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India's Accession to the Imperial Conference

There were few outward signs in the spring of 1914 that within five years India would be represented at a major international organisation in Geneva. India had no foreign policy of its own, and virtually no international personality besides its representation at certain technical organisations.[1] India was ruled jointly by a British Minister, the Secretary of State for India based in London, and the Governor-General or Viceroy who operated from the newly minted capital of British India in the ancient Mughal capital at Delhi.[2] The participation of Indians in the levers of governance was kept to a minimum. The Indian Councils Act of 1909 had seen minor concessions given for greater representation of Indians at the Imperial Legislative Council, as a response to Indian statesmen in the Indian National Congress and Muslim League. Despite these reforms, both the Congress and the Muslim League continued to apply pressure for more substantive reforms, albeit through constitutional means. Earlier, more direct action, however, had served as a warning for the British administration. British attempts to partition Bengal in 1905 had been met with outrage and caused a wave of nationalist sentiment and violence against British rule. Political assassinations, such as that of Curzon Wyllie in London (the original target being ex-Viceroy Lord Curzon) and bomb-throwing at the Viceroy Lord Hardinge as he paraded

[1] India's position at international organisations is noted within Verma's work, but is not investigated further, and will be discussed later in this chapter. Verma, *India and the League of Nations*.

[2] Since the time of the East India Company, British India had been governed from Calcutta, until 1911, when the Capital was moved to Delhi. However, it took several decades for 'New Delhi' and the architecture of 'Lutyens' Delhi to emerge.

on the back of an elephant to inaugurate Delhi as the new imperial capital, had reminded the British of a mounting resistance to the Raj.

Writers from the interwar years who watched the rapid development of the Empire in the 1920s mused about how unlikely the changes in the Empire had seemed before the Great War of 1914. Harvard Professor William Yandell Elliott wrote,

> Before that struggle, in which the Dominions established their claim to mature nationhood, one could hardly have foreseen the rapidity and the completeness with which the legal supremacy of the United Kingdom would pass, even in the sphere of foreign policy. … In the world which existed before the creation of a League of Nations, indeed, the hope of acting jointly under no more compulsion than an agreement to 'consult' would have been both unworkable and dangerous.

At the 1911 Imperial Conference, the British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith had lectured the Dominion leaders on the essential unity of imperial foreign policy that must be directed by Britain or see the 'passing of the Empire'.[3] The ultimate divisibility of the Empire at an international level, as witnessed only eight years later, reveals the rapidity with which imperial policy changed.

Nonetheless, events were already afoot that would reshape the Empire prior to 1914. Whereas the Great War was more directly the cause of the Dominions' representation in the League, the seeds of India's future membership of the League of Nations were being sown not on the Gangetic plains but in South Africa.[4] The creation of the Union of South Africa from a group of disparate colonies was a project that attracted new forms of imperial theorists and policies of governance. Lord Alfred Milner provided much of the impetus for the creation of the Union. Milner was a veteran colonial officer, having served in Egypt and later as Governor of the Cape Colony in South Africa, and was a strong proponent of the notion of 'Imperial Federation'. This was the idea that Britain could unite its 'White' colonies into a form of super 'Imperial Parliament', so as to effectively incorporate their representation (but not of other, less 'developed' colonies) into the Empire's governance. Fears of European settlers demanding equality, as the Thirteen Colonies of America had done in the eighteenth century, underpinned the project – fears that had seen some realisation in the 1837 rebellion in Canada. The

[3] Elliott, *The New British Empire*, 9–10.

[4] A similar argument about the making of international relations is made in Vineet Thakur and Peter C. J. Vale, *South Africa, Race and the Making of International Relations* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

conclusion in the 1839 Durham Report was to grant increased autonomy to most European settlers, but Milner wanted to see their incorporation into the project of empire building.[5]

South Africa proved to be a highly experimental and inflammatory laboratory of early twentieth-century imperial identity politics. Even the Europeans, who were a minority in southern Africa, were divided along national lines, broadly between Afrikaner Boers and British settlers (termed *Uitlanders* by the Boers). The Second Boer War (1899–1902) fought between Afrikaner farmers and the British had been highly unpopular in Britain. The conflict had been both expensive and challenging, provoking fears of Britain's overextension, and had called on significant reinforcements from Britain's settler colonies, especially Australia but also Canada and New Zealand.[6] Their contribution had revealed the necessity of their participation in imperial defence, especially in light of the rapid economic and military ascendancy of Germany, not to mention continued rivalries with France over African colonies.[7]

After several years of conflict of asymmetric warfare, the Boers eventually capitulated, and Milner's policy was to amalgamate the southern British colonies in Africa with the newly annexed neighbouring Dutch-speaking Boer Republics into a new Dominion. This action was unprecedented since the annexation of French Quebec. The other Dominions were seen as appendages of the Anglo-Saxon race and culture, whilst the Boer colonies of South Africa, though of European origin, were not British. Despite the shared perception of race in a colony where both British and Boer settlers were a small minority, the British element of imperial federalism was initially significant. Many of its theorists, steeped in an Oxfordian education of the Classics, saw Britain as carrying the torch of democratic and liberal governance that had been ignited over two millennia ago in the agora of Athens. Imperial Federalists such as Milner perceived other European models of imperial rule, especially the growing German presence in world affairs, as overtly militaristic, manifestly and

[5] Mélanie Torrent, 'A Commonwealth Approach to Decolonisation', *Études anglaises* 65, no. 3 (17 December 2012): 348.

[6] Robert J. D. Page, 'Canada and the Imperial Idea in the Boer War Years', *Journal of Canadian Studies* 5, no. 1 (February 1970); Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa 1899–1902* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[7] This rivalry with France over colonial possessions is best presented in the 1898 standoff over Fashoda in East Africa over control of the Nile. Although resolved peacefully, it led to fears of war between Britain and France.

biologically racial (rather than more inherently and culturally), and thoroughly illiberal.[8] Milner was thus not convinced that the Boers could be turned from foes into friends and willing participants of the British imperial project in the matter of a few years.

Milner faced a paradox in South Africa, where the British attempted to reconcile their perceptions as an enlightened empire based on consensual ties rather than 'Prussian' coercion by trying to absorb a resentful, recently conquered population. To grapple with the South African quandary, Milner established a circle of young Oxford-educated scholars in the South African Civil Service who were nicknamed his 'Kindergarten'. Milner's first goal was to attempt to maintain the supremacy of the British minority living in South Africa by giving out parcels of land to entice immigration from Britain. By ensuring a British settler majority (among whites), Milner attempted to ensure that South Africa could be absorbed into the Empire on a similar cultural basis to the other Dominions, one of British supremacy (Figure 1.1).[9]

Milner and the Kindergarten had far-reaching ambitions that surpassed their work in South Africa. Their aim was to progressively work towards the notion of 'imperial federation', the goal of reuniting the Anglo-Saxon, internally self-governing colonies of the Empire into a grand 'Imperial Parliament'. Milner's political forebears had achieved the creation of the Colonial Conference, where representatives from these self-governing colonies could be consulted in the running of imperial affairs, which could act as a political stepping stone towards the creation of the Imperial Parliament.[10] Milner's schemes for the creation of a culturally (and racially) British-dominated South Africa were fraught from the start. He himself was forced to resign in 1905 due to ill health, and was replaced by another like-minded individual, Lord Selbourne. Yet the British general election of 1906 returned a Liberal government, bent on accelerating the process of integrating the Boer colonies towards self-government. When Winston Churchill, the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, who had recently defected to the Liberal party, introduced new electoral legislation that would no longer disenfranchise the Boers, Milner's dreams of Anglo-Saxon supremacy in South Africa were dashed.[11]

[8] Morefield, *Empires without Imperialism*, chap. 1.
[9] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 116–17.
[10] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 79.
[11] This was largely accomplished by redrawing constituencies that favoured rural areas that were predominantly inhabited by Boers, rather than urban areas that had a larger British

FIGURE 1.1 Milner's Kindergarten circa 1902: Seated left to right front row: John Dove, Philip Kerr, Geoffrey Robinson. Second row: Hugh Wyndham, Richard Feetham, Lionel Curtis (centre), F. Perry, Dougal O. Malcolm. Third row: Robert H. Brand, Patrick Duncan, Herbert Baker, Lionel Hitchens.
Source: Milner's Kindergarten in South Africa, 1902. Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milner%27s_Kindergarten#/media/File:Milner's_Kindergarten.png

The outcome of the 1907 elections in South Africa would prove formative to the Kindergarten, which had stayed in South Africa to fulfil Milner's vision. Boer parties, such as the recently formed 'Het Volk' (The People) led by Louis Botha and the former Boer commander Jan Smuts, would show that Boer identities would have to be reconciled with imperial allegiance, rather than swamped by British settlers. Unfortunately for other minorities within South Africa, this would come at their expense. The Boer war had been largely fought for the acquisition of the Boer

population. Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 129.

republics' vast goldmines and mineral resources, yet a lack of labour led to Milner encouraging indentured labour from China to work the mines. These workers proved to be highly unpopular with Het Volk, which campaigned for their immediate expulsion to return the jobs to better-paid and unionised Afrikaners.[12]

Another target of Het Volk's policies of racial discrimination was the Indian community in South Africa.[13] After the electoral victory of Het Volk in 1907, the Transvaal colony passed the Asiatic Registration Act, a policy creation of one of the Kindergarten's leading members, Lionel Curtis, which created a register of all Chinese and Indian residents.[14] Both communities rallied together to resist the Act, which saw the political debut of Indian barrister Mohandas K. Gandhi, and yet the Chinese workers having come from outside the British Empire had few rights and were gradually expelled between 1907 and 1910.[15] Indians claimed their rights as British subjects to be able to migrate within the Empire, yet this did little to stop the deluge of anti-Indian legislation that aimed to simultaneously restrict the entry of Indians into the Transvaal, as well as to apply discriminatory legislation, such as the racial profiling, registration, and fingerprinting of Indians, so as to discourage greater migration.[16]

For the Kindergarten, the resistance to Indian migration was a secondary issue compared to the task of creating a self-governing (for whites) South Africa, which could reconcile both its local Afrikaner and British imperial identities. The Kindergarten began the dissemination of pro-Union propaganda that promoted a South African identity as opposed to a uniquely British or Afrikaner one, but ignored the identities of Africans and Asians.[17] The South Africa Act and the Immigrants Regulation Act of the Union of South Africa incorporated the

[12] Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, 'Lord Milner and the South African State', *History Workshop* 8, no. 1 (1979): 66.

[13] This was not just Afrikaners as the more British Cape Colony and Natal had passed anti-Chinese legislation before the Transvaal in 1904.

[14] Keith Breckenridge, 'Gandhi's Progressive Disillusionment: Thumbs, Fingers, and the Rejection of Scientific Modernism in Hind Swaraj', *Public Culture* 23, no. 2 (1 May 2011): 333.

[15] Liberal politicians in particular campaigned on the basis of defending South Africa from the 'Yellow Peril' of Chinese labour. The infamous Bucknill Report that observed sexual practices among male Chinese workers led to increased calls to expel them. Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and 'The Chinese Puzzle' in Imperial Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2009), 32–37, www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9780230609495.

[16] Auerbach, *Race, Law, and 'The Chinese Puzzle'*, 63; Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s*, 113; Sinha, 'Premonitions of the Past'.

[17] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 140.

immigration laws of the various provinces into the laws of the now-unitary state of South Africa. The decision was a significant juncture in the history of the Empire. Rather than preserving the imperial ideology of free movement of subjects that had broadly operated in the nineteenth century (a system that had benefited from the cheap labour of indentured servitude), the Kindergarten sided with the anti-migrant stance of Afrikaner and British settlers.[18]

For the Kindergarten, Smuts became the embodiment of the politician for a new form of Empire. Smuts may have been an Afrikaner nationalist, but he began to support the notion of South Africa finding a place within the greater framework of the British Empire. Gandhi himself had called upon the support of the British Government to protect the notion of a common imperial subjecthood that would protect Indians as British subjects. Gandhi would soon become disillusioned with how apparently Liberal British politicians prioritised South Africa's Home Rule over defending the rights of Indians in South Africa and in the rest of the Empire.[19] Gandhi eventually capitulated to Smuts in 1914, before returning to India the following year, agreeing to an easing of the restrictions on the rights of Indians already residing in South Africa, but consenting to tighter controls against future Indian migration.[20]

The rise of barriers to entry to migrants from China, Japan, and India would be replicated in other Dominions, especially Australia and Canada. The most notorious case was that of the Komagata Maru, a Japanese steamer chartered by Sikh businessman Gurdit Singh that aimed to challenge Canada's new immigration laws head-on. The ship, carrying mostly Punjabi passengers, was held up in Vancouver Harbour in 1914 under an 'indefinite transit rule'.[21] After weeks waiting in the harbour, Canadian authorities sent the ship back to India, on the arrival of which the police, attempting to arrest suspected dissidents, opened fire on the passengers killing many of them. The Komagata Maru became emblematic of India's second-class citizenship within the Empire and enraged Indian public

[18] A similar point about the normative change in imperial politics is made in Sinha, 'Whatever Happened to the Third British Empire? Empire, Nation Redux', 177.

[19] Breckenridge, 'Gandhi's Progressive Disillusionment', 333; Sinha, 'Premonitions of the Past', 825–26.

[20] Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s*, 141.

[21] Indefinite transit rules were a roundabout way for blocking migration from India in that a steamer could only enter Canada if it had completed the voyage in one journey without stopping for refuelling and resupplying.

opinion.[22] The perceived bias of the British in favouring the autonomy of the Dominions over the rights of Indians led to a significant upsurge in Indian insurgent politics. The nascent *Ghadar* Party, which had formed in San Francisco, massively expanded its size during the Komagata Maru incident to become a trans-Pacific anti-colonial militant organisation.[23]

South Africa thus provided the ground on which new forms of experimentation with imperial policies could take place, but it was also an important breeding ground of a new form of Indian nationalist politics that would increasingly radicalise against the inequalities of imperial rule. With the mounting irreconcilability between the move towards self-governance for the Dominions and the rights of Indians to migrate throughout the Empire, the Kindergarten began looking for a form of compromise. After the completion of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the Kindergarten's members began to disperse throughout the Empire, often entering preponderant positions in the corridors of power. However, the Kindergarten produced a journal, the 'Round Table', to forward their agenda of imperial federalism. New chapters of the Round Table movement were created across the Empire, especially within the Dominions, disseminating positions on Irish Home Rule, the definition of Dominion status, and their relation to other colonies of the Empire.[24]

Freed from the geographic hinterland of South Africa, the Round Table established an Empire-wide network, with Curtis at the centre, from which they could confront what they saw as the Empire's three existential issues. These anxieties, although distinctly different, were all interconnected. The first was the Empire's loss of seeming unipolarity in global affairs. Once the economic workshop of the world with an unrivalled navy to match, Britain was now being economically outcompeted by Germany and the United States. Moreover, both had rapidly expanded their naval power, with Britain and Germany locked in an arms race over the manufacture of new 'dreadnought' class battleships.

[22] Gopalan Balachandran, 'Indefinite Transits: Mobility and Confinement in the Age of Steam', *Journal of Global History* 11, no. 2 (July 2016): 190–96; Sinha, 'Premonitions of the Past', 826.

[23] During the incident, which lasted several months, war with Germany had also broken out which may have contributed to growing numbers of Ghadar supporters. Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011); Hugh Johnston, 'The Komagata Maru and the Ghadr Party: Past and Present Perspectives of an Historic Challenge to Canada's Exclusion of Immigrants from India', *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly* 9, no. 178 (23 July 2013): 9–31.

[24] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 229–48.

The second was the aforementioned future of imperial immigration, which created bitter divisions between the white Dominions and India in particular. And the third was the future of India itself, which was vital for the Empire's economic interests and Imperial defence, but which was seeing an uptick of agitation against imperial rule.[25] Keeping Indian politicians and the Dominions satisfied would become a key factor in maintaining the imperial economy, but also bringing in key resources and troops for the Empire's defence in the face of a future conflict with Germany.

The first issue was largely out of the Round Table's hands, and for the second, they had already prioritised the Dominions' demand for an end to Indian migration over the imperial rights of Indians. In 1912, the Round Table began to confront the third issue, which they called the 'Indian Question'.[26] One of its leading proponents and a founder of the Round Table journal, Philip Kerr, visited India and began examining potential schemes for devolution. Kerr believed that India should be put on a similar trajectory towards a status akin to the British Dominions, a policy that seemed radical in pre-war India, but enjoyed support from Indian politicians. In spite of this, Kerr believed that this was a process that should be carried out by the British, and not by Indian elites, who had increased representation from the Minto Morley reforms of 1909. However, these views were not universally accepted within the Round Table itself, with some members believing democracy to be an unsuitable goal for India and one that would lead to anarchy. Lionel Curtis, now a lecturer at the University of Oxford, also believed that India should have no place within imperial decision-making until it had reached a state of self-governance.[27]

Despite the disunity in the Round Table movement towards India, Kerr found several senior members of the Indian Civil Service and Government of India who were open to his views on reform.[28] 1911 had seen another Imperial Conference, this time enlarged to include South Africa, yet India was still not being considered for full accession to the Conference. The British Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe, had attended the 1911 Conference to discuss the issue of Indian migration to the

[25] Morefield, *Empires without Imperialism*, 9–10.
[26] Sinha, 'Premonitions of the Past', 826.
[27] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 298–301.
[28] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 301.

Dominions, but his presence there was only because the topic of discussion was of relevance to India.[29] Senior civil servants in the Government of India debated the possibility of India gaining full admission to the Imperial Conference and a future Imperial Parliament. One of them, W. H. Buchan, believed that Indian membership would stand as a corrective to the 'anti-Asiatic' Dominions in the Imperial Conference. However, Buchan feared that Indian politicians were not loyal to the principles of the Empire, but only to self-governance, and that permitting representation by elected officials may lead to Indian independence:

> If she is allowed to develop apart from the Empire there is a real danger that she may set her face towards independence and separation. It is for us to bring her into touch with the Empire, to make her think imperially and realise that she is and must always be an integral part of the Empire, and that by that connection her best interests will be secured. That education cannot be started too soon. The new imperial parliament offers an excellent opportunity.[30]

This was supported by another high-level bureaucrat in the Government of India, E. Molony, who wrote a list of pros and cons for Indian membership of the Imperial Conference. He believed that the government had 'miscalculated the level of resentment felt in India due to Asiatic exclusion'. Molony believed that India's membership should embody Queen Victoria's 1858 Proclamation of the equality of British subjects in India, long-vaunted by the British administration as evidence of its civilising mission, renewing imperial loyalty in India. Moreover, he did not believe that Dominion racism and arguments that Indians were a 'barbarous and uncivilised race, not entitled to representation' were sufficient for exclusion.[31]

The various civil servants gravitated towards the position that India should be represented, but with appointed Indian representatives rather than elected ones. Though many of the Government of India civil servants did not share the Dominion leaders' doubts about the competency of Indian politicians, being in regular work and proximity with them, they feared that the Imperial Conference would become a vehicle to independence. India's strategic importance to the British Empire was so great that

[29] Karl Joseph Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939' (Newcastle upon Tyne: Florida State University, 1994), 11.

[30] W. H. Buchan, 'Comments on a Memorandum on the Representation of India', 11 June 1912, James Meston Papers, Reel 1, Nehru Memorial Library.

[31] E. Molony, 'Comments on a Memorandum on the Representation of India', 3 June 1912, James Meston Papers, Reel 1, Nehru Memorial Library.

the shock to the imperial system if control of India were lost, might lead to its demise. The outcome was that the basis underlying India's accession to the Imperial Conference was fundamentally to pay tribute to the notion that India's position in the Empire 'is something more than a mere dependency'.[32]

The outbreak of the First World War in the summer of 1914 put immense strains on the imperial system, as the Dominions and India were automatically pulled into the conflict, and were expected to levy significant numbers of troops and resources for the war-effort.[33] In South Africa, the work of the Kindergarten was put under even more pressure when Boer troops defected to Germany. However, the rebellion was rapidly put down by imperial loyalists such as Smuts and Louis Botha.[34] In India, the Ghadars had plotted an empire-wide mutiny of Punjabi troops, who made up the backbone of the Indian army. However, the movement had already been infiltrated by British intelligence, and the mutiny in Punjab, the heartland of military recruitment in India, was quickly supressed. In Singapore, the mutiny of the 5th Indian Light Infantry achieved more success before being quashed by a coalition of the Allied forces.[35] The fear of internal pressure emanating from nationalists, often backed by Germany, was a perennial fear for the British, despite these outbreaks being rapidly put down.

Pressure for constitutional change arose from the loss of support from Britain's politically moderate allies. The once relatively loyalist Indian National Congress had seen the rapid growth of a more confrontational faction within it, under the leadership of Bal Gangadhara Tilak, demanding more devolution than the British had anticipated. The growth in agitation for 'Home Rule' accompanied by India's significant contribution to the war effort, gave moderate reformers sitting within India's highly restricted legislature, the Imperial Legislative Council, the impetus for an increased Indian role in imperial affairs. Though the Council had expanded its elected Indian membership in 1909, the majority were still appointed and could consistently outvote the elected members. A senior politician of the Muslim League, Mian Muhammad Shafi raised this issue

[32] Molony, 'Comments on a Memorandum on the Representation of India'.

[33] Australia, India, and South Africa did not introduce conscription in the First World War, although many volunteered.

[34] Rob Skinner, *Modern South Africa in World History: Beyond Imperialism* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 56.

[35] R. W. E. Harper and Harry Miller, *Singapore Mutiny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

in the Legislative Council in June 1915, in which India would at last be represented at the Imperial Conference, and asked if it would be possible that the Legislative Council might have some input in the selection of delegates.[36]

This request was initially rejected. The Government of India considered it to be 'too controversial', and that such policies should be decided by the British Government, and only once the war was over.[37] However, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, overrode his subordinates and seized the opportunity to increase the status of India within the Empire: 'I regard the representation of India at the next Imperial Conference not merely as politically desirable, but as an act of justice.'[38] Hardinge had followed the debates over the status of Indians in South Africa, and had been sympathetic to Gandhi's cause, leading him into a political confrontation with Smuts who had lobbied for his recall.[39] However, there was also the political expediency for Hardinge to find a possible means to calm the increasing demand for political reform in India by finding a means to satisfy calls for equality with the Dominions. The Viceroy's support for India began to pose questions about the nature of the Imperial Conference, which would foreshadow India's admission into the League of Nations four years later. One official worried that the Imperial Conference would reject India for not being self-governing, a fact that in India's current political situation, he didn't want 'rubbed in'. Conversely, elevating India's position to the Imperial Conference risked tacitly endorsing Indian self-governance. He concluded that 'representation without self-government is of very little value'.[40] Another administrator, William Stephenson Meyer, future head representative of India's first delegation to the League in 1920, believed that India could only be

[36] S. R. Hignell, 'Resolution by the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi on the Subject of the Submission of a Representation to His Majesty's Government, through the Secretary of State for India, Urging That India Should in Future Be Officially Represented in the Imperial Conference. Question and Answer in Parliament on the Subject of the Representation of India at the next Imperial Conference', 29 June 1915, Home/Political/Feb/1-2/Part 2, National Archives of India.

[37] R. H. Craddock, 'Resolution by the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi . . .', 1 July 1915, Home/Political/Feb/1-2/Part 2, National Archives of India.

[38] Lord Hardinge, 'Resolution by the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi . . .', 13 July 1915, Home/Political/Feb/1-2/Part 2, National Archives of India.

[39] Sinha, 'Whatever Happened to the Third British Empire? Empire, Nation Redux', 177.

[40] W. H. Clark, 'Resolution by the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi . . .', 15 July 1915, Home/Political/Feb/1-2/Part 2, National Archives of India.

represented by the Secretary of State, a member of the British Government, doubling Britain's weight at the Imperial Conference.[41]

One suggestion was to completely change the basis of representation at the Imperial Conference and allow all British colonies to be represented via a separate sub-group under Great Britain. This proposal would have formally created a two-tier system within the Imperial Conference in which India would have been grouped together with the rest of the non-European settled colonies. Yet, some officials were insistent that it was important to introduce some level of Indian representation in imperial affairs: 'If you refuse to hear her, you are putting a community of three-fourths of the King's subjects on the same level as the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands or St Helena'.[42]

Hardinge's main objective when supporting India's accession to the Imperial Conference was to maintain imperial loyalty. Similar requests had been made for an elevation of India's status in 1911 in the Legislative Council, and Hardinge was keen to show that the recent constitutional reforms in India were not a 'sham'.[43] Hardinge contacted Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, who agreed to lobby the British Cabinet, but also believed that the Dominions would not allow India to enter.[44] Not only would Indian membership possibly call into question the special status that membership of the Imperial Conference implied, it would also increase India's potential voice in the debate over immigration within the Empire.

Nonetheless, Shafi resubmitted a resolution in September 1915 to the Legislative Council. The resolution had strong support from many members who saw this as a way to differentiate India from other colonial 'dependencies'.[45] Shafi himself presented the resolution as the natural

[41] William Stephenson Meyer, 'Resolution by the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi …', 19 July 1915, Home/Political/Feb/1-2/Part 2, National Archives of India.

[42] R. H. Craddock, 'Resolution by the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi …', 19 July 1915, Home/Political/Feb/1-2/Part 2, National Archives of India.

[43] Lord Hardinge, 'Lord Hardinge to Austen Chamberlain', 29 July 1915, Home/Political/Feb/1-2/Part 2, National Archives of India.

[44] Austen Chamberlain, 'Austen Chamberlain to Lord Hardinge', 11 August 1915, Home/Political/Feb/1-2/Part 2, National Archives of India.

[45] 'Communication to the Secretary of State of a Copy of the Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, Dated on the 22nd September 1915, on the Occasion of the Discussion of a Resolution Moved by the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi on the Representation of India at the Imperial Conference', 16 June 1916, Home/Political/June/457–458/Part A, National Archives of India.

evolution of the Empire, in a similar fashion to the way Smuts would see the Dominion position within the Empire, but this time including India:

> so long as British politics were dominated by the 'Manchester School', which regarded self-governing institutions as only a step towards ultimate separation, this idea of a permanent Imperial Unity could obviously find no place in the political schemes which engrossed the minds of British statesmen in the middle of the nineteenth century.[46]

Shafi's denunciation of the centralised control of the variety of the 'Second British Empire' revealed the enthusiasm that many Indian moderates had towards emulating the Dominions in achieving devolved rule within the Empire. For them, autonomy with maintained loyalty to the Empire was still a feasible structure. Other members of the Legislative Council, such as C. Vijayraghavachariar, saw India's participation at the Imperial Conference as a 'very modest request', which ran the risk of India tacitly endorsing policies that were antithetical to Indians. If India could not stop resolutions that discriminated against Indian migration in the Empire at the Imperial Conference, then Indian politicians would be seen as complicit in perpetuating a racist policy.[47] Despite his reservations, the motion was carried unanimously.[48]

Simultaneous to the internal debates about India's representation at the Imperial Conference, was the Round Table's decision to start an inquiry into India's constitutional position within the 'Commonwealth', a term that the Round Table had begun to use in lieu of 'Empire' in 1914.[49] Aware of the debates happening over the future position of India, Lionel Curtis decided to ignore them when he published his book *The Problem of the Commonwealth* in 1915. The book was criticised by British scholars of India for leaving India out of a future federated Imperial Government, and prompted a point of clarification from Lord Milner, who wanted to divine Curtis's position on the future of India.[50] In his

[46] 'Communication to the Secretary of State of a Copy of the Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, Dated on the 22nd September 1915, on the Occasion of the Discussion of a Resolution Moved by the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi on the Representation of India at the Imperial Conference'.

[47] 'Communication to the Secretary of State of a Copy of the Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, Dated on the 22nd September 1915, on the Occasion of the Discussion of a Resolution Moved by the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Mian Muhammad Shafi on the Representation of India at the Imperial Conference'.

[48] Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939', 13.

[49] Morefield, *Empires without Imperialism*, 7.

[50] 'Lionel Curtis to Alfred Milner', 29 November 1915, MS. Curtis 2, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

book, Curtis had aggregated the colonial dependencies together with little analysis of each colony's internal situation, placing both Africa and India in the category as unprepared for self-government. Moreover, Curtis had taken to supporting the Dominion governments in their right to regulate Indian migration, believing that if the Dominions became majority Indian, they would lose their ability for 'responsible government'.[51]

It was primarily the question of India's relations with the Dominions which motivated Curtis's new focus on India in the summer of 1915. The Round Table had envisaged an ambitious post-war constitutional settlement between Britain, the Dominions, and the non-European colonies. The pinnacle of this project was the creation of an Imperial Parliament, independent of Westminster, which would deal primarily with imperial affairs, foreign policy, and governance of the non-European colonies.[52] Curtis realised that this Imperial Parliament could not exclude India from a post-war settlement, yet he did not want India occupying a similar position as the Dominions, until it had achieved self-government in some distant future. He believed that Britain should send representatives from the Government of India to attend the Imperial Conference after the war. Yet Curtis's focus was primarily aimed at involving the Dominions in the 'civilising mission' towards India, rather than softening Indians' opinion of the Empire. He hoped that the Conference would lead to a cross-imperial effort by Britain and the Dominions, to bring India to responsible government.[53] Moreover, he hoped to strengthen imperial identity by engaging the Dominions in more active participation in the so-called 'dependencies'.[54]

Although having been confronted with the issue of the status of Indians in South Africa, Curtis was generally ignorant of the politics and conditions within India. He travelled there in 1915 on the invitation of a former colleague from his days in the Kindergarten of South Africa, James

[51] Lionel Curtis, *The Problem of the Commonwealth* (Toronto: Macmillan & Co., 1915), https://archive.org/details/problemofcommonwoocurt/page/n3.

[52] The idea for Imperial Federation was not a new one and found some intellectual roots in the eighteenth century, yet it metamorphosed into a movement in 1884 under the Imperial Federalist League, Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 70.

[53] 'Lionel Curtis to James Meston', 16 July 1915, Mss Eur F136/11, British Library, India Office Records.

[54] 'Memorandum by the Round Table', 1 May 1916, Home/Public/May/278/Deposit, National Archives of India.

Meston; the Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces.[55] Meston was worried that the war-time mobilisation of Indian troops would motivate Indian politicians to make demands for self-government after the war, and wanted an opinion on what form of constitutional settlement might emerge in that eventuality.[56] Curtis began to disseminate a pamphlet to Government officials called 'Suggestions for Constitutional Progress in the Indian Polity', which mostly discussed the question of India's relationship to a future post-war Imperial Parliament, but also raised the issue of India's membership of the Imperial Conference. Curtis officially laid out his position that Indian participation at the Imperial Conference was 'not practical' so long as India was not self-governing.[57] The Government of India would need to begin devolving powers to an Indian legislative body before India could be properly represented at the Imperial Conference, but it delayed calls from both Indian and British officials that India should gain a seat immediately:

> This is not an essay on the problems of satisfying Indian aspirations, or allaying Indian unrest ... It is an attempt to indicate what progress appears possible now, or likely to be possible for a considerable time to come, in the direction of self-government.[58]

Despite Meston's close communication with Curtis throughout his travels in India, Meston secretly admitted to the new viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, that he found the Round Table's proposals 'disappointing'.[59] Yet even Curtis's limited vision was considered too grandiose, advocating a position for India within the imperial system that many in the Government of India were unprepared for.

The death knell of the Round Table scheme rang when one of Curtis's apparently secret letters to the editor of the Round Table journal, Philip Kerr, was made public. The letter, which was written on a ship to Bombay, laid out Curtis's vision for dramatically increasing the participation of the Dominions within the governance of India, complaining that the Government of India was too sensitive to the opinion of Indian

[55] Both would later go on in 1920 to found the Royal Institution of International Affairs at Chatham House, where a large portrait of Curtis still hangs at the entrance.

[56] 'James Meston to Lionel Curtis', 16 May 1915, Mss Eur F136/11, British Library, India Office Records.

[57] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 301.

[58] The Round Table, 'Suggestions for Constitutional Progress in the Indian Polity', May 1916, James Meston Papers, Reel 2, Nehru Memorial Library.

[59] 'James Meston to Lord Chelmsford', 8 May 1916, James Meston Papers, Reel 1, Nehru Memorial Library.

nationalists. Curtis argued that powers should be slowly devolved to Indian politicians, and that some limited participation of Indians in the Imperial Parliament should occur:

> We must do our best to make Indian Nationalists realise the truth that like South Africa all their hopes and aspirations are dependent on the maintenance of the British Commonwealth and of their permanent membership therein.[60]

Curtis also realised the unpopularity of the idea of Dominion rule in India and was willing to suffer potential 'bloodshed' in exchange for a long-term adherence of India to the Empire. Despite attempting to be seen as the herald of a new consensual imperialism, Curtis believed that imperial coercion remained an important part of maintaining India within the Empire.

On his arrival in Bombay, two hundred copies of the letter were printed, probably for distribution to Curtis's correspondences and different Government of India officials. With so many copies in circulation, one found its way to the Bombay Chronicle run by a pro-Home-Rule British editor, Benjamin Horniman. He was quick to publish Curtis's exchange, and it was soon replicated across the Indian press.[61] The scheme was met with general outrage, not just for the belief that Indians were not capable of self-government, but mostly for the increased role of the Dominions in governing India, which one newspaper in Allahabad deemed 'a bitter pill to swallow'.[62] Another newspaper, the Advocate, ran titles such as 'Beware of the Round Table. Beware of Curtis', and Indian politicians began warning the government that 'the letter will make the blood of the most moderate Indian boil. They are taking the line that it will be do more to awaken India than a thousand platform speeches and may well lead to anarchy and sedition'.[63]

To add fuel to the flames, the publication of Curtis's letter coincided with his attendance at the Indian National Congress in Lucknow, meeting leaders such as Tilak and Gandhi, whom Curtis knew from his time in

[60] 'Lionel Curtis to Philip Kerr', 13 November 1916, Home/Political/Jan/26/Deposit, National Archives of India.

[61] James DuBoulay, 'Papers on the Subject of a Letter from Lionel Curtis to Mr Phillip Kerr, Editor of the Round Table', 4 January 1917, Home/Political/Jan/26/Deposit, National Archives of India.

[62] 'Extract from Allahabad Based Newspaper "The Leader"', 6 January 1917, Home/Political/Jan/27/Deposit, National Archives of India.

[63] James DuBoulay, 'Papers on the Subject of a Letter from Lionel Curtis to Mr Phillip Kerr, Editor of the Round Table', 29 December 1916, Home/Political/Jan/26/Deposit, National Archives of India.

South Africa and who had returned to India in 1915. The Lucknow congress was also attended by the Muslim League, who hoped to make an alliance with the Indian National Congress to advance a greater representation of Indians at the Legislative and Executive Councils. The Congress and the Muslim League were still dominated by many Indian moderates, whose goal was greater participation within a British-led polity, rather than full self-government. However, Tilak's 'Home Rule' faction, backed by other significant INC (Indian National Congress) members such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Annie Besant, and Gandhi had gained significant traction within the party. The publication of Curtis's letter was a political tinder-box for Home Rule politicians (whom the British branded 'extremists'), with Tilak attacking the notion of India being governed by other colonies which would amount to racial discrimination against Indians.[64]

The letter also implicated the association of many top government officials, particularly Meston, with Curtis's views. His invitation to Curtis to come to India, as well as their regular correspondence, strengthened the belief that Curtis's scheme was government policy. It increased anger against the Raj, arguing that it was prioritising the racial concerns of the Dominions above the rights of Indians.[65] Though the Government of India did not have grounds for finding Curtis's writing seditious, they worried that any further publication, especially as Curtis intended to publish a book on India, would inflame anti-colonial agitation. In a bid to disassociate themselves from Curtis and the Round Table, the Government forbade any association or private communication between government officials and the Round Table.[66] Curtis had lost the support from his intended audience for his policy reform for India and was discredited in the eyes of most Indian politicians.

Nearly simultaneously to the scandal caused by Curtis's letter, other developments were unfolding which would lead to India's eventual

[64] 'L. Robertson to Sir James DuBoulay', 18 January 1917, Home/Political/March/26 & K.W/Deposit, National Archives of India.

[65] James DuBoulay, 'Papers on the Subject of a Letter from Lionel Curtis to Mr Phillip Kerr, Editor of the Round Table', 2 January 1917, Home/Political/Jan/26/Deposit, National Archives of India.

[66] James DuBoulay, 'Question and Answer in the Imperial Legislative Council and in the United Provinces Legislative Council in Connection with Lionel Curtis and Round Table Groups', 22 January 1917, Home/Political/June/143-144 & K.W/Part A, National Archives of India.

accession to the Imperial Conference. In December 1916, a week of political intrigue in London over Britain's lack of performance in the war led to a change of prime minister, as Herbert Asquith was replaced by Lloyd George, who established a cross-party war-cabinet involving the Conservative Party. Lloyd George, considering the vast contribution of troops sent by the Dominions, was keen for greater Dominion representation in the war effort, and decided to bring back the Imperial Conference system that had been suspended at the outset of the war. Moreover, Austen Chamberlain suggested that India should participate. This was met with uncertainty by the new Cabinet, which was unsure of elevating India's constitutional position so rapidly, and worried about the possibility of angering the Dominion premiers, for whom the War Conference was being held. A compromise was reached, in which the British government would push for the accession of India to an 'Imperial War Conference', an emergency conference to co-ordinate the war effort with the Dominions, rather than the permanent peacetime 'Imperial Conference'.[67]

Whilst the Dominions were not interested in governing India, as Curtis had originally suggested, they could not dismiss its position in the Empire and the sway it had on British policy. Though immigration from India had largely stopped during the war, the end of the conflict threatened to re-open the enduring wounds between the Dominions and India. A proposal for a political solution was promulgated by Curtis, who wanted to reconcile the Dominions and India. Instead of returning to the free movement of British subjects within the Empire, Curtis pushed for India to regulate its own immigration policy and to reciprocate by introducing its own immigration restrictions against the Dominions. This was a weak gesture, as the net number of Indians emigrating from India was considerably larger than the number of Dominion citizens moving to India, but Curtis hoped to enshrine India's growing equality with the Dominions.[68] Before Curtis's 'ex-communication' by the Government of India, he privately wrote to Meston who was to represent India, to forward his proposal, securing his input in the upcoming Imperial War Conference.[69]

[67] Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939', 14–16.

[68] 'Lionel Curtis to Lord Chelmsford', 2 November 1916, Mss Eur F136/11, British Library, India Office Records; Sinha, 'Premonitions of the Past', 826.

[69] 'Lionel Curtis to James Meston', 22 January 1917, Mss Eur F136/11, British Library, India Office Records.

THE IMPERIAL WAR CONFERENCE TO THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS

The Imperial War Conference of 1917 would be an important milestone in the growing status of India within the Empire, as well as in the idea of creating a League of Nations after the war. India's entry was lauded at the Conference as a significant moment in the country's constitutional progress, yet the delegation was not one of India's choosing. Representing India was its Secretary of State, Austen Chamberlain, accompanied by Meston with whom Curtis had regular correspondence. Two Indian representatives were also appointed: Ganga Singh, the Maharaja of Bikaner, and Satyendra Sinha, a veteran statesman and moderate reformer. The appointment of Singh helped to acknowledge that India's position at the Imperial Conference was a result of its wartime contribution, and of its continued loyalty to Britain. The Maharaja of Bikaner had been the first Indian prince to throw his support behind the war effort, raising funds and a camel corps which would fight in Egypt.[70] Whereas Singh represented the third of India under the control of the Princely States, the approximately 565 quasi-autonomous territories within British India, Sinha represented those parts directly ruled by the British. Sinha had served both on the Viceroy's Executive Council and as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1915. Sinha was from the 'old-breed' of the Congress, and even though he had been President for two years, his faction was being quickly superseded by the so-called 'extremists' in the party under Tilak (Figure 1.2).[71]

The fiction of India's representation through a British-led delegation with Indian appointees, was not lost on the Indian Press. The *Punjabee* based in Lahore wrote that: 'British statesmanship will be perpetrating one of the gravest blunders in its history if at this Conference India is represented only by official nominees who, judging from the achievements of Sir. S. P. Sinha, the Maharaja of Bikaner and Sir James Meston, are either unwilling or unable to give either faithful or strong expression to the views and wishes of the community.'[72] Indian members of the Legislative Council attempted to introduce a motion that would allow the Council to appoint members to the Indian delegation, a motion that

[70] Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939', 18–19.
[71] Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939', 17–18.
[72] 'Press Cutting from the Punjabee Lahore', *The Punjabee*, 6 May 1917, War-Dec.- 85–103- Part A, National Archives of India.

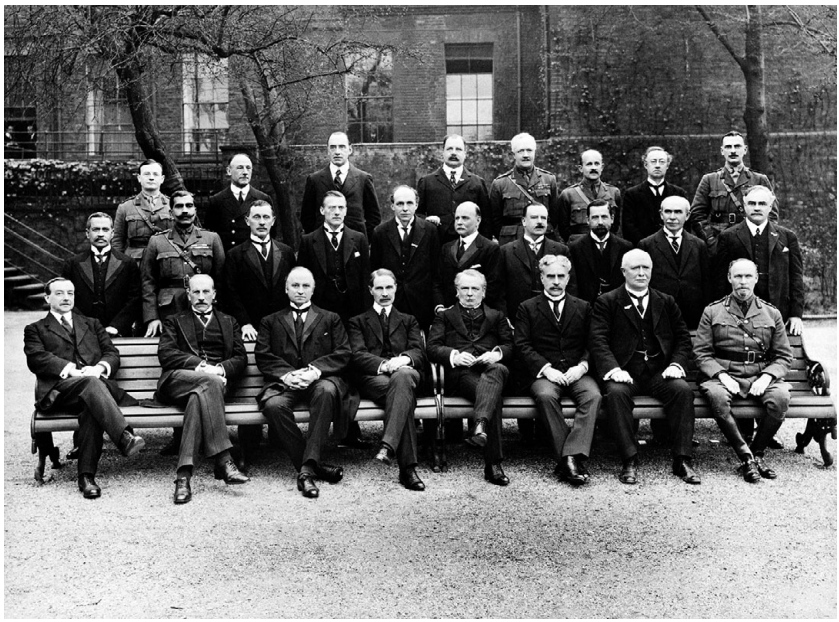

FIGURE 1.2 The Imperial War Cabinet of 1917. Left to right front row: Arthur Henderson (Labour Minister without portfolio), Lord Milner, Lord Curzon, Bonar Law (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Lloyd George, Robert Borden (Premier of Canada), William Massey (Premier of New Zealand), and Jan Smuts (Minister of Defence, South Africa). Middle row: S. P. Sinha, The Maharajah of Bikaner, James Meston (Lieutenant-Governor of United Provinces), Austen Chamberlain (Secretary for India), Lord Robert Cecil (Minister of Blockade), Walter H. Long (Colonial Secretary), Joseph Ward (Finance Minister, New Zealand), Sir George Perley (Minister of Canadian Overseas Forces), Robert Rogers (Canadian Minister of Public Works), and J. D. Hazen (Canadian Minister of Marine). Back row: Leo Amery, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe (First Sea Lord of the Admiralty), Sir Edward Carson (First Lord of the Admiralty), Lord Derby (Secretary for War), Major-General F. B. Maurice (Director of Military Operations, Imperial General Staff), Lieut-Col Sir M. Hankey (Secretary to Committee of Imperial Defence), Henry Lambert (Secretary to the Imperial Conference), and Major Storr (Assistant Secretary).
Source: The Imperial War Cabinet, 1 May 1917. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Imperial War Museums, www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205124978

was blocked by Sir William Vincent, the Council's Vice President. Vincent argued that India's representation had been highly successful, and that its place at the Imperial Conference was already a significant leap forward. When pressed on the issue, Vincent responded 'I cannot help feeling that the Hon'ble Member is on this occasion rather beating his head against

the wall.'[73] Nonetheless, the Imperial Conference had failed to quench the thirst for equality that many members at the Legislative Council sought, with Tej Bahadur Sapru calling out the injustice compared to the Dominions' ability to choose their own representatives. The leader of the Muslim League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, also raised the possibility that India would lose its representation altogether after the war, highlighting the legal distinction between the Imperial Conference and the Imperial War Conference.[74] The hollowness of India's representation was thus not lost on many Indian moderates, who repeated their demands for elected representation, rather than British appointment.

Without elected representatives, the War Conference was one that favoured Dominion objectives over Indian ones. Rather than championing the free movement of British subjects, the Conference adopted Curtis's 'solution' by implementing the principle of reciprocity in immigration controls.[75] With very few Dominion subjects settling in India, compared to the number of Indians migrating abroad, the right to control immigration was one of the many trinkets of autonomy to come, that as scholar Mrinalini Sinha put it, improved the status of India but not of Indians within the Empire.[76] Smuts, who before the war had been at the centre of the immigration issue with Gandhi, saw India's regular participation at the Imperial Conference, as a means to satiate Indian demands for an enhanced status in the Empire.[77] The Dominions, particularly South Africa which had the most exclusionary policies against Indians, were quick to approve Curtis's 'Reciprocity Resolution', which had been raised vicariously through the presence of Meston at the Conference.[78] The Imperial Conference had seemingly confirmed Vijayraghavacharia's warning at the Imperial Legislative Council, that India's membership of

[73] 'Extract from the Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council Assembled under the Provisions of the Government of India Act, 1915', 19 March 1918, Poll.- June- 91-112-Part A, National Archives of India.

[74] 'Extract from the Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council Assembled under the Provisions of the Government of India Act, 1915'.

[75] Imperial War Conference, London, and Walter Hume Long, *Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid before the Conference. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, May 1917* (London H.M. Stationery Off, 1917), http://archive.org/details/1917extractsfromooimpeuoft.

[76] Sinha, 'Premonitions of the Past', 827.

[77] 'Extract from Reuter's Government and Press Telegram, No. 116, Bombay', 19 May 1917, Home/War/Dec/85-103/Part A, National Archives of India.

[78] Sinha, 'Premonitions of the Past', 827.

the Imperial Conference could be used to legitimise policies that were counter to Indian political demands, for the equality of British subjects.

Whilst the Round Table had played an important role in resurrecting the Imperial Conference to revitalise the project for Imperial Federation, the increased representation of the Dominions in imperial affairs ultimately led to the shelving of notions such as the Imperial Parliament. By creating the Imperial War Cabinet, Lloyd George had committed himself to greater Dominion participation in the Empire's foreign affairs, as Federalists had long desired. Yet there was no taste among Dominion Premiers for the form of Imperial Federation that Curtis and the Round Table promulgated. Resolution IX of the Conference highlighted the Dominions' autonomy and right to a voice on Imperial foreign policy, rather than proclaiming the vision for a pooled Imperial Parliamentary model of Empire.[79]

A month after the conference, Smuts gave a speech at a parliamentary banquet in London entitled 'The British Commonwealth of Nations'. Riding on the tailwinds of the Imperial Conference, Smuts championed the notion of a British confederation, or Commonwealth, calling the British Empire a 'League of Nations'.[80] This he contrasted to Curtis's scheme for Imperial Federation, which had often been inspired by American-style federalism, which Smuts found to be an inappropriate model for the British Empire. What Smuts emphasised was not the notion of a shared British identity, but of shared liberal values within which different cultures could operate: 'The British Empire, or this British Commonwealth of nations, does not stand for unity, standardisation, or assimilation, or denationalisation; but it stands for a fuller, richer, and more various life among all the nations that compose it.'[81]

The speech had a significant impact on the direction of the post-war settlement with the Dominions. Letters were sent to Smuts congratulating him and declaring that his speech was the 'funeral of the Round Table'.[82]

[79] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 290–91; Imperial War Conference and Long, *Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid before the Conference. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, May 1917*.

[80] 'The British Commonwealth of Nations … a Speech Made by General Jan Smuts on May 15th, 1917' (Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), 10, archive.org, https://archive.org/details/britishcommonwea00smut.

[81] 'The British Commonwealth of Nations … a Speech Made by General Jan Smuts on May 15th, 1917', 7.

[82] Lewis Vernon Harcourt and Jean van de Poel, eds., '752. From Lord Harcourt Vol. 16, No. 172, 15th May 1917', in *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 518.

Smuts was also praised back in South Africa, for having 'approached questions of the war and of the future governance of the Empire from a point of view that is new to the public and you have also given expression to what most of us in the Dominions were thinking in a nebulous way. At any rate you have put the lid on Messrs. Lionel Curtis and Company'.[83] The speech also received support from the premiers of Canada, Robert Borden, and Australia, Billy Hughes, who supported the idea of an annual imperial conference, but did not think that an Imperial Parliament was 'feasible or wise'.[84] Smuts had been initially unsure of joining Lloyd George's broad church of a cabinet, that included Imperial Federalists like Milner, who still hoped to tie South Africa's new-found autonomy to the creation of the much vaunted 'Imperial Parliament'. Yet Smuts's involvement would come to dominate the Dominion policy, pushing the Empire towards confederation and separate representation.[85]

As the door began to shut on Imperial Federalism, it also began to close on Curtis's schemes in India. Indian administrators did not believe that Britain would give up its imperial powers over India, to be shared with Dominions that were reluctant themselves to govern Indian affairs. Whereas Curtis's scheme for India was met with 'violent opposition', India's participation at the Imperial War Conference was seen more positively and perceived by the Government of India as the constitutional path that India should follow.[86] Austen Chamberlain believed that the Imperial Conference had gone very well for India, and that 'any readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire shall be based on the recognition of India as an important portion of the Imperial Commonwealth, and that India shall be given an adequate voice in foreign policy and diplomatic relations, and included in any

[83] Sir T. Watt, '776. From Sir. T. Watt Vol. 18, No. 385, 5th September 1917', in *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, ed. Jean van de Poel, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 543–46.

[84] 'Arrangements for and Proceedings of the Imperial War Conference. Question of the Position of Indians in the Self-Governing Dominions and the Representation of India at Future Imperial Conferences', December 1918, Home/War/Dec/85–103/Part A, National Archives of India; Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 294–95.

[85] Margot Asquith, '768. From M. Asquith Vol. 15, No. 27, 19th June 1917', in *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, ed. Jean van de Poel, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 534.

[86] 'Arrangements for and Proceedings of the Imperial War Conference. Question of the Position of Indians in the Self-Governing Dominions and the Representation of India at Future Imperial Conferences'.

arrangements that may be made for continuous consultation in all important matters of common imperial policy'.[87]

Developments in India's major nationalist parties were also driving the British response to a post-war settlement. The 1916 Congress in Lucknow had led to a pact between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, which was now being increasingly led by the members of the Home Rule League. The Government of India was ruffled by this alliance, the rapidly evolving nature of Indian nationalism, and the demands for greater self-governance. Meston met Jinnah of the Muslim League for lunch after the Lucknow Pact, in a bid to gauge the support of the 'moderates' for the government. Jinnah claimed it was natural that the 'extremists' were gaining traction as they had a clear objective: self-government. The 'moderates' only stood for supporting the Government of India.[88] Yet even staunch moderates such as the Maharajah of Bikaner interpreted India's new status as a route towards self-government. He wrote to Austen Chamberlain suggesting that self-government would 'go a very long way in dispelling the uneasiness, impatience, disappointment, despondency and despair at present so markedly noticeable ... the ranks of the extremists and even of the Seditionists and Anarchists will be considerably diminished, if not entirely done away with'.[89] Yet Chamberlain, who was facing a political crisis over failures in the Middle East campaign, had reportedly 'broken' Bikaner's 'heart' when telling him 'that England was not in India for the purpose of letting it rule itself'.[90]

With Chamberlain's resignation as Secretary of State in July 1917, the next set of symbolic devolutions for India would be initiated by his successor, Edwin Montagu. There had long been an expectation in India for a substantial transfer of power to Indians after the war, as had been shown in 1916 by the Lucknow Pact and the growing success of the Home Rule movement. Although Montagu was reluctant to take the post of Secretary of State for India (knowing very little about India and preferring a greater role in the war effort), he was keen to reconcile Indian demands for self-governance within the limits of acceptability set

[87] 'Austen Chamberlain to Lord Chelmsford', 6 July 1917, Home/War/Dec/85–103/Part A, National Archives of India.

[88] 'Meston to Chelmsford', 11 January 1917, James Meston Papers, Reel 1, Nehru Memorial Library.

[89] 'Ganga Singh Maharaja of Bikaner to Austen Chamberlain', 15 May 1917, Meston Paper Reel 2, Nehru Memorial Library.

[90] 'James Meston to Lord Chelmsford', 25 July 1917, James Meston Papers, Reel 1, Nehru Memorial Library.

by the British Government. He attacked Austen Chamberlain and the Government of India for their performance in the war in Mesopotamia, a failed campaign in which the Indian army had played a dominant role, and argued for the reform of the Government of India.[91]

The speech marked Montagu out as a reformer, leading to the Conservatives in the Cabinet such as Lords Curzon and Balfour frowning upon his appointment as the Secretary of State for India. Lloyd George had made the appointment in anticipation of some sort of reform that could assuage the demands of the Indian political elite.[92] Montagu set out a strategy in a speech in Parliament on 20 August 1917, to bring India to 'responsible government'. The seeming promise towards growing self-governing institutions in India was well received by Indian politicians, who believed that Montagu had responded favourably to the Congress-League Scheme demands for 'self-government'. The term 'responsible government' however, was not an oratorial mistake, as had been widely believed. The term had been discussed beforehand and was supposed to distinguish Montagu's reform scheme from that of the Congress and Muslim League.[93]

Montagu, who in spite of his position as Secretary of State, was unfamiliar with India, embarked on a facts-finding mission to the subcontinent so as to collect information and opinions towards what shape his envisaged reforms would take. Montagu wrote to the Viceroy, expressing the difficulties in confronting the task of reconciling, the changing global *zeitgeist* towards national self-government, with British imperial demands in India: 'An autocratic and independent executive is common, self-governing institutions are now, (I don't ever quite know why), accepted as the only proper form of Government. How can you unite the two? Can you have a Government administered by an alien agency responsible to the people of the country itself?'[94] However, many senior British officials in the Government of India were dubious of Montagu's reform plans. Henry Richards, a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, scoffed at what form Indian 'Home Rule' would take: 'If it means Government by

[91] Edwin Montagu, 'Political Intrigues and Discussions', 22 July 1917, Mss Eur C965 : 1916–1919, British Library, India Office Records; 'Court of Inquiry. (Hansard, 12 July 1917)', https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1917/jul/12/court-of-inquiry-1.

[92] Montagu, 'Political Intrigues and Discussions'.

[93] Lionel Curtis, *Papers Relating to the Application of the Principle of Dyarchy to the Government of India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), 361.

[94] 'Montagu to Chelmsford', 21 September 1917, Mss Eur D523/1, British Library, India Office Records.

the people of India I wish Montagu could been on an elephant beside me the last few days or at the ferries and seen "the people"'.[95]

Finding what level of reform was acceptable to both Indian members of the Legislative Council who hoped for expansive devolutions of power, and British civil servants who warned that 'the delegation of real power should be exercised soberly and with discretion' was a conundrum for Montagu. India's accession to the Imperial Conference, instead of satiating the demands for devolution, had raised expectations of them. But it had simultaneously given the Government of India more room for manoeuvrability in terms of what could be devolved.[96] It was in this quandary that Montagu discovered Curtis and the Round Table in India, in December 1917, who were quickly taken by him.[97] Backed by significant members of the British Cabinet, especially Milner, Curzon, Robert Cecil, and to a lesser extent the Prime Minister, Curtis and the Round Table had found their way back into the circles of influence in India.[98]

'Dyarchy', as Curtis named his envisaged reforms, involved electoral devolution to Indian provinces that would work towards localised self-government, with a strong central executive in New Delhi. The executive itself would also be charged with recruiting Indians into the civil service, though senior positions would still be held by Europeans. The idea was to work towards building a form of sub-Dominion, where a semblance of self-government was devolved, though considerable power was still retained by the British administration. The intention was to put India onto a constitutional track under which it would gain full Dominion status in some distant future, when deemed ready for 'responsible government'. Bosco describes Dyarchy as 'an ingenious transitional device in the imperial tradition by which these moderate Indian critics of the Government could be mobilised in support of the Raj while general political education could be accelerated'.[99]

Dyarchy was an example of the progression towards a new form of imperial politics that would be partially replicated across the Empire during the 1920s and 1930s. By focussing on devolving the governance

[95] 'Sir Henry Richards to Meston', 24 October 1917, Meston Paper Reel 2, Nehru Memorial Library.
[96] 'Suggestions for Change in the Constitution of, and Powers Exercised by, Provincial Legislative Councils', 1917, Meston Paper Reel 2, Nehru Memorial Library.
[97] Deborah Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth: Biography of Lionel Curtis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 150.
[98] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 318.
[99] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 306.

of local concerns rather than those of an imperial or international level, Montagu sought 'maximum devolution' where possible and retained powers where he deemed necessary.[100] Indian politicians would become better represented within local decision-making, focussing on technical and economic matters rather than on the politics of the executive; imperial defence and foreign policy in particular were out of bounds.[101] Nonetheless, the initial promise of Dyarchy as a stepping stone towards Dominion status was very popular among Indian moderates, who aimed to revivify Curtis after his fall from grace in 1916. One of the architects of the Congress-League Scheme – Bhupendra Nath Basu, a former leader of Congress – engaged in a series of conversations with Curtis in April 1917. Basu acted as a litmus test for Curtis's ideas, which Curtis attempted to conciliate with Basu's Congress-League scheme, whilst simultaneously trying to draw Basu into the Round Table's Chapter in India.[102] For Montagu, Curtis's contacts with Indian moderate politicians, for whom the constitutional reforms were designed to assuage, made Curtis politically useful.[103]

Curtis's vision, however, did not include India occupying an independent role internationally, either in its diplomatic relations or within a future League of Nations. Curtis published his memoirs and letters on the formation of the notion of Dyarchy in 1920, after the enactment of the Government of India Act 1919. In his work entitled 'Dyarchy', Curtis spoke very little about India's international role, besides its role in the Imperial Conference and within Curtis's hypothetical 'Imperial Parliament'.[104] Moreover, Dyarchy itself seemed like more of a means for directing Indian aspirations inward towards local self-governance, leaving many significant levers of state such as foreign policy under the

[100] 'When we have begun to consider the reforms themselves, I think the line we shall have to go upon will be this. Let us decide first what is the maximum devolution to the Local Governments which can possibly be achieved at the present moment. Having got that maximum of devolution, then we can enquire as to the power of the Secretary of State in Council over the Viceroy, and the power of the Indian people over the local government'. 'I feel certain that the circumstances are now such that we shall have to make up our minds what is the maximum of self-governing institutions and responsible government which is safe, and now what is the least which is demanded by the situation'. 'Montagu to Pentland', 6 September 1917, Montagu Papers, Reel 2 Volumes 15–21, Nehru Memorial Library.

[101] 'Confidential Reports on the International Status of India', December 1927, Mss Eur D545/22, British Library, India Office Records.

[102] Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth: Biography of Lionel Curtis*, 143.

[103] Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth: Biography of Lionel Curtis*, 142.

[104] Curtis, *Papers Relating to the Application of the Principle of Dyarchy to the Government of India*, 122.

control of the Empire. It would not be from Curtis's line of political thought, that India would gain a seat at the League of Nations.

As Curtis and Montagu expected, the publication of the intended reforms in the spring of 1918 was praised by Indian moderates, who would gain more space for participation within the Government of India and local parliaments.[105] However, the plans were lambasted by many Indian nationalists for not fulfilling their demands for Home Rule, whilst on the other side of the aisle, British officials and settlers in India resented the expansion of Indian participation in the Government of India's administration.[106] This did not deter Montagu who declared that he did not 'care a brass farthing for the European community out here except the ICS (Indian civil service)'.[107]

With the knowledge that fully self-governing institutions would not be granted after the war, the Home Rule League began to put the Government of India under increasing international pressure. In early 1918, it came to the Government's attention that a prominent Indian politician had contacted Woodrow Wilson through an American couple who supported home ruler Annie Besant's Theosophical movement. Subramania Iyer, a renowned South Indian member of the Indian National Congress called upon Wilson to 'completely convert England to your ideals of world liberation'.[108] Even more embarrassing for the outraged Government of India was that Iyer, a Knight Commander of the Indian Empire (KCIE), had contacted a foreign government without their consent. Senior administrators discussed the best way to make an example of Iyer: by cutting his pension or removing his title, or by discrediting him, claiming that he had become senile in his old age. Debates in Parliament over the removal of Irish title holders were discussed as a possible precedent, but Iyer renounced his Knighthood before any action could be taken.[109] The Iyer incident represented an early episode into the effects of the so-called Wilsonian Moment. Home rulers in India now saw the United States as an important external actor to pressure Britain into awarding India self-rule. Iyer's letter was a harbinger

[105] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 316–20.
[106] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 322–23.
[107] Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth: Biography of Lionel Curtis*, 149.
[108] 'Subramania Iyer to Wilson', n.d., Home/Political/Sept/45–51/Part A, National Archives of India.
[109] 'Action Taken against Sir Subramania Iyer, K.C.I.E., in Respect of His Letter to the President of the United States of America on the Subject of Home Rule for India. Action Taken with Regard to the Renouncement by Him of His Titles of K.C.I.E. and Dewan Bahadur', 1918, Home/Political/Sept/45–51/Part A, National Archives of India.

of the future internationalisation of India's bid for self-governance, as well as that of other colonies.

THE PHILLIMORE REPORT: INDIA AT THE POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH UNION

At the same time as these increasing pressures of anti-colonial nationalism in the British Empire, the Allied Powers were seeking to devise international tools to maintain world order after the war. In early 1918, the creation of an international organisation was only one of several competing notions of what shape such devices might take. Wilson's 14th point, envisaged an 'association of nations' formed 'for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity'.[110]

Prior to 1918, there had been many civil society voices envisaging what shape such an 'association' would take, but the Fourteen Points fired a starting gun, as France and Britain created investigative commissions into the notion of a League of Nations.[111] Robert Cecil, a member of the Round Table and Under- Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was a strong advocate of the idea of a League of Nations. Cecil lobbied British Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour for an inquiry into the formation of such an organisation. Balfour established the 'Phillimore Committee' to investigate the best form that it might take. Whilst other Round Table members such as Phillip Kerr and Maurice Hankey wanted the League to be a form of Congress of the great powers, Cecil wanted to see a more concrete international organisation.[112]

Many British schemes for the League accentuated the desire of Britain and other Great Powers to occupy a place of predominance within the future organisation, alongside other 'great powers'. This was deemed a better reflection of the division of power within the international system than the notion of sovereign equality between states, big or small.[113]

[110] 'Avalon Project – President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points', 1919 http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp.

[111] For an in-depth history of the British civil society contributions to the idea of the League, including the 'Bryce' group, see Sakiko Kaiga, *Britain and the Intellectual Origins of the League of Nations, 1914–1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108774130.

[112] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 369–71.

[113] Committee on the League of Nations, 'Interim Report to A. Balfour'. (Committee on the League of Nations, 20 March 1918), Mss Eur F112/182 : October 1916–May 1919, British Library, India Office Records.

Despite debates about who should be represented, few saw the representation of non-self-governing colonies, or colonies at all for that matter, as a means for assuring British predominance at the League. Yet the inclusion of colonies as members of international organisations was not without precedent. When conducting the report, Phillimore aimed to draw from historical and current examples of the functioning of international organisations. Though there were no exact parallels in terms of scope, of what was hoped to be achieved with the League of Nations, other smaller technical organisations had existed since the 1860s. These were the International Telegraph Union (ITU) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU), based respectively in Geneva and Bern.[114] Though imperfect comparators to the League, in terms of their more limited scope, there were very few international organisations to draw examples from, and thus both were investigated by Phillimore.[115]

If the League of Nations were to take the shape of an international organisation, Phillimore worried that British power would not be adequately reflected in a 'one seat one vote' system. Yet an investigation of the ITU and UPU showed that the question had been dealt with already. The Postal Union, which began to function in 1874, was intended only for European states, with each state having one vote. The decision for equal votes was not favoured by most of the imperial members, whose size and influence could not be brought to bear on the UPU.[116] The treaties that would establish the UPU and ITU were conspicuously drafted in a vague fashion that left the political unit of membership open to interpretation. In the first year of the Postal Union's operation, no colonies were included among its members. However, from the outset, Britain began to look for a means of bringing colonies into the UPU's membership, via the proposition of sharing postage expenses with its colonies, which it also hoped would expand its share of the vote.[117]

[114] Sluga too mentions the connection between the Postal Union and the League regarding non-sovereign entities. Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 49.

[115] Committee on the League of Nations, 'Interim Report to A. Balfour'.

[116] James Donald Cotreau, 'Historical Development of the Universal Postal Union and the Question of Membership' (Boston, University of Fribourg, 1975), 93.

[117] 'A Brief Account of the Formation of the Postal Union, Its Gradual Extension to the Various Parts of the British Empire and the Reasons Which Have Hitherto Deterred the Australasian and South African Colonies from Joining the Union' (Darling and Son for Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1886), 5, IOR/L/PARL/2/316, British Library, India Office Records.

The British hoped to exploit the poor definition in the treaties that stated any 'country' could become a member, but which did not sufficiently define what constituted a county.[118]

On 15 November 1875, the Government of India sent an official request for membership of the UPU. Not to be left behind, France escalated the situation by expressing their desire to include their colonies as a bloc on 29 December. Two weeks later the Dutch and Spanish governments followed suit in requesting the admittance of their own colonial empires.[119] The UPU began to open its doors to colonial entities, greatly enhancing the influence of the imperial member states.[120] Thus a committee of the leading states in the UPU was created, which ruled in favour of the inclusion of British India and the French Colonies, whilst Dutch and Spanish colonies were temporarily rejected.[121] In 1877, the UPU was inundated by requests for admission from colonies of Britain, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Portugal.[122]

Attempts were made to regulate the influx of colonies into the UPU. The Russian government launched an official complaint in 1878 regarding the number of colonies that particularly Britain and France had introduced. This was finally resolved by defining that members could only be from large colonies with their own postal system, which meant that India and Canada remained, but Hong Kong and Jamaica, which had joined the year before, were ejected.[123] This added limited parameters to membership but did not counter the issue that colonies were being directed by their imperial state. Another major conference at Lisbon in 1885 also discussed the matter, when Britain tried to include its Australian and South African colonies as members. The outraged French, who warned that Britain's pursuit of multiple votes would 'destroy the harmony of the Postal Union', threatened to send applications from its own colonies, if

[118] Cotreau, 'Historical Development of the Universal Postal Union and the Question of Membership', 97.

[119] Cotreau, 'Historical Development of the Universal Postal Union and the Question of Membership', 86–87; Douglas Howland, 'An Alternative Mode of International Order: The International Administrative Union in the Nineteenth Century', *Review of International Studies* 41, no. 1 (January 2015): 162.

[120] Mazou Moussibahou, *The Universal Postal Union Past: Present and Future* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2004), 61.

[121] Cotreau, 'Historical Development of the Universal Postal Union and the Question of Membership', 90.

[122] Cotreau, 93–94.

[123] Howland, 'An Alternative Mode of International Order', 171.

British colonies became members.[124] Britain accused them of 'extreme jealousy', and advocated for two votes for its Australasian colonies, one each for Australia and New Zealand.[125] The European powers found this excessive, and Germany made the case that it had only one vote, despite Germany's federal nature.[126]

This rush by empires to include colonial entities as UPU members helped maximise vote share without necessarily advocating for a colony's autonomy. Howland claims that the technical nature of the activities of these forms of administerial organisations that worked to regulate postal rates, provided an acceptable minimum threshold of admission, whereby colonies could be included without threatening the indivisibility of the imperial member states.[127] Furthermore, at the time of the UPU's creation, there were considerably fewer anti-colonial nationalist movements, in comparison to those emerging during the World War. Even in the Dominions, the desire for separate representation was often of less significance than the financial burdens that their representation would incur. Postmasters in the Australian and South African colonies wrote against their separate membership, suggesting that it would be likely to prompt a financial loss if they were to share a greater burden of the costs.[128] The demand from the colonial periphery for membership and some form of international recognition, which had become increasingly prevalent after the World War, was not particularly present in the nineteenth century.

Despite the fundamental difference of purpose between the Postal and Telecommunications Unions and that of the proposed League, both were investigated as possible precedents for models of representation at the League. In the many nebulous conceptions which proliferated during the war on what shape the League of Nations might take, the dialectic between the equality of states and the desire of Great Powers to wield more influence was not ignored by those theorising the future shape of the League:

[124] 'Extract from Report of the British Delegates to the Third Congress of the Universal Postal Union, Held at Lisbon', 21 April 1885, 36, IOR/L/PARL/2/316, British Library, India Office Records.

[125] 'Extract from Report of the British Delegates to the Third Congress of the Universal Postal Union, Held at Lisbon'.

[126] 'Extract from Report of the British Delegates to the Third Congress of the Universal Postal Union, Held at Lisbon'.

[127] Howland, 'An Alternative Mode of International Order', 180.

[128] 'A Brief Account of the Formation of the Postal Union, Its Gradual Extension to the Various Parts of the British Empire and the Reasons Which Have Hitherto Deterred the Australasian and South African Colonies from Joining the Union', 20–21.

I doubt whether great States or Commonwealths will be content with the suggested equality of representation in the College of Judicial Selections and in the Council of Conciliation. Would the Commonwealth of Nations which we are accustomed to call the British Empire be entitled in its entirety to only as many representatives as, say Montenegro, or the Republic of Panama? Would Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa be entitled to representation? And if so to equal representation with each other and with the Mother Country – and with the United States of America and Russia?[129]

By 1919, however, the idea of separate representation for colonies had become increasingly invalidated.[130] The Hague Conferences of 1898 and 1907 had begun to adopt a binary approach as to who was entitled to speak internationally.[131] The United States in particular wanted to deny the entry of European colonies as participants of the Hague Conferences, invalidating the numerous potential votes that the empires could bring to the negotiations. However, the United States outraged the British negotiators at the Hague in 1907, by simultaneously supporting the equality of states, whilst inviting many of its Latin American quasi-protectorates to attend.[132] The same charges of American hypocrisy would be levelled at the Paris Peace Conference, but Britain realised that it was swimming against the normative tide by including its colonies. Phillimore acknowledged this, claiming that if colonies were included in a future League of Nations, it would be 'resented' and that he had 'shrunk' from the option of including colonies.[133] If Britain pushed too hard for colonial representation, it could anger the allies and delegitimise future peace talks.

The changing attitude towards separate representation meant that alternative means would have to be devised by Britain, in order to guarantee its influence at the League: 'Most of them (different plans for League of Nations) would create an artificial body of eight Great Powers – the old six European Great Powers, with the United States and Japan added, but excluding China and would eliminate from the League, and therefore from voice in Court or Council, what they call backward or

[129] 'W.P. Schreiber to W.H. Dickinson', 21 December 1917, DAV 325, British Parliamentary Archive.
[130] Committee on the League of Nations, 'Interim Report to A. Balfour.'
[131] Howland, 'An Alternative Mode of International Order', 162.
[132] The Platt Amendment of 1901 declared Cuba to be a 'virtual Protectorate', whilst the United States pushed the Colombian Government to release Panama as a defacto American Protectorate in 1903. Frederick Charles Hicks, 'The Equality of States and the Hague Conferences', *The American Journal of International Law* 2, no. 3 (1908): 543–48.
[133] Committee on the League of Nations, 'Interim Report to A. Balfour'.

half-civilised States'.[134] The Phillimore Report invoked the language of civilisation, to maintain a core of Westernised states (including Japan), at the head of the organisation, but it did not intend for smaller European states or South American states to have a leading role.[135] If the representation of colonies at the League of Nations was no longer politically acceptable, the Great Powers would maintain their influence by promoting themselves to a higher position than other states, via the creation of a League Council.

By the time of the Armistice with Germany, there was a consensus among the different schemes of the Great Powers, that colonial representation would not be the basis of maintaining a higher vote share. Early French plans excluded the direct representation of colonies by stating that only representative forms of government could sit at the League, in a bid to disenfranchise Germany and the Central Powers: 'En conséquence, n'y peuvent être admises que les nations constituées en Etats et pourvues d'institutions représentatives permettant de les considérer comme responsables elles-mêmes des actes de leur propre Gouvernement'.[136] The French plan to restrict membership to 'representative' governments, irritated the British proponents of the League of Nations, such as Robert Cecil, less because of the representation of colonies, than the alienation it would further reinforce with Germany.[137] Even within the British administration, there were strong voices against splitting British membership. The members of the Round Table that still supported the federalisation of the Empire's foreign policy through an Imperial Parliament, saw separate representation as an existential threat to their project.[138] Represented by Lord Milner in Cabinet, the Round Table was reluctant to engage in the question of Dominion and Indian representation. At the Imperial Conference, Lloyd George claimed that Milner's Committee had 'thrown cold water' on the idea of the League of Nations.[139]

[134] Committee on the League of Nations. [135] Committee on the League of Nations.

[136] Translation: 'Consequently, only nations constituted as states and endowed with representative institutions which allow them to be held responsible for the acts of their own government can be admitted' 'Report of the Committee Appointed by the French Government', 8 June 1918, Mss Eur F112/182 : October 1916–May 1919, British Library, India Office Records.

[137] 'Robert Cecil to Colonel House', 22 July 1918, Mss Eur F112/182, British Library, India Office Records.

[138] Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire*, 427–28.

[139] David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, vol. 4 (London: I. Nicholson & Watson, 1934), 1751.

Without knowing what form the League would take, the British Government did not condone what it saw as premature propaganda on the topic of the League, especially in its non-Dominion colonies. With nationalist movements rapidly gaining traction throughout the Empire, the Government did not want to disseminate the notion that colonies would have a right to membership at the peace talks or in a future League of Nations. In August 1918, the Ministry for Information contacted the Colonial Office on whether it should distribute a pamphlet in Ceylon authored by Viscount Grey of Fallodon, a leading Liberal politician and a vocal supporter of the idea of a League of Nations. The response from the Colonial Office was unanimous disapproval, claiming that 'the idea of a League of Nations has not yet crystallised in the West' and that 'The tone is too despondent and it assigns too much leadership to the U.S.A – moreover Ceylon may want to be one of the nations in the League'.[140] The formative idea of the League could not be publicly propagated, especially in colonies, until a clearer notion emerged of what the League was and who would be in it.

The warning signs that the Dominions would not be satisfied with their current constitutional status became increasingly clear over the summer of 1918. The Australian Premier, Billy Hughes, exclaimed that the Dominions were no longer colonies, but part of a 'League of free nations', in which the Dominions should be equal partners to Britain. They wanted direct and equal access to the Prime Minister in talks, rather than by passing their communications through the Colonial Office. To think otherwise was to reinforce a status quo that was deemed by Hughes as 'archaic' and 'atrophied'.[141] It was also clear that the Dominions had a special interest in the League of Nations, and though separate representation at the League had not yet been guaranteed, the Dominions wanted to be present at panels and committees considering the League's formation.[142] The collapse of the German army in the autumn of 1918, brought the question of who would be represented at the Peace Conference, to the forefront of discussions.

[140] 'Propaganda Pamphlet on the League of Nations', 24 August 1918, CO 323/788/61, The National Archives (UK).

[141] London Imperial War Conference and Walter Hume Long Long, *Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid before the Conference. Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, October 1918* (London H.M. Stationery Off, 1918), 156, http://archive.org/details/1918extractsfromooimpeuoft.

[142] 'Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet Held at 10, Downing Street', 2 October 1918, CAB/23/8, UK National Archives.

On 29 October, the armistice that would later be signed on 7 November (and would come into effect on 11 November), was negotiated in Paris by British, French, and American representatives. Britain included neither the Dominion Premiers, nor the members of the Government of India or India Office at the negotiations. Lloyd George correctly believed that the Dominions' main war objective would be the annexation of German colonies, and that if this goal was achieved, separate representation would not be necessary. During the armistice negotiations, Lloyd George approached American diplomat 'Colonel' Edward House, offering the United States 'trusteeship' of German East Africa, if they accepted the annexation of German colonies in southern Africa and the Pacific by the British Dominions, so as to avert a 'revolution in those Dominions'.[143] Round Table proponent and Parliamentary Under-Secretary Leo Amery wrote to Smuts, warning that the Dominions would not make any gains out of the misconception of their status, which was that of British possessions, and that taking control of German colonies should act as a substitute for greater independence.[144] Despite trying to secure greater territorial annexation for the Dominions, their exclusion from the talks provoked outrage from the Dominion leaders. Hughes again expressed the most public dismay at Australia's lack of representation, while Canada and South Africa had sent delegates to London as a sign of their preparedness for representation. Even the India Office had released a memorandum on their war aims. The British Government was no longer able to exclude separate representation from its official policy, without severely provoking Dominion politicians.[145]

The British Government believed it to be workable to have just one delegate for all the Dominions and India collectively. Nevertheless, Lloyd George wanted a selection of Indian delegates ready for the Conference, with a preference for the Maharajah of Bikaner to represent Indian princes and S. P. Sinha to represent British India:

> You will understand that the Prime Minister and I regard it as of the highest importance that both the representatives of British India and of the Princes should

[143] 'Edward House to US Secretary of State Robert Lansing, 30th October 1918', in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919. Paris Peace Conference*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 407.

[144] Lewis Vernon Harcourt and Jean van de Poel, eds., '848. From L.S. Amery Vol. 19, No. 16, 1st November 1918', in *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 682–84.

[145] Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939', 32–33.

be available here to show the world that we are not neglecting India in the peace discussions.[146]

Schmidt has argued that Lloyd George brought separate Indian representation into government policy for short-term political needs, fearing a party coup by his previously usurped Liberal rival Asquith, at the upcoming elections. Asquith may have intended to buy Montagu's loyalty by permitting Indian access to the Paris Peace Conference, though this has not been archivally substantiated.[147] Rather than present this very rapid development in India's constitutional position as a moment of great symbolic change, the decision had been hastily placed at Montagu's feet. The Secretary of State for India admitted, that the government had not anticipated the 'sudden collapse' of the German armed forces, and was unprepared to find and send delegates from India to France in such a short timeframe.[148] Nonetheless, Montagu and Lloyd George believed that tried-and-tested delegates from the Imperial Conference such as Bikaner and Sinha would be the strongest representatives for India, within a British delegation at the Peace Conference.[149]

With British Government policy now supporting the representation of the Dominion and Indian leaders within the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, Lloyd George was hard-pressed to find a solution that would not be rejected out of hand by the other Great Powers. The British proposed that the Great Powers would each get seven delegates, in a bid to give three of its delegates to the three most outspoken Dominions: Canada, South Africa, and Australia. Britain would keep four delegates, who could potentially overrule the other three.[150] The French, who had tacitly disapproved of separate representation, explicitly made it clear to the United States that it was 'imperative' to limit the size of delegations 'to avoid for instance the individual representation claimed by the important English colonies (a principle which cannot be allowed, for why should not a similar claim be presented by each of the different States composing the Federation of the United States)'.[151]

[146] 'Montagu to Chelmsford', 13 November 1918, Foreign & Political/Internal/March/65/Part B, National Archives of India.
[147] Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939', 35.
[148] 'Montagu to Chelmsford', 13 November 1918.
[149] Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939', 35.
[150] 'Edward House to US Secretary of State Robert Lansing, 15th November 1918', in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919: The Paris Peace Conference*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 349.
[151] 'Edward House to US Secretary of State Robert Lansing, 15th November 1918'.

The United States Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, agreed that the principle of separate representation should be disallowed.[152] However, he did not have the same qualms about states in Latin America that were under American domination: 'It is, of course, true that Liberia, Cuba, Haiti and Panama, are practically under the direction of the United States, and this might also be said of Nicaragua, but this fact is hardly one which can by us be emphasized according to the suggestions of the French Note.'[153] Moreover, the American legal advisor David Hunter Miller was worried about the inclusion of governments which the United States had not recognised at the Peace Conference. They believed that by entering the League, they would tacitly recognise the Tinoco government in Costa Rica.[154] The United States argued that the formal, *de jure* independence of states was a more important factor than the *de facto* independence of their foreign affairs, a distinction that notably benefitted the United States over the colonial empires. Moreover, the United States sought to exclude states' access to the Peace Conference based on their international recognition, despite the case that Costa Rica was recognised by other states and had declared war on Germany in May 1918.

Initially, it seemed that the Paris Peace Conference would perpetuate the norms of the Hague Conference by disallowing the participation of colonies. With little time left before the pre-conferences to the official Paris Peace Conference, Smuts presented a note to the Imperial War Cabinet, stating the Dominions' case for representation. He proposed a panel system where Dominion Premiers would be represented, if the topic of negotiation concerned them. Without adequate representation, Smuts warned, that in anticipation of back-room deals and compromises in Paris, what was agreed at the Imperial War Conference would be ignored. Therefore, to avoid a situation that would 'take the Dominions by surprise and lead to regrettable results', Smuts advocated Dominion representation at Paris as British Imperial Policy. Despite tying his proposal for Dominion representation to their status within the Imperial War Cabinet, of which India was a member, India was notably absent from Smuts's demands.[155]

[152] 'Edward House to US Secretary of State Robert Lansing, 15th November 1918'.

[153] 'Memorandum by D. H. Miller on Revised French Proposals on November 21st 1918', in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919: The Paris Peace Conference*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, n.d.), 355.

[154] 'Memorandum by D. H. Miller on Revised French Proposals on November 21st 1918', 355.

[155] Jan Smuts, 'Dominion Representation at the Peace Conference', 25 November 1918, CAB 24/70/74, UK National Archives.

The note was presented the following day at the Imperial War Conference, but Lloyd George was not prepared to make a decision on Smuts's proposal without the approval of the Foreign Office and postponed the topic until Arthur Balfour attended. Meanwhile, the Dominions began to turn their attention to the League of Nations. They did not initially intend to be represented separately but wanted the right to raise the issue of annexing German colonies into their Dominions at the Conference. Some Dominion Premiers such as Australia's Billy Hughes, were hostile to Wilson's plan for a League, fearing that it impinged on their immigration policy of maintaining a 'White Australia', giving access to further migration from China and India. Smuts aimed to reassure the other Dominion Premiers that his own draft vision of the League was under way and would soon be presented.[156]

With mounting pressure from the Dominion Premiers on Lloyd George for representation, Montagu precipitated to make similar demands for India, on the basis of it being a member of the Imperial War Cabinet and in recognition of India's war-time involvement.[157] In a meeting between the Imperial War Conference and French and Italian Premiers Clemenceau and Orlando, Lloyd George raised the question of the representation of the Dominions, stating that some of the issues at the impending Conference would likely concern them disproportionately. The Allied representatives conceded this, as long as they were represented within the British panel during discussions among the major belligerents of the war. Erstwhile, they would have the status of 'small states', similar to that of Belgium, Serbia or the Hedjaz.[158] Lloyd George requested India's representation on the same basis as the Dominions, based on the considerable number of soldiers it had mobilised. Clemenceau relented, and so India too, would join the Dominions at the Paris Peace Conference.[159] Rather than states being equally represented, the Paris Peace Conference would reflect perceived power and war contribution

[156] 'Minutes of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, Held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. on Tuesday, November 26, 1918, at 12 Noon', 26 November 1918, CAB 23/42/9, UK National Archives.

[157] Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939', 34.

[158] 'Tasker Bliss to Henry White, 9th January 1919', in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919: The Paris Peace Conference*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 385–97.

[159] 'Notes on an Allied Conversation Held in the Cabinet Room, 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, 3rd December, 1918, at 11.15 Am', 4 December 1918, CAB 23/42/12, UK National Archives.

as the basis for their number of votes. However, this was not well-received by many of the Dominion leaders, that had contributed more manpower and had incurred more casualties than the United States had done. The Dominion Premiers insisted that Lloyd George push harder for an increased status, when the Paris Peace Conference began.[160]

The final display of Dominion input prior to the opening of the Conference was Smuts's publication of his vision of the League of Nations. Its relatively unassuming title 'The League of Nations, A Practical Suggestion' disguised a radically imperial and Dominion-centric role for the League of Nations. Where many British politicians had wanted a League that reflected the governance of the Great Powers, not unlike what had existed in the post-Napoleonic period, Smuts envisaged a more ambitious form of collective security.[161] Smuts believed that the nation-state was the ultimate state of human organisation after considerable evolution, but that its expansionist passions should be tempered by supranational organisations. For Smuts, only one model of governance in the world reflected this link between national autonomy and the supranational: the British Empire, or at least since its turn towards the Commonwealth. 'Today the British Empire remains the only embryo league of nations because it is based on the true principles of national freedom and political decentralisation.'[162] Despite this paean to the British Empire, most senior British politicians detested the plan, and rejected the idea of a strong League capable of intervening in British imperial affairs. Regardless of their ambivalence to his project, Smuts had shown how South African and other Dominion ambitions were rapidly outgrowing their status, and how they could potentially make a bid for their own representation at a future League of Nations.[163]

CONCLUSION

The decision in December 1918 that Britain would support the dividing up of the Empire's representation at the Paris Peace Conference, an

[160] Schmidt, 'India's Role in the League of Nations, 1919–1939', 35–36.
[161] Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 40–41.
[162] Jan Christiaan Smuts, *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion* (London Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), 9, http://archive.org/details/leagueofnationspoosmutuoft; Smuts also presented the idea of the Mandates System for ex-German and Ottoman territories, but likely poached the idea from Lionel Curtis who published an article called 'Windows of Freedom' that envisaged American governance of Mandates. Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth: Biography of Lionel Curtis*, 161.
[163] Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 41–43.

important stepping stone towards representation at the League, was a product of both internal structural changes within the Empire as well as external pressure. Much of the impetus came from within the Empire's semi-periphery, Britain's Dominions, that perceived their contributions to the war effort as a platform for statehood. However, though many of the Dominion Premiers, particularly Smuts and Borden, championed maximising Dominion autonomy, they still believed in retaining strong links with Britain.

The result of Dominion representation at the Peace Conference was not the outcome sought by the Round Table that championed the Dominions' domestic autonomy but believed that the Empire should present a united front in foreign affairs. By the end of 1918, the so-called 'purer gospel' of the Round Table movement, Imperial Federalism, had reached a dead end.[164] Yet it was the Round Table's empowerment of certain actors who championed autonomy, that led to Dominion representation at the Paris Peace Conference. From their outset in South Africa, the Round Table's forerunner, Milner's Kindergarten, had looked for a leader like Jan Smuts as a model for the new empire of nations, united by a common imperial cause. In building a Dominion in South Africa out of the Cape Colonies and Afrikaner Boer states, Milner and his followers had raised Smuts to a position of power, and by including them in the Imperial Conference, had granted him an important voice in imperial affairs.

The Round Table and Curtis were often the victims of their own creations and their unintended consequences. The growing autonomy of the Dominions and their increasing segregation of non-European Subjects of the Empire caused a collision between the 'Third' and 'Second' models of the British Empire. Catalysed by the war, this clash of imperial visions threatened the stability of the whole Empire, as nationalist movements and insurgent groups multiplied. This conflict had been first witnessed in South Africa between Smuts and Gandhi, over the question of Indian migration and Indian rights, and would further escalate in India's domestic politics. Their response to this quandary was to extend the notion of nation-building within the Imperial model. Yet its application in India was always intended to be a half-way house. Curtis's visit to India may have convinced him of India's future viability for Dominion status, but to him it was a status to be applied in the distant future.

[164] Lewis Vernon Harcourt and Jean van de Poel, eds., '835. From L.S. Amery Vol. 19, No. 9, 8th July 1918', in *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 664–65.

This model of formal elevation but *de facto* status quo was manifested in India's participation alongside the Dominions in the Imperial Conference. The project of representing India at the Conference was one borne out of the efforts of Indian politicians themselves, who did not share the perception of India's role at the Imperial Conference as symbolic, but as a forum to champion the rights of Indians and India within the Empire. For Curtis and the Round Table, the desire shown by Indian politicians for a role in the Imperial Conference revealed the possibility of appeasing the Indian moderates whilst building the fictitious notion of Indian statehood, by offering them some form of international outlet. Curtis was not so cynical as to want to deny true Indian representation and believed that the Conference should offer a space for Indian politicians to voice their grievances, to resolve the inter-imperial conflict over imperial citizenship and immigration. However, it was unlikely that the British Government of the time would loosen its control. The appointment of Indian delegates to the Imperial War Conference by British Officials rather than by Indians at the Legislative Council, was seen as a betrayal by many Indian politicians. Though their push for greater imperial participation had provided some of the impetus, the form in which India took its place at the Imperial Conference was not one of the Indian moderates' designs.

Despite being seen as a significant milestone in the Round Table's vision for the Empire, the Imperial Conference in 1917 that Curtis and others had believed to be a precursor to the Imperial Parliament, would actually confirm the Empire's future confederal nature, at least for the Dominions. The Round Table had empowered the Dominions, but the Dominion leaders did not share their vision of Imperial Federation. The Dominions' successful efforts to gain representation at the Peace Conference only a year later showed how quickly Dominion policy had veered away from Milner and Curtis's ideal. Dominion leaders had effectively cut out the middleman, the Round Table, and had become an effective negotiating force on their own terms. As Lloyd George remarked, 'There was a time when Downing Street ruled the Empire. Now the Empire rules Downing Street.'[165]

The increasing autonomy and voice that the Dominions would now be able to mobilise in imperial affairs, would not be enjoyed by Indian politicians. The rejection of Imperial Federation led to a redoubling of

[165] Quoted in James Henry Powers, *Years of Tumult: The World Since 1918* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1932), 165 in Morefield, *Empires without Imperialism*, 10.

efforts in analysing India's role within the Empire. Curtis's partnership with Montagu to devolve increasing self-governance to India was not one that reflected India's position alongside the Dominions at the Imperial Conference. India was already an anomaly within the imperial system before it had even entered the Peace Conference or the League of Nations. The same mechanism of notional granting of devolutions of power, that suggested India's autonomy, internationalisation, and statehood, while devolving little materially, which was implied by India's membership of the Imperial Conference, was a precursor to a similar form of fictitious sovereignty that would soon be played out at the League of Nations. Yet despite the apparent inequalities disguised in India's membership of the Imperial Conference and the League, it was formally demarcated in a position of superiority over the rest of the Empire.

These tactically chosen devolutions of power were not necessarily perceived as a form of decolonisation by imperial reformers, despite pressure from Indian politicians and more militant groups, but rather as the rise of a new form of imperial governance. Many of the architects of the 'Third British Empire' did not see their actions as decolonisation either, but as cementing the ties between Britain and its colonies through a new constitutional compromise. The commitment of these reformers to devolving increasing statehood, in order to increase ties to the Empire, calls into question the simple binary of measuring decolonisation by the level of statehood. Though the two are not disconnected, the work of the Round Table showed how the increasing attributes of statehood within the Empire, or 'Dominionisation', was not necessarily the same as independence.[166] Despite its doubtful premises, this form of imperial governance was to markedly distinguish Britain from other colonial empires, when the Paris Peace Conference finally opened in January 1919.

[166] Hopkins describes Dominion status as 'a characteristically ambiguous imperial invention that recognised various states of self-government while managing to convey overtones of continuing subordination'. Hopkins, 'Rethinking Decolonization', 212.