major push in the 1930s and the World War II period, and took a quantum leap in the years following independence. In any case by 1939 India was more or less self-sufficient in its major consumer-goods requirements. Most importantly, the bulk of this process occurred under the aegis of independent indigenous capital.

Second, apart from import substitution, there was a growing tendency towards inward orientation, with indigenous producers who were earlier producing for export shifting towards the home market, a good example being the cotton textile industry.7

Third, while the total volume of India’s international trade since World War I showed a general decline, its internal trade in many items increased considerably.8


5I will here, for lack of space, give a very brief and illustrative résumé of the economic development during the colonial period and leave out any discussion of the post-independence developments.

6See for example Subramanian and Homfray, Recent Social and Economic Trends in India, Delhi, 1946, pp. 48–50.

7A. K. Bagchi, Private Investment in India, chs. 3 and 7.

8Subramanian and Homfray, pp. 45, 51.
Fourth, there was in this period, for a multiplicity of reasons, a rapid shift of traditional 'pre-capitalist' accumulation in trade, merchant-usury, landlordism, etc., to industrial capital. While many of the princes financed big industry, a lot of merchant-usury capital went into smaller enterprises.\(^9\)

Fifth, as compared to the pre-World War I period, in the post-war period up to 1945 there was a gradual but consistent shift in the pattern of foreign trade, with the proportion of manufactured goods in the total exports showing a significant increase and in the total imports showing an even more significant decrease. Conversely, the proportion of raw materials in the total exports showed a definite decrease and the proportion of the raw materials and capital goods (as opposed to consumer goods) in the total imports showed a comparative increase.\(^10\) There was here a definite tendency towards the reversal of India's traditional colonial pattern of foreign trade,\(^11\) suggesting a not inconsiderable amount of indigenous industrial growth.

Sixth, contrary to traditional belief,\(^12\) the actual net inflow of foreign capital to India was never very large and virtually insignificant in the form of industrial investments. Most foreign capital in the twentieth century came in the form of loans to meet the balance-of-payment deficits caused not in a small measure by the unilateral transfers made to the metropolis in the form of home charges and debt servicing, or the interest charges and dividends accruing due to earlier foreign loans and investments. In fact if one pits the outflows on current account due to interest, dividends and home charges against the net inflow due to foreign borrowing on the capital account, one would find that there was an outflow of capital from India virtually throughout the colonial period and certainly since World War I.\(^13\) However, even if one considers only the flows in the capital account, it is again seen that foreign

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\(^9\)See for example A. I. Levkovsky, *Capitalism in India*, Delhi, 1966, pp. 319 and 233ff.


\(^11\)However, if a static view is taken at any point of time, the structure of foreign trade was still clearly colonial.

\(^12\)It was assumed that the imperialism of the third stage necessarily meant massive foreign investment in the colonies.

capital inflow fell off after the spurt of the early 1920s, and by the early 1930s Indian repayments, repatriation of foreign debt and earlier foreign investments exceeded fresh investments, i.e. there was a net outflow of foreign capital.\textsuperscript{14} The process of repatriation which began in the early 1930s picked up after 1935, and with the onset of World War II both repatriation of sterling public debt and retirement of private foreign loans and investments increased rapidly.\textsuperscript{15} It was in fact during World War II that India ceased to be a debtor country and by the end of the War had accumulated as credit against Britain a whopping sterling balance of nearly 1500 crores.\textsuperscript{16} Not only did the growing dependence on the London money market cease, the economy had in fact acquired a major bargaining position.

Further, areas in which traditional foreign capital (in the sense of European-controlled business in India, the investments even here being largely internally raised) dominated—e.g. plantations, jute, foreign trade, etc.—underwent a relative stagnation after World War I for a variety of reasons, and simultaneously a dual process of repatriation and Indianization (first ownership and gradually control was moving into Indian hands) set in. On the other hand the intrusion of the new type of foreign capital in the form of direct investments by multinational corporations, which began in the early 1930s and 1940s, remained very small till independence\textsuperscript{17} compared to the rapid growth of indigenous enterprise in this period. Though such investments did increase considerably post-independence, they were kept under strict control and never allowed to acquire a dominant position in the country.\textsuperscript{18}

Last, the Indian capitalist class, through a process of economic and political struggle and by taking advantage of the two wars and

\textsuperscript{14}See A. K. Banerji.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., and M. Kidron, \textit{Foreign Investments in India}, London, 1965, pp. 53ff.
\textsuperscript{16}Statement of Sterling Balances of RBI, Purshottamdas Thakurdas Papers (PT Papers), Fl. 381, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{17}Their role is sometimes greatly exaggerated, seeing in them the ushering in of 'dependent capitalism'. A. K. Bagchi, 'Foreign Capital...'.
\textsuperscript{18}See, V. Kelkar, 'India and the World Economy, A Search for Self-reliance', NCAER Workshop on Technology, 1980; Arun Bose, 'Foreign Capital', in V. B. Singh, ed.
the great Depression,\textsuperscript{19} as well as the specific crisis faced by British imperialism in this period, was able to significantly increase its hold over the Indian economy in opposition to foreign capital between 1914 and 1947. This was achieved chiefly through the following three processes: (a) by entering new areas almost exclusively and accounting for the overwhelming proportion of the new investments made since the 1920s, e.g. in sugar, cement, paper, heavy chemicals, iron and steel, etc.;\textsuperscript{20} (b) by edging out or encroaching upon in greater or smaller degree the various traditional areas of European influence and dominance, e.g. banking, life-insurance, jute, textiles, (partially) shipping, foreign trade, coal, tea, etc.;\textsuperscript{21} (c) through faster growth—in terms of investment and output—of areas where Indian capital dominated, as opposed to those where European interests were dominant (the latter by and large tending to stagnate in our period), e.g. cotton vs. jute, Bombay and other interior regions vs. Bengal and the metropolitan centres, home market-oriented industries vs. export-oriented industries like jute, plantations, etc., internal trade vs. foreign trade, and so on.\textsuperscript{22}

A study by the Gokhale Institute in 1951 clearly shows that the control of Indian capital in the larger industries in India extended rapidly in comparison to European control between 1915/16 and 1937, and between 1937 and 1943/4.\textsuperscript{23} By 1944 Indian private capital controlled about 62 per cent of the larger industrial units employing 1000 or more workers, and about 58 per cent of the labour force in such factories. The corresponding figures for British private capital were 27 per cent and 32 per cent. Indian capital thus controlled more than twice the number of the larger units controlled by British capital and slightly less than twice the labour force employed in such factories.\textsuperscript{24} However, while Indian capital appeared to dominate the larger establishments, these constituted only 4.7 per cent

\textsuperscript{19}Bipan Chandra, ‘Colonialism and Modernisation’, in Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India, New Delhi, 1979.

\textsuperscript{20}Bagchi, Private Investment, chs. 3 and 6, particularly, pp. 83ff, 192ff; Rajat Ray, Industrialisation in India, Growth and Conflict in the Private Corporate Sector, 1914–1947, New Delhi, 1979, ch. 3.

\textsuperscript{21}Kidron, ch. 2, and Bagchi, Private Investment, chs. 7–13.

\textsuperscript{22}Bagchi, pp. 83ff, 433ff.

\textsuperscript{23}Gokhale Institute, Notes on the Rise of Business Communities in India, New York, 1951.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., and Ajit Roy, Indian Monopoly Capital, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 18–20. The share of non-British foreign capital was not very significant.
of the total factory units and employed 57 per cent of the labour force.\textsuperscript{25} In the rest of the factories, representing 95.3 per cent of the total units and employing 43 per cent of the labour force, Indian control was absolute.\textsuperscript{26} This made the total Indian share in the modern factory industry, including the small-scale industry, very high indeed.\textsuperscript{27}

The political and economic significance of total Indian control over the small-scale sector has been generally ignored. Recent works show that despite a much faster rate of growth of large-scale manufacturing compared to the small-scale sector, the income generated from the small-scale sector was larger than that generated in large-scale manufacturing till as late as 1941.\textsuperscript{28} Besides, the fixed investments and total capital employed in certain sectors like flour mills (rarely noticed, these were entirely Indian) was far greater than that employed in areas such as woollens, soap, glass, matches, basic chemicals, etc.\textsuperscript{29} Politically, too, the fact that the entire small-sector was Indian-owned (in contrast with other colonies like Egypt and Indonesia where it was Greek, Syrian and Chinese) has interesting connotations regarding the size, strength and politics of the indigenous national bourgeoisie.

Estimates of the rough share of Indian capital in the domestic market have also been made. On the eve of independence the share of foreign enterprise in the total gross output of Indian industry was only 25 per cent.\textsuperscript{30} Since roughly half of it was for export, one can say that about 12.5 per cent of the internal market was covered

\textsuperscript{25}Ajit Roy, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{26}In a rather generous estimate for 1947, Shirokov calculated that foreign companies owned 8.4 per cent of the enterprises and employed 24.3 per cent of the total labour force in organized industry, and in the bigger enterprises (employing more than 1000 workers) the corresponding foreign shares were 30.2 per cent and 38.2 per cent. Also, by 1948, foreign companies controlled at best about 25 per cent of the total investments in private industry, leaving a rather large share for Indian investment. G. K. Shirokov, *Industrialisation in India*, Moscow, 1973, pp. 47–8.

\textsuperscript{27}In fact exclusion of the small sector, as well as dependence on sources relating to metropolitan areas where foreign capital dominated, often give a misleading picture of the overall control and influence of foreign capital. See for example Rajat Ray, p. 43ff.

\textsuperscript{28}S. Sivasubramaniam, ‘Income from the Secondary Sector in India, 1900–47’, *Indian Economic \& Social History Review*, October–December 1977

\textsuperscript{29}Levkosky, table xxxii, p. 287.

\textsuperscript{30}Shirokov, pp. 48–9.
by foreign enterprises in India. If to this are added the foreign imports, then foreign capital, outside and within India combined, controlled not more than 27 or 28 per cent of the domestic market.\textsuperscript{31} This left about 72 to 73 per cent of the domestic market for indigenous enterprise.

In the financial sphere also, where earlier European capital was supreme, the Indian bourgeoisie made massive inroads. While in 1914 foreign banks held 70 per cent of the deposits, by 1937 they held 57 per cent, and by 1947 a mere 17 per cent.\textsuperscript{32} In the 1940s Indian companies showed rapid growth in the insurance business as well, especially in life insurance. Also, the assets and paid up capital of the larger Indian companies expanded rapidly towards the end of our period, leaving the top European houses far behind.\textsuperscript{33}

Perhaps the huge financial accumulations that the Indian capitalists were making through speculation in goods, bullion, shares, etc. during the two World Wars represented windfall gains which, in a sense, shortened the usually long period of primary accumulations, necessary before the shift to industry was possible (especially as the traditional accumulations in banking and foreign trade were largely destroyed with the coming of the British), rather than acted as constraints on the development of industrial capitalism. However, given the constraints put by the colonial state and structure, Indian capitalists were unable to fully utilize these accumulations for the expansion of their production base,\textsuperscript{34} especially through new investments, a large part of these accumulations being used up, especially in the 1940s, to rapidly buy up existing European companies. In

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32}Kidron, p. 42, and Gokhale Institute.

\textsuperscript{33}In 1946, the total assets of the houses of Tata, Dalmia-Jain and Birla were Rs 600 crores, while those of the three largest European companies, Andrew Yule, Bird Heilgers and Martin Burn (Indo-British) were only 74 crores. Similarly, between 1939 and 1948, the paid up capital of Tata and Birla increased from Rs 21 million and Rs 11.5 million to Rs 364 million and Rs 206.1 million respectively. While, apart from these, two other Indian companies had crossed the 100 million mark by 1948, there was only one European company, Bird Heilgers with Rs 116.7 million, which had managed to do so. Shirokov, p. 49; B. R. Tomlinson, ‘Foreign Private Investment in India, 1920–50’, \textit{Modern Asian Studies}, vol. 12, pt. 4, October 1978.

\textsuperscript{34}The capitalists through the FICCI repeatedly castigated the colonial government for not allowing them to expand into various areas of production.
fact one of the crucial problems faced by the Indian capitalists was of 'realization'—it was not the shortage of resources but how to create conditions for converting the available resources into productive investment which bothered them.\textsuperscript{35}

The various factors listed above suggest that what are considered some of the typical disarticulating features of a colonial economy\textsuperscript{36} were, to an extent, howsoever hesitatingly, getting reversed, even within the overarching colonial structure. First, there was a growing tendency towards surplus value being appropriated through extended reproduction in the colony. This was being accumulated and invested by an independent indigenous bourgeoisie, though within the constraints of a colonial economy.\textsuperscript{37} Second, there was a growing tendency towards indigenous industry being articulated with indigenous agriculture and the home market.\textsuperscript{38} Third, the hold of foreign capital was declining and the indigenous bourgeoisie had gradually acquired a dominating position in the indigenous production sphere, as well as the home market. Last, the colonial economy, like the indigenous bourgeoisie, had acquired a minimal strength and bargaining position \textit{vis-à-vis} the metropolitan centre (note for example the shift from a country \textit{vis-à-vis} the metropolitan centre (note for example the shift from a country weighed down by huge debts to accumulation of large foreign exchange balances, and the colonial bourgeoisie's ability to bargain effectively while associating with foreign capital in setting up enterprises,\textsuperscript{39} or while negotiating trade agreements with Britain).\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{35}See Aditya Mukherjee, 'Indian Capitalist Class ...', p. 133. One may perhaps show a linkage between the more belligerent phases of Indian capitalists \textit{vis-à-vis} the colonial government and their unrealized accumulations.

\textsuperscript{36}See Hamza Alavi, 1979, and S. Amin, pp. 15ff.

\textsuperscript{37}As opposed to extended reproduction not taking place in the colony or extended reproduction occurring in the colony, though surplus value was appropriated by a metropolitan bourgeoisie and invested in the metropolitan countries.

\textsuperscript{38}The typical colonial feature of colonial agriculture being articulated with metropolitan industry, and the home market with metropolitan industry, was showing a decline.

\textsuperscript{39}See Aditya Mukherjee in \textit{SIH}.

\textsuperscript{40}The early twentieth century, when the Indian capitalist class was dependent on the British umbrella to protect its foreign markets (for example in China), contrasts sharply with the 1930s when the Indian capitalists with their inward orientation and greater control over the home market could reject the Ottawa Trade Agreement, partially the Modi-Lees Pact, and bargain strongly in the Indo-British Trade Agreement of 1937–9, which also they ultimately rejected.
Thus the Indian economy and the Indian bourgeoisie were in a much stronger position compared to most other colonies on the eve of independence. In any case, some prejudices apart, India at that moment did not appear to be in the most opportune phase for the ushering in of 'dependent capitalism' of the neo-colonial type.

Having said all this, it is necessary to clarify that all the developments listed above which suggest the growth of a certain level of independent capitalism within the colonial structure did not occur as a result of colonialism, nor were produced by colonialism itself—on the contrary they were a product of the space wrenched from it. It is easily demonstrable that all the above developments occurred, to list some of the causes, either (a) in struggle, political and economic, against imperialism, whether through the national movement, legislative assemblies, business chambers or directly by entrepreneurs, as in shipping, or (b) when the grip of imperialism weakened or loosened due to world factors autonomous to the logic of the colonial system, such as the World Wars and the Depression, or (c) when the principal metropolis lost out in competition to other metropolitan centres and preferred to permit indigenous enterprise in the colony to grow rather than allow other foreign powers to capture the colonial market, for example protection to cotton, iron and steel, matches and sugar being related to competition from Japan, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and Java (a Dutch colony), or (d) due to the inner contradictions of colonialism itself—for example the increasing need for revenue from the colony could no more be met from a by now stagnating or even declining agriculture but had to be met through revenue tariffs, which provided indigenous manufacture a certain amount of protection. In other words the specific non-colonial developments in the twentieth century occurred not as a result of colonialism but in spite of or in opposition to it.

It is necessary to emphasize this aspect to disabuse the crude

notions of ‘decolonization’ popular both in right\textsuperscript{41} and left\textsuperscript{42} wing interpretations, with implications such as that imperialism was pulling out by its own volition as the colony ceased to pay, or that now imperialism, although it continued, was encouraging industrialization, and therefore the colonial bourgeoisie had no basic contradictions with it.\textsuperscript{43} In fact in this period, though the Indian capitalist class grew, imperialist exploitation and the consequent underdevelopment did not cease. The colony, far from ceasing to pay, was subjected to a greater and blatant direct appropriation of surplus through currency manipulations, forced loans, large military expenditures and numerous other unilateral transfers.\textsuperscript{44} Also, though India’s importance as a market for British goods, in terms of volume of imports, had declined, it remained nevertheless one of Britain’s most important markets.\textsuperscript{45} The Indian economy till 1947 remained essentially backward and structurally colonial.\textsuperscript{46} Imperialism continued to put major fetters on industrialization. Foreign capital continued its hold in certain sectors and the dependence on the


\textsuperscript{43}A fuller treatment of the ‘decolonization’ view cannot be undertaken here but will be attempted elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{44}See Ousep Matthen, ‘Monetary Aspects of the Inter-War Economy of India’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, and A. K. Banerji. The apparent paradox of a simultaneous growth of the indigenous capitalist class and an increase in imperialist exploitation is explained by the fact that the brunt of the impact of the latter was borne by the less privileged sections of the Indian people.

\textsuperscript{45}See B. Chatterjee and B. R. Tomlinson.

\textsuperscript{46}In 1947 India was still basically an agricultural country with a very small secondary sector both in terms of output and employment.
world capitalist system for capital goods and technology remained—a dependence which the Indian capitalist class and later the independent Indian state made efforts to break, not without considerable success.

The reason for emphasizing the specific non-colonial developments occurring in India in the twentieth century is to suggest that the economic situation had become one in which it was by no means impossible for an independent national bourgeoisie to develop.

II  The Politico-Ideological Dimension

II.i  Imperialism and the Indian Capitalist Class

Since the early 1920s efforts were being made by various capitalists like G. D. Birla and Purshottamdas Thakurdas to establish a national-level organization of Indian commercial, industrial and financial interests—as opposed to the already relatively more organized European interests in India—to be able to effectively lobby the colonial government. This effort culminated in the formation of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (hereafter Federation or FICCI) in 1927, with a large and rapidly increasing representation from all parts of India. The FICCI was soon recognized by the British government as well as the Indian public in general as representing the dominant opinion as well as the consensus within the Indian capitalist class.

The Federation, while representing the larger interests of the capitalist class, was occasionally faced with conflicts within the class, as would be expected in any class organization. The Federation leaders, however, with their imaginative leadership, were able to resolve these intra-class conflicts, which generally arose from

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48The only occasions when any significant overt conflict arose within the Federation between sections representing different business interests were in 1944 and 1946, when the small trading interests accused the Federation of being dominated by industrialists and not fully protecting the former’s interests. FICCI, Annual Report (A.R.), 1944, pp. 101–9 and A.R., 1946, pp. 178–80, 186–90. There were of course other occasions when conflicts occurred within the Federation, but they were born out of political or ideological differences rather than of different interests of various sections of the class, i.e. there was considerable overlap between sections of the class on either side.
narrow local-level issues,\textsuperscript{49} by taking up the cause of aggrieved sections to the extent that this was compatible with the interest of the class as a whole,\textsuperscript{50} and more importantly by constantly reiterating the common interest of the class as a whole and emphasizing the need to present a ‘united front’ vis-à-vis their common enemy, the ‘third party’ (i.e. colonial interests).\textsuperscript{51} The Federation also kept remarkably free of any significant communal or regional divisions within the organization,\textsuperscript{52} and actively opposed any attempts to give business interests ‘representation on communal basis’.\textsuperscript{53} By the end of the 1920s, therefore, the Indian capitalist class had succeeded in creating a class organization on a national basis which over time effectively subsumed within it or subordinated various existing divisions within the class in the long-term interests of the class as a whole.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{49}The work of A. D. D. Gordon, \textit{Business and Politics, Rising Nationalism and Modernising Economy in Bombay, 1918–1933}, New Delhi, 1978, constantly emphasizes the conflicts between industrialists and what he calls ‘marketeers’. Gordon, however, misses the point that the conflicts were based on local (often even municipal) level rivalries and fails to identify the unity of these sections on wider, long-term class issues. See my review of Gordon, in \textit{Indian Historical Review} (forthcoming), for a more detailed critique of Gordon’s work.

\textsuperscript{50}For example, while supporting the general demand of the traders against government control on distribution of goods during World War II, the Federation supported controls on essential commodities in scarce supply. FICCI, \textit{A.R.}, 1947, p. 13. This was necessary in the interest of the mass of consumers, and also in order not to project the Federation as actively supporting profiteering, etc., thus discrediting the organization as a whole.


\textsuperscript{52}It was in 1946 that for the first time in the entire history of the Federation a communal issue came up in the annual meeting, though it was condemned by the president and the controversy diffused. FICCI, \textit{A.R.}, 1946, pp. 38–47.

\textsuperscript{53}See for example D. G. Mulherkar, Secy. FICCI, to C. H. Bhabha, Commerce Member, GOI, 5 August 1947, FICCI, \textit{Correspondence}, 1947, pp. 100–1.

\textsuperscript{54}In this sense, as well as by other indices which I will discuss later, it can safely be argued that by this period an Indian capitalist class had emerged, though some sections still remained outside the FICCI. The point is that the process of the formation of a national capitalist class had taken off, though it was not yet completed. Perhaps such a process is never completed fully. I however disagree with the view, often held, which denies the emergence of the process itself. For example C. Markovits argues: ‘By 1930, the business communities of India were still a very heterogeneous lot, and, in spite of the creation of the FICCI in 1927, could hardly be called a capitalist class in any accepted sense of the term.’ (p. 246.) One might add here that the heterogeneity of the
Indian Capitalist Class: Development During 1927–47

The Federation was treated as a platform from which redressal could be sought from the government for the immediate grievances of various sections of the capitalist class, and also as a forum for organizing public opinion, both within the class and outside, on larger issues which affected not only Indian capitalists but the Indian economy as a whole.\textsuperscript{55} In the process the Indian capitalists, with some of the most astute minds of the period in their ranks, developed a fairly comprehensive economic critique of imperialism in all its manifestations—whether of direct appropriation through home charges, or of exploitation through trade, finance, currency manipulations or foreign investments—including in their sweep the now fashionable concept of unequal exchange occurring in trade between countries with widely divergent productivity levels.\textsuperscript{56} They kept a watchful eye on the complex national and international developments, especially those \textit{vis-à-vis} imperialism, which had a bearing on Indian economic development, and forcefully argued the national position.\textsuperscript{57} The Congress leaders not seldom saw their assistance as invaluable and treated their opinions and expertise on

\footnotesize{ethnic, caste, religious and regional origins of Indian capitalists did not preclude their emergence as an all-India class any more than the Italian, Jewish, Polish or German origins of the American capitalists precluded the formation of an American bourgeoisie.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{55}See for example A. L. Ojha, FICCI President, FICCI, A.R., 1941, pp. 22–4 and G. D. Birla, FICCI, A.R., 1946, p. 71. Even before the formation of FICCI this process had started, especially after World War I, through various regional chambers of commerce.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{56}The speeches in FICCI, press communiques issued by their leaders and pamphlets produced by them, often products of the labours of the Research Committee of the Federation, which investigated questions, like rural debt, foreign capital, etc., and, later, journals like the \textit{Eastern Economist}, brought out by capitalists, are some of the sources where their views can be seen. For an interesting awareness of ‘unequal exchange’, see G. D. Birla, FICCI, A.R., 1934, p. 173, S. P. Jain and B. M. Birla in FICCI, A.R., 1943, p. 129 and 1946, pp. 104–5 respectively.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{57}For example, since the early 1920s Purshottamdas put up a major battle against the British policy of currency manipulation and fiscal deflation which had wide repercussions for the Indian economy. In the 1940s he, Birla and others led a significant agitation to obtain for India her hard-earned sterling balances with Britain and made energetic attempts to secure India her rightful position in the post-War international monetary negotiations. See particularly, FICCI, A.R., and \textit{Correspondence}, 1944 to 1946.}
many national economic issues with respect. The leaders of the capitalist class also clearly saw the role of FICCI as being that of 'national guardians of trade, commerce and industry', performing in the economic sphere in colonial India the functions of a national government.

However, FICCI was not to remain merely a sort of trade union organization of the capitalist class fighting for its economic demands and doing ideological propaganda to achieve this. The leaders of the capitalist class clearly saw the necessity of the class effectively intervening in politics. As Purshottamdas, President of FICCI, declared at its second annual meeting: 'We can no more separate our politics from our economics.' Further, involving the class in politics meant doing so on the side of Indian nationalism. 'Indian commerce and industry are intimately associated with and are, indeed, an integral part of the national movement-growing with its growth and strengthening with its strength.' A little later G. D. Birla was to confess that, contrary to what was earlier anticipated, it was clear that 'It is impossible in the present political condition of our country to convert the government to our views...the only solution...lies in every Indian businessman strengthening the hands of those who are fighting for the freedom of our country.' While political freedom was seen as necessary for the prosperity of the country as well as of the capitalist class, it was clearly recognized that self-government was not going to be achieved through 'reforms in small instalments from dyarchy to diluted provincial autonomy and so on endlessly until some day,...it may

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60 Here too, as we saw above, it was not only the narrow economic demands of the class which were put forward—but that of the nation in an era of colonial rule. This aspect in discussed later.
61 FICCI, A.R., 1928, p. 4. Purshottamdas's speech, including his exhortation to enter politics, received a warm welcome from many Indian capitalists. For example R. D. Birla to Purshottamdas, 1 January 1929, G. D. Birla to Purshottamdas, 14 Dec. 1928, Visvesvarayya to Purshottamdas, 4 Jan. 1929, etc. P.T. Papers, fl. 78.
64 Ibid.
be doomsday, when in the opinion of her mentors she [India] is fit to be granted full responsibility’, but had to be fought for, as seen from the historical experience of other British dominions. Therefore the capitalists were urged to ‘fight and strengthen the hands of those who are fighting for Swaraj’.

Before discussing the capitalist class’s strategy and tactics for ‘Swaraj’, some of the alleged weaknesses and characteristics of this class which, it is often argued, made it either incapable of fighting imperialism or at least of doing so in a full and complete manner, must be seen.

One of the more persistent themes regarding the Indian bourgeoisie has been that—(a) its dependence on foreign capital and interest in trade, especially in imported goods, (b) its links with feudal landowning interests, and (c) its fear of the left or popular movements from below—led it either to surrender or to repeatedly compromise and collaborate rather than put up a consistent struggle against imperialism. This argument was first put forward by the communists, applying mechanically the experience of countries like China to India in the 1920s, and has been repeated in substance ever since. Surprisingly, the same view continues to be held with even less justification for the post-colonial Indian bourgeoisie, not only by the different streams of the Indian communist movement, with certain variations, but even in Marxist academic writing.

These generalizations need examination.

(a) As I have shown above and discussed in detail elsewhere, the Indian capitalist class grew independently and in opposition to

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66Purshottamdas to Stephen Demetriadi (President London Chamber of Commerce), 25 May 1928, P.T. Papers, fl. 71, pt. 1.
68For the communist characterization in the 1920s, see Aditya Mukherjee, ‘Workers’ and Peasants’ Parties’. For an example of a recent reiteration of the same view, see Sumit Sarkar, ‘Logic of Gandhian Nationalism: Civil Disobedience and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1930–31)’, The Indian Historical Review, vol. iii, no. 1, July 1976, pp. 120–1, 146, See also Ajit Roy, Indian Monopoly Capital.
foreign capital and throughout maintained a consistent opposition to domination of foreign capital. It somewhat softened its attitude towards foreign capital (even occasionally collaborations with it) only when it had grown sufficiently in strength and was convinced of being able, with the help of an imminent independent national state, to utilize foreign capital for its own economic development without succumbing to foreign domination.71 Further, Indian capital was never dependent on foreign finance for resources for investment but only on foreign capital equipment and technology,72 a dependence which did not lead to the acceptance of a subservient position but on the contrary to a concerted effort, first by the capitalist class and later by the national state, to overcome it with the help of a multi-pronged strategy,73 not without considerable success.

As for the capitalist class’s links with trade, particularly in imported goods, the overall strategy of the Indian capitalist class appeared to remain unaffected by it. FICCI, in its entire history, not once argued for the expansion of these importing interests but on the contrary consistently agitated for a reduction in imports through protection and other measures.74 In fact in 1930 there was an active move on the part of the importers and distributors of foreign cloth in Calcutta, who ‘on account of the Swadeshi movement’ were going to ‘give a pledge not to import or make new purchases of foreign cloth upto the end of the current year at least’, to make contact with Bombay and Ahmedabad millowners and switch to purchasing cloth from them. ‘There are people in this town among the cloth dealers who could purchase the whole production of your mills for twelve months.’75 In any case the tendency to link trading interests, as opposed to industrial interests, with elements of compradorism76

71See Aditya Mukherjee, ‘Indian Capitalist Class and Foreign Capital’.
72Ibid., the latter being a qualitatively different order of dependence compared to the former.
74Sarkar quotes an instance where even the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta, a member of FICCI, cold-shouldered the proposals put to it by the Marwari Association to rehabilitate the import trade. Sarkar, p. 120.
75G. D. Birla to Ambalal Sarabhai, 30 April 1930, with copies to Purshottamdas and Kasturbhai Lalbhai, P.T. Papers, fl. 100/101.
76See S. Sarkar, p. 120 and Markovits, pp. 47–50.
flies in the face of the fact that in India the trading groups participated in the anti-imperialist agitations in a much more militant and active manner than the industrialists.\footnote{See for example A. D. D. Gordon.}

Second, this approach not only misses the existence of a considerable overlap between trading and industrial interests but also adopts a completely static view, missing the fact that these two interests were in fact a part of a continuum where the former shifted to the latter over time, especially in our period.

Third, this reductionist tendency to mechanically link sections of the class with any one political position totally denies any role to ideology.

It is pertinent here to deal with another shibboleth—that the big bourgeoisie (or, as some would have it, its monopoly crust)\footnote{Levkovsky, p. 323.} was more prone to collaborate with foreign capital and faced ‘no major conflict’ with it.\footnote{See for example A. K. Bagchi, ‘Foreign Capital’, p. 61 and Ajit Roy, p. 89 ff.} My research, however, suggests that it was Indian big business, trying to enter areas like shipping, automobiles, locomotives, chemicals, banking, insurance, etc., which most felt the constraints created by imperialism and faced stiff competition from foreign capital.\footnote{See my forthcoming doctoral thesis, ‘The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism’, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU.} It is not accidental that in the leadership of FICCI Indian big business was very well represented.

In fact the cause and the role of the \textit{very early crystallization} of tendencies towards concentration and monopoly among indigenous capital has not been fully appreciated in any of the works on this subject. This phenomenon was an aspect of a backward\footnote{First, the limited market in a backward economy (of, for example, automobiles) quite often necessitated a virtual monopoly of the entire market to enter production profitably. Second, in a backward economy to enter a new sophisticated area the business house would have to manufacture the entire range of ancillary products itself, and sometimes even provide basic infrastructures like power, roads, etc. The textile machinery industry in India had to produce 17,944 parts itself, requiring huge financial resources which only a house like the Birlas could provide. See Rajat Ray, \textit{Industrialization in India}, p. 194, for this figure.} and late\footnote{One aspect of late capitalism is that developments here do not go through the same stages as did the early capitalist economies—certain intermediate stages of capitalist development are skipped. To begin manufacture under con-}
capitalism trying to emerge in a hostile colonial context where great concentration of resources, with control over diverse areas (with considerable vertical and horizontal integration)\textsuperscript{83} was perhaps the only way of effectively counteracting the 'collective monopoly'\textsuperscript{84} of the alien interests.

(b) The Indian capitalist class's 'links' with feudal interests have been greatly exaggerated. The role of this link in the class being pro-feudal and in blunting its anti-imperialism has been assumed and never actually demonstrated. None of the major business houses had 'significant semi-feudal land holdings', though 'several of them' had 'large scale capitalist farms'.\textsuperscript{85} More important, the comprehensive reforms in agriculture suggested by the dominant section of the Indian capitalist class were geared precisely towards the undermining of the existing feudal and semi-feudal tendencies in Indian agriculture. Some of the major changes in agriculture suggested by the capitalists can be enumerated.\textsuperscript{86} They

ditions of virtual free trade a late entrant would have to achieve almost the same degree of capitalist intensity and scale as already achieved elsewhere to be competitive.

\textsuperscript{83}The example of the Dalmia-Jain group is an extreme one though by no means exceptional. By 1946 this group had controlling interests in chemical plants, paper mills, plywood, spare parts factories, railways, electricity, vegetable ghee, soap, research laboratories, a number of presses and publishing concerns, banks, insurance companies, investment companies, sugar mills, jute mills, cotton mills, flour mills, airlines, cement, coal, foodstuffs, collieries. Gokhale Institute, pp. 47–50.

\textsuperscript{84}How the 'collective monopoly' of European (finance, trade, banking, industrial, etc.) interests prevented indigenous investment in industry is superbly brought out by A. K. Bagchi in his major work, \textit{Private Investment in India}. Perhaps another reason why Indian houses diversified into so many areas was to spread their risks, since state support in any one area was never assured.

\textsuperscript{85}Bipan Chandra, 'Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism', in \textit{Nationalism and Colonialism in India}, pp. 141, 169. The fact, which Sarkar points out, that the Indian Year Book of 1939–40 describes G. D. Birla as 'millowner, merchant, zamindar', is to my mind not sufficient evidence of the capitalist class's feudal links, just as the East India Company holding the zamindari of the Calcutta villages was no proof of it being part of the Indian 'feudal' system.

\textsuperscript{86}I am summarizing below the view put forward by a wide cross-section of the Indian capitalist class in what was popularly known as the Bombay Plan (the signatories to which were Purshottamdas Thakurdas, J. R. D. Tata, G. D. Birla, Sir Ardeshir Dalal, Sir Sri Ram, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, A. D. Shroff and John Mathai) and in the FICCI. See Purshottamdas Thakurdas and others, \textit{A Plan of Economic Development for India}, pts. I, and II, Penguin,
wanted land reforms which would abolish tenancy and rentier landlordism in favour of peasant proprietorship. To achieve this, *ryotwari* settlements were to be introduced in the zamindari areas. (The fact that even the ryo
twari system was not altogether free of the evils associated with zamindari was not overlooked.) The state was, over time, to ‘extinguish’ the claims of the landlords over their lands by making a lump-sum payment, and establish a class of peasant proprietors in direct contact with the state. Till this was achieved, security of tenure for tenants was to be assured and rents were to be controlled to prevent speculative investment in land. Further, co-operativization was to be introduced on a wide scale: for marketing to circumvent the hold of rural merchant usurers and secure remunerative prices to the direct cultivator; for finance to ‘liquidate the burden of agricultural indebtedness’; and for production, using compulsion if necessary, to meet the problem of small uneconomic holdings.\(^7\) Also, minimum agricultural wages were to be fixed and agricultural income tax was to be introduced on a graduated scale, and, if possible, with an exemption limit. Last, productivity was to be increased by commencing a comprehensive programme of irrigation, fertilizers and modern agricultural research, the results of which were to be popularized by introducing ‘model farms’ on the scale of one such farm for every ten villages. Clearly, Indian capitalists were proposing a programme of agrarian reforms which would free Indian agriculture of its semi-feudal constraints and usher in modern capitalist and peasant farming. That they did not support ‘radical agrarian programmes’ in the sense of outright expropriation of landlords without compensation, or that they sought agrarian reform which was oriented not in favour of the landless labourers and poor peasants but in that of rich and middle peasants and improving capitalist landlords, was


\(^7\)The FICCI President in 1945, J. C. Setalwad, went to the extent of suggesting that the government should experiment with not only co-operative but even collective farming on the Russian model, for which Soviet experts should be called for consultation. FICCI, *A.R.*, 1945, pp. 7–8. However, this was by no means the general view among the capitalists who were very clear in rejecting the Soviet model and opting for co-operative farming.
not a result of their 'feudal' connections but of their being a bourgeois propertied class.

Much has also been made of the big landlords and 'feudal' princes investing liberally in large business enterprises set up by Indian capitalists. To my mind this phenomenon is not to be seen as that of Indian capitalists having 'feudal links' which forced them to compromise with feudalism, but as reflecting the quite common phenomenon in the transitional phases to industrial capitalism, where traditional pre-capitalist accumulations (both from landlordism and rural merchant usury) are sought to be utilized in the newly emerging system.

What bears emphasis, however, is the fact that whatever be the 'links' of the Indian capitalist class with 'feudal' interests, these links did not lead to its adopting a pro-feudal and therefore pro-imperialist stance. While, as we have seen, its economic programme undermined feudalism, politically Indian capitalists throughout kept their distance from the pro-imperialist landlords and princes, whether in Legislative Assemblies or at the Round Table Conferences, or in any other forum.

(c) In India the 'fear of organized labour', or, to use the phrase of the 1920s, the 'menace of the Red spectre', never became, for a variety of reasons, strong enough (nor was perceived as such by the capitalists) to push the Indian bourgeoisie into the lap of imperialism. Whenever the left threat was seen to be becoming

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88 See Sarkar, p. 121. The experience of India since 1947 and of various other countries like Germany, Japan, England, etc. suggests that this was a feasible model of agrarian reform from above which overthrew feudalism in agriculture.

89 One cannot perhaps lump all Indian princes, especially the progressive ones among them who were committed to fairly wide-ranging modernization along capitalist lines, as feudal; they were more like the Meiji oligarchies and Bismarckian Junkers. It is significant that in the inter-war period a substantial part of industrial investment in India occurred in the princely states. Bagchi, Private Investment, pp. 210, 214–15.

80 See for example Ajit Roy, ch. VIII.

81 Marx's notion of the second path of capitalism from above, is relevant here. The crucial question is one of determining the direction in which the society and economy were moving, which in this case certainly was not that of feudalism. The continuing of elements of the old order does not necessarily indicate a compromise or capitulation to it.

82 See Bipan Chandra, 'Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism before 1947', and 'Modern India and Imperialism', in Nationalism and Colonialism. The correct understanding that the bourgeoisie would have joined hands with
important, the extremely self-conscious Indian capitalists responded not by seeking help from imperialism but by attempting *inter alia* to strengthen the right wing of the nationalist stream. In fact Indian capitalists evolved a subtle, many-sided strategy to contain the Left, no part of which involved a sell out to imperialism. For example when in 1929 certain capitalists, to meet the high pitch of communist activity among the working-class trade unions, attempted to form a class party where European and Indian capitalists would combine, the leaders of the Indian capitalist class firmly opposed this move. As G. D. Birla put it, 'The salvation of the capitalists does not lie in joining hands with reactionary elements' (pro-imperialist European interests in India) but in ‘cooperat[ing] with those who through constitutional means want to change the government for a national one.'

Purshottamdas was to reiterate the clearly perceived primacy of the national over the social contradiction, ‘... we are Indians first and merchants and industrialists afterwards...’

Further, capitalists were not to attempt to ‘kill Bolshevism and communism with such frail weapons’ as frontally attacking the Left with class organizations of the capitalists, which would carry no weight with ‘the masses’ or even the ‘middle classes’. As G. D. Birla clearly put it, ‘I have not the least doubt in my mind that a purely capitalist organization is the last body to put up an effective fight against communism.’ A much superior method, as Birla was to clarify later (1936), when Nehru’s Leftism was seen as posing a

imperialism if the threat of the Left actually became too great did not help the Left to correctly characterize the bourgeoisie and evolve a strategy on that basis, when this was not the case in reality. In fact the reverse was true. The bourgeoisie was able to perceive that any weakening of its nationalism would give an opening to the Left and, therefore, did not provide such an opportunity. Apart from its economic position, its class-politics prompted it to support and not betray the national movement. This enabled the bourgeois perspective to hegemonize the national movement while the Left was waiting in the wings for the moment of betrayal.

*G. D. Birla to Purshottamdas, 30 July 1929, PT Papers, fl. 42, pt. v.*

*Purshottamdas to N. M. Mazumdar, 7 June 1929, PT Papers, fl. 42, pt. ii.*

Support was not to be given to the imperialist government to extend its existing powers with wider ‘political aims’, as was attempted through the Public Safety Bill, in the name of suppressing communists. Ibid., and Purshottamdas, President’s speech in FICCI, A.R., 1928.

*G. D. Birla to Purshottamdas, 30 July 1929, PT Papers, fl. 42, pt. v.*
danger, was to ‘let those who have given up property to say what you want to say.” The correct strategy was to ‘strengthen the hands’ of the right wing nationalists such as Vallabhbhai and Bhulabhai who are fighting against socialism.” The government was also urged to give concessions to the right-wing nationalists, otherwise it would be ‘helping the socialists indirectly.”

Further, capitalists were to encourage extensive ideological work through their ‘political and ideological representatives’ to fight socialism.” On the other hand it was argued that the ‘root cause’ or ‘raison d’etre of communism’ was to be studied and steps taken to ‘alleviate poverty and discontent’ and adopt a ‘sympathetic attitude’ towards labour. It is with this perspective that the ‘Post-War Economic Development Committee’ set up by the capitalists in 1942, which eventually drafted the Bombay Plan, was to function. The committee was to recognize ‘the inevitability of a change in the direction of a socialist economy’ and be ‘prepared to make such adjustments as may meet all reasonable demands before the socialist movement assume[d] the form of a full-fledged revolution’. The attempt was to incorporate ‘whatever is sound and feasible in the socialist movement’ and see ‘how far socialist demands could be accommodated without capitalism surrendering any of its essential features’. The eventual plan (Bombay Plan) was therefore to seriously take up the questions of equitable distribution, partial nationalization, etc., with this objective clearly in mind. ‘A consistent... programme of reforms’ was the ‘most effective remedy

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96 G. D. Birla to Walchand, 26 May 1936, PT Papers, fl. 177. Similarly, Indian Finance of 11 March 1944 warned against the class speaking ‘with too obvious a concern for its own class interest... condemn(ing) itself in the eyes of the public’. See also Biplab Chandra, ‘Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Capitalist Class, 1936’, in Nationalism and Colonialism, and Aditya Mukherjee, ‘Indian Capitalist Class and the Congress’.


98 G. D. Birla, In the Shadow of the Mahatma, p. 194.


100 G. D. Birla to Purshottamdas, 30 July 1929, ‘Our duty does not end in simply opposing socialism. Businessmen have to do something positive to ameliorate the condition of the masses.’ G. D. Birla to Walchand, 26 May 1936. PT papers, fl. 42, pt v.

101 John Mathai to Purshottamdas, 8 Dec. 1942 and enclosures, PT Papers, fl. 291, pt. 1. PT Papers, fl. 42, pt v,
against violent social upheavals’.  

The Indian capitalist class’s response to the threat from the Left was thus not one of panic, making it go over to the side of imperialism, but a mature one. While remaining on the side of nationalism, it evolved a subtle strategy of combating the Left—in certain respects pre-empting the post-War world-wide successful attempts by reformist welfare capitalist states to save capitalism as a system. In other words while the Indian capitalist class’s strategy was definitely anti-socialist and bourgeois, it was not pro-imperialist.

One may add here that the bourgeoisie’s understandable inclination to remain within a bourgeois framework is often misinterpreted as its accepting or attempting to grow within the imperial framework. For example Bagchi sees the argument for ‘a capitalist order of society, international collaboration between capitalists of all countries, avoidance of drastic social change and respect for the fundamental rights of property’, as ‘remain[ing] imprisoned by some of the basic presuppositions of the British imperial system...’, while all that it actually demonstrates is the desire to maintain the capitalist system. This confusion arises because of the basic assumption, noted earlier, which has been made ever since the early 1920s, namely that colonial countries could not break out of the hold of imperialism so long as they remained within the parameters of capitalism, and that only breaking out into socialism could achieve this task. Given this understanding, being bourgeois meant by definition being pro-imperialist. Consequently, as we will see, a political strategy of anti-imperialism which was at best bourgeois was often seen as pro-imperialist, or at times the non-pursuit of a revolutionary socialist strategy against imperialism was seen as compromising with imperialism. In reality, however, the Indian bourgeoisie, rather than attempting to remain and grow

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103The limited dependence of the capitalist class on the colonial administration for maintaining law and order and social peace was, ‘however, the dependence not of a comprador class but of (an independent) capitalist class in an era of mass movements and socialist revolutions’. Bипан Чандра, ‘Indian Capitalist Class’, in Nationalism and Colonialism, p. 155.


105M. N. Roy, for example, argued in 1927, that the ‘overthrow of imperialist domination cannot be a bourgeois revolution’. Aditya Mukherjee, ‘Workers and Peasants’. See also Bagchi, Private Investment, pp. 426–8 for a similar perspective.
within the imperialist framework, built up a multi-pronged strategy precisely to undermine it, and the Indian national movement did succeed in overthrowing imperialism—though remaining, despite contending forces, under bourgeois ideological hegemony—and in establishing an essentially independent capitalist society, however weak and prone it was to dangers of potential neo-colonialism.  

II.ii The Indian Capitalist Class and the National Movement

What was the strategy of anti-imperialism favoured by the Indian capitalist class? The Indian national movement was not led or created by the Indian capitalist class, nor was it in any sense crucially dependent on its support. The capitalist class, however, constantly reacted to the existing autonomous national movement and evolved a strategy towards it and towards imperialism. I shall identify certain broad features of this strategy.

The Indian capitalist class's strategy vis-à-vis imperialism was certainly one which remained within the bourgeois framework but was not at any point anti-national, i.e. seeking to remain within the imperialist framework. The capitalist class's seeking and supporting social, economic and political concessions or reforms, wrested from or offered by the colonial government, or its preference for legal and constitutional opposition, cannot be understood per se as its surrendering to imperialism. If it supported the colonial government on certain specific issues, this was in the nature of tactical support of reforms within the system while maintaining a strategic opposition to the system as a whole. Such a perspective was by no means identified with only the capitalist class in colonial society. Even the working class or the peasantry could and did support and demand from the colonial government reform measures such as the reduction of working hours or legislation to improve the position of tenants, without necessarily identifying their long-term interests with the colonial government or the colonial system.

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106 Perry Anderson sees this point and argues that the establishment of a bourgeois democracy in India in 1947 and its more or less successful practice over the last thirty years demonstrates the falsity of Trotsky's notion, declared after 1924, that henceforth there could be no successful bourgeois democratic revolution in any of the colonial countries. Considerations on Western Marxism, London, 1976, p. 118.

107 See Bipan Chandra, 'Indian Capitalist Class', pp. 144-5. I will take up the question of the autonomy of the Congress-led anti-imperialist movement again below.
While analysing what for lack of a more precise term has been called ‘reformism’, one must distinguish between two basically different kinds of ‘reformist’ strategy. First, one which seeks reforms to serve the long-term interest of perpetuating the existing system and pre-empting more fundamental changes, and second, one which while seeking reforms within the system maintains the perspective of fundamentally transforming or overthrowing the existing structure, seeing many of the reforms as ‘steps or means’ towards achieving that goal. In the case of colonial India, only the liberal imperialists argued for the former strategy vis-à-vis imperialism. No segment of the nationalist stream, including the most conservative segments such as the Liberals (who stood further right of the capitalists in their anti-imperialism), fell into this category. As for the Indian capitalist class, it was ‘reformist’ (vis-à-vis imperialism) in the latter sense. The Indian capitalist class was reformist in the first sense when it approached the social question (i.e. the question of the maintenance of capitalism itself) and was reformist in the second sense when it approached the national question (i.e. the question of the continuation of imperialism)—though its particular strategy of overthrowing imperialism was to be one which simultaneously ensured the maintenance of capitalism.

For example, the Indian capitalists’ preference for legal and constitutional opposition was partially due to their attempt to oppose imperialism while simultaneously maintaining the capitalist system. Broadly, the factors which explain their insistence on not

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108 See Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Oxford, 1977, ch. 6, for a very interesting analysis of ‘reformism’ within the Marxist tradition and its relationship with ‘revolution’. He makes the above distinction between the two trends of reformism, though in the context of capitalism and its transformation.

109 There were here crucial differences between the ‘reformism’ of the capitalist class and that of the Congress, which we will discuss later. For example, while for the Congress all reforms were essentially steps towards their ultimate goal of overthrowing imperialism, for the capitalist class some of the reforms and concessions, especially the economic ones, were necessary for ensuring its continued day to day existence or ‘immediate’ growth. This was because of its dependence on the government of the day, in this case the colonial administration, on issues such as minimum tariff protection, transport facilities, government orders, permission to start factories at a particular site and sometimes (for example, during the ’40s when the Capital Issues Control was introduced) even for permission to start a new company. See Bipan Chandra, ‘Indian Capitalist Class’, pp. 154–5.

110 For example see above, I.1, pp. 260–2.