Britain and Indian nationalism

The imprint of ambiguity 1929–1942

D.A. LOW

Emeritus Smuts Professor of the History of the British Commonwealth in the University of Cambridge and University Fellow, The Australian National University

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1 Introduction: contemporary encounters

> Damn the Americans. Why don't they tyrannize us more?
>
> Manuel Quezon, President of the Philippines Senate

> The Gandhis and the De Valeras would have long since entered heaven had they been born in one of the French colonies.
>
> Ho Chi-minh, *L'Humanité*, 25 May 1922

> There is no more slippery customer than the British Government. The British Government are past masters in the art of political chicanery and fraud, and we are babes at their game. We can never in future listen to any declaration unless action follows. Jawaharlal Nehru, January 1931

On 8 November 1927 Lord Birkenhead, Britain's Secretary of State for India, announced the appointment of a statutory commission under the chairmanship of the Liberal politician, Sir John Simon, to review the Indian constitution. No Indian was appointed to it. The Indian nationalist elite of all colours was outraged, and over the next two years there built up in India the potential for another major countrywide agitation of the kind that Gandhi had led in the early 1920s. In October 1929, in an attempt to preempt this, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, formally declared that in the British view 'the natural issue of India's constitutional progress . . . is the attainment of Dominion Status', and announced the calling of a Round Table Conference in London on constitutional reform. This, however, served to assuage very few, and in March 1930 Gandhi launched the Indian National Congress upon a major Civil Disobedience campaign. That was vigorously repressed, and twelve months later, following an agreement between Gandhi and Irwin, it was formally called off. Yet early in 1932 Civil Disobedience was renewed. This time it was even more resolutely repressed; and as a consequence by the mid 1930s Congress gradually moved towards participating once again in the constitutional politics on which the British set great store.

To its delight Congress then won substantial electoral victories, first at the elections for the central legislature in 1934, and then more particularly in the provincial elections in 1937. Following upon these latter, despite

some initial hesitation, Congress came eventually to form 'responsible' governments, in accord with the provisions of the new Government of India Act of 1935, in seven of the eleven provinces of India. But two years later, on the outbreak of the Second World War, in protest against the determination of the British to deny Indian political leaders anything but a merely advisory role in the mobilising of Indian support for the war effort, these Congress ministries resigned, and over the ensuing year a further nationalist agitation began to mount. In August 1940 Gandhi declared that this should take the form of a succession of individual acts of civil disobedience rather than a mass movement since eight years before the British had shown how quickly they could defeat that.

Sixteen months later this campaign was overtaken by very much larger events, when late in 1941 the Japanese launched their assault upon the western empires in South and Southeast Asia. At this critical juncture the British Government sent Sir Stafford Cripps to Delhi to try to effect a settlement with the Congress leaders. But since the Cripps Offer fell short of their immediate demands, it was summarily rejected. As it happened the Japanese were then checked at the gates of India. But not before the Congress had launched its great 'Quit India' movement of August 1942, the largest uprising the British had ever had to face in India since 1857. Whilst this was repressed, sometimes brutally, the tide had now turned, for by the terms of the Cripps Offer the British had promised that once the Second World War was over they would grant India the independence it had sought for so long, and in 1947 amid a great deal of turmoil proceeded to do so.

That is the conventional story of India's political history from the late 1920s to the mid 1940s, such as will be found in every standard account.[1]

Over recent decades the story has been filled out in a number of different directions. There have for a start been a number of important accounts of the British side. These have included studies of the Irwin Viceroyalty, of the Round Table Conferences, and of Linlithgow's Viceroyalty,[2] together with a particularly valuable account of the economic side of Britain's involvement in India in the years before independence.[3] Upon the central

[1] The most recent include S. Wolpert, *A New History of India*, New York 1977; S. Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947*, Delhi 1983; J.M. Brown, *Modern India. The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 2nd edn, Oxford 1994; B. Chandra *et al.*, *India's Struggle for Independence 1857–1947*, Delhi 1988. See also J.M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power. Indian Politics 1915–1922*, Cambridge 1972, and *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics*, Cambridge 1977.

[2] S. Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin 1926–1931*, Oxford 1957; R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity 1917–1940*, Oxford 1974; G. Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, London 1978.

[3] B.R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914–1947: The Economics of Decolonisation in India*, London 1979.

political issues it is now well understood that alongside Winston Churchill's robust opposition in the early 1930s to Indian constitutional reform, his opponents, Stanley Baldwin, Lord Irwin, and Sir Samuel Hoare, proceeded on the principle that if constitutional reform could be carried through skilfully, British control at the centre could actually be strengthened, even whilst control over India's provincial governments was relinquished to popularly elected ministries.[4]

We now know a good deal more too about the Congress – the quarters from which it secured support, the processes by which this was generated, the forms that it took. For some while the role of 'those who had been to school and college' has been well understood.[5] More work needs to be done on the important contribution of India's merchant communities.[6] A major clarification, moreover, came from tracing the long succession of adherences to Congress of the more well-to-do peasant communities from around the end of the First World War in Bihar, Gujarat, west Bengal, and parts of the United Provinces, then quite dramatically at the end of the 1920s from the Frontier Province, and thereafter from Madras and Maharashtra in the early 1930s, and the Princely States by the 1940s.[7] There have been studies too of the part played by India's embryonic capitalists,[8] and the role of the Indian Princes.[9]

[4] C.R. Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire. The British Conservative Party & the 1935 Constitution*, Delhi 1986.

[5] A. Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge 1968; S.R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, Delhi 1971; S.R. Mehrotra, *A History of the Indian National Congress*, vol. I, *1885–1918*, Delhi 1995; B. Chandra, *Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India. Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership 1881–1915*, Delhi 1966.

[6] C.A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad 1880–1920*, Oxford 1975; A.D.D. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics: Rising Nationalism and a Modernising Economy in Bombay 1918–1933*, Delhi 1978; D.A. Low, *Eclipse of Empire*, Cambridge 1991, ch. 4.

[7] D.A. Low, ed., *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917–1947*, London 1977; D. Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat: Kheda District 1917–1934*, Delhi 1981; G. Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh 1926–34: A Study in Imperfect Mobilization*, Delhi 1978; S. Henningham, *Peasant Movements in Colonial India: North Bihar 1917–1942*, Canberra 1982; D.A. Arnold, *Congress in Tamilnad: Nationalist Politics in South India 1919–37*, Delhi 1977; S. Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns*, Durham, N.C. 1988; J. Manor, *Political Change in an Indian State: Mysore 1917–55*, Delhi 1977.

[8] B. Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Delhi 1979, pp. 144–203; R. Ray, *Industrialization in India: Growth and Conflict in the Private Corporate Sector 1914–1947*, Delhi 1979; C. Markovits, *Indian Business and Nationalist Politics 1931–39*, Cambridge 1985; M.M. Kudaisya, 'The Public Career of G.D. Birla 1911–47', Cambridge PhD thesis, 1992.

[9] B.R. Ramusack, *The Princes of India in the Twilight of Empire*, Columbus, Ohio 1978; R. Jeffrey, ed., *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States*, Delhi 1978; S.R. Ashton, *British Policy towards the Indian States 1905–1939*, London 1982; I.F. Copland, *Unwanted Allies. The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire*, Cambridge 1997.

A great deal of important detail has been unearthed too on the extent to which Indian involvement in the new institutions the British fashioned was characterised by local interests, by factionalism and self-seeking. The 'Cambridge School' of the 1970s aroused a good deal of ire in India for drawing attention to this; ideology and the strong personal commitment that satyagraha entailed were much too easily brushed aside.[10] Yet it would be foolish to suggest that all the political infighting that plagued India after independence sprang hydra-headed just as the British left.

At the same time some important new work has been done on the major theme of Muslim alienation from the Congress and the eventual creation of Pakistan.[11] More than one case has been made here that cuts across the earlier accounts.[12] More has now been retailed, moreover, about the areas that became Pakistan.[13] Curiously it is only now that detailed work is being done on the horrendous partition massacres, from which a very variegated picture is beginning to emerge.[14]

During the 1980s India's modern historiography was greatly enlivened by the 'Subaltern' school, which took its name from Gramsci's somewhat confusing term for the non-elite. Under Ranajit Guha's energetic direction this underlined not only the key importance of the structural contradictions which imperial rule necessarily involved, but the subordinate role imposed on very many disadvantaged communities within Indian society itself; and in a succession of volumes it produced abundant evidence of the extent to which the often different concerns of subordinate communities were both exploited and repressed by the more elitist activists in the

[10] J. Gallagher, G. Johnson, and A. Seal, *Locality, Province and Nation. Essays on Indian Politics 1870–1940*, Cambridge 1973; G. Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism. Bombay and the Indian National Congress 1880–1915*, Cambridge 1973; F. Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces Muslims 1860–1920*, Cambridge 1974; D.A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: Madras Presidency 1870–1920*, Cambridge 1976; C.J. Baker, *The Politics of South India 1920–1937*, Cambridge 1976. For the contrary view see Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, and B. Chandra, *Indian National Movement: The Long Term Dynamics*, Delhi 1988.

[11] Especially Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*; D. Page, *Prelude to Pakistan. The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control*, Delhi 1982; M. Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India 1885–1930*, D. Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam. Punjab and the Making of Pakistan*, Berkeley 1988; R.J. Moore, *Escape from Empire. The Attlee Government and the Indian Problem*, Oxford 1982.

[12] A. Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman. Jinnah, the Muslim League and the demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge 1985; J. Chatterji, *Bengal Divided. Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–1947*, Cambridge 1994.

[13] Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns*; S. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power. The Pirs of Sind, 1843–1947*, Cambridge 1992; Tai Yong Tan, 'The Military and the State in Colonial Punjab, 1900–1939', Cambridge PhD thesis 1992.

[14] S. Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905–1947*, Delhi 1991, ch. 6; V. Damodaran, *Broken Promises: Popular Protest, Indian Nationalism and the Congress Party in Bihar 1935–1946*, Delhi 1992, ch. 6.

Congress, both in the urban and more particularly in many of the rural areas of India.[15]

As studies of modern Indian nationalism prior to independence develop further so such matters as the rituals of politics,[16] the creation of communities,[17] the supports for the colonial state,[18] the effects of the world's slump,[19] the visions of independence,[20] the huge plethora of India's discrete arenas and their complex relation to its polity,[21] along with the erosion of imperial authority, have come to engage attention; while the middle decades of the twentieth century are now being studied not just in terms of Independence and Partition (which, quite understandably, have so far preoccupied attention) but in relation to both the immense disruptions and the significant continuities that occurred,[22] and the ways that these spilled across into the post-independence history of the countries of South Asia.[23]

In the 1980s there were at the same time two rather disconcerting tendencies. Chiefly perhaps because in 1985 the Indian National Congress celebrated the centenary of its founding a great deal of attention was devoted to the history of the Indian nationalist movement.[24] That provided a great many welcome new insights. It rarely focussed, however, upon the actualities of the interactive conflict with the British Raj, and there were some disturbing signs of a reversion to uncritical paeans, even on occasion to outmoded hagiography. The more worrying development came from the British side. For as the British documents came increasingly to be studied so the unwary allowed themselves to be trapped into supposing that the processes of decolonisation turned principally on

[15] R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies*, vols. I–VI, Delhi 1982–89.

[16] D.E. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India. The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852–1928*, Berkeley 1991.

[17] S.B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India*, Berkeley 1989.

[18] G. Kudaisya, 'State Power and the Erosion of Colonial Authority in Uttar Pradesh, India 1930–42', Cambridge PhD thesis 1992.

[19] D. Rothermund, *India in the Great Depression 1929–1939*, Delhi 1992.

[20] For one example see M.M. Kudaisya, 'G.D. Birla'.

[21] G. Johnson, *The New Cambridge History of India* (forthcoming volume).

[22] E.g. Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905–1947*, chs. 5 and 6; Damodaran, *Broken Promises*, chs. 3–6; D.A. Low, ed., *Freedom, Trauma and Continuities: Northern India in the 1940s*, Delhi 1997.

[23] E.g. D.A. Low, ed., *The Political Inheritance of Pakistan*, London 1991.

[24] B.N. Pande, general editor, *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, 3 vols., Delhi 1985; P.R. Brass and F. Robinson, eds., *Indian National Congress and Indian Society, 1885–1985*, Delhi 1987; R. Sissons and S. Wolpert, eds., *Congress and Indian Nationalism. The Pre-Independence Phase*, Berkeley 1988; M. Shepperson and C. Simmons, eds., *The Indian National Congress and the Political Economy of India 1885–1985*, Aldershot 1988; D.A. Low, ed., *The Indian National Congress. Centenary Hindsights*, Delhi 1988; J.L. Hill, ed., *Congress and Indian Nationalism*, London 1991.

imperialists' decisions; occasionally they even permitted themselves to marginalise the Indian national movement to little more than a distant irritant.[25] There need be no doubt that the decisions of the imperial power were of major importance to the processes of decolonisation. They often had, moreover, a sequence to them that warrants the illumination they have received. Yet it is quite erroneous to suggest that all this somehow unfolded within an imperialist vacuum; worse still, that imperial rulers were the olympian masters of their empire's fate.

These tendencies can be fairly readily corrected by calling in aid a larger perspective drawn from the protracted tale of multiple decolonisations across the world in the middle decades of the twentieth century. For that clearly shows that whatever the particular triggers – intellectual breakthroughs, rising ambitions, state crises, or a complex of these and other factors – the growth and development of a vigorous nationalism was all but essential to any sustained progress towards the ending of imperial rule. That seems to have been as true for Egypt as for Zaire, for Vietnam as for Indonesia, for India as for Zimbabwe (and for many others too). Where by contrast nationalism developed relatively slowly – in the Princely States in India, or in Malaya as compared with Indonesia, or in tropical Africa as compared with monsoon Asia – the onset of decolonisation took a good deal longer to occur.

At the same time too narrowly focussed a concentration upon the development of the nationalist movement in any one place can seriously distract from any fully rounded understanding of the course that a particular conflict took, and it is precisely at this point that it seems vital to allow a major place for the policies of the corresponding imperial power. For whilst the generation of nationalist impulses seems to have been of critical importance for any movement towards nationalist independence, not only does the character of the encounter which then ensued appear to have been principally determined by the nature of the particular imperial reactions which these encountered, but the manner in which nationalists responded to these seems to have been principally conditioned by those reactions too.

So soon as one links these together it is, for example, far from surprising that whilst the processes of decolonisation in West Africa in both the French and British territories after mid-century were generally peaceful, those in Britain's East and Central African colonies were marked by violent revolt and major disturbances; whilst those in Algeria, Rhodesia,

[25] This at all events is how I read M. Beloff, *Dream of Commonwealth 1921–42*, London 1989. See also Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, and R.F. Holland, *European Decolonization 1918–1981*, London 1985.

and the Portuguese colonies were scarred by guerilla war. For these marked differences mirrored very precisely: the readiness of the British and then of the French to grant independence to all-black West African governments without too much resistance; the long-running opposition of the British to proceeding similarly where there were white settler minorities; and the absolute determination of the French in Algeria, the whites in Rhodesia, and the Portuguese throughout their African colonies to maintain their hold at whatever cost.[26]

In considering the Indian case it now takes a peculiarly blinkered view to underplay the major role played by India's surging nationalism in determining the course of the Indo–British conflict. An immense amount of data has been trawled upon this subject and countless studies have been produced to put the question beyond dispute. Nevertheless despite the many contributions which have been made to it in recent years it remains a striking feature of the historiography of modern India that the distinctive (and in contemporary comparative terms decidedly eccentric) character of the Indo–British conflict is all too often substantially ignored. The conflict is treated as its own paradigm. The course which events took is largely taken for granted. There is little or no recognition of the key contingent variables on which so many of them turned; while the idiosyncratic quality of the actual cut and thrust of the interactive conflict in India is rarely given prominence. As a consequence crucial features of the encounter can be seriously underplayed, important nuances missed, and one is left with the supreme irony that the very particular singularities of this quite extraordinary encounter are often overlooked altogether.

The problem here stems characteristically from the propensity of almost all the available accounts of India's political history for the years before independence (not least by the present author) to confine themselves almost entirely to data which relate to India only. There is, of course, a great deal of this and there no doubt remain many caches to be trawled. Nevertheless this whole approach is now seriously limiting understanding. One is all too frequently confronted by a one-country myopia. The wider setting is hardly noticed. Next to no attention is paid to comparative material and comparative issues. And so much of the essence of this major story is as a consequence too often lost to sight.

As it happens, standing close by is one especially helpful way out of this whole tangle. For if we will only lift our eyes and consider a whole series of events elsewhere in Asia which were simultaneously occurring nearby, a

[26] I have sought to explore these various points in D.A. Low, *Eclipse of Empire*, Cambridge 1991, esp. chs. 1, 3, 5, and 9.

shaft of new light can very soon be cast upon the nature, quality, and character of the course, conduct, and denouement of the Indo–British conflict in a way that is now overdue. Very occasionally, as we shall see, it is worth taking a brief look at what was happening in China away to the northeast where the governing Kuomintang was by the early 1930s in mounting armed conflict with the southern Communist forces under the redoubtable Mao Zedong. It is principally, however, to Southeast Asia that we need to look. For there running parallel to the Indo–British struggle during the first half of the twentieth century there ran three other, major, nationalist–imperialist encounters, each of a broadly similar kind to the Indo–British conflict, each of which nevertheless followed a quite distinctive course to that pursued in India.

Whilst, of course, we must allow for the very important respects in which these countries differed from each other, and *a fortiori* with India, in their size, their previous history, their economies, the developments to which they had lately been subjected, and so on, the pertinent distinctions in the present case all the same remain. In pursuing them it seems critically important (as in the African instances cited above) to pay close attention to the particular circumstances and policies of the imperial power by whom they were confronted in relation to the crucial impact these characteristically made upon their corresponding anti-imperialist thrusts, since in the end there seems little doubt that the principal clues to a great deal else that follows lie here.

The principal facts can be briefly stated. Besides the confrontation between the two World Wars between India's nationalists and the British, there ran upon the one hand the relatively non-confrontational encounter between the Filipino nationalists and the Americans, and on the other not only the eventually unrelieved conflict between the Indonesian nationalists and the Dutch, but the sometimes quite horrendous contest between the Vietnamese nationalists and the French. So soon as these are brought to view not only does any lingering notion that there was something prototypical about the Indo–British story have to be very soon discarded. By exposing the comparisons which these other stories provide it becomes possible both to embark on a much closer scrutiny of the singularities of the Indo–British conflict and to particularise its specific character and quality in a very much sharper form. A brief outline of each of these other encounters must serve to determine the distinctions to be drawn.

Back at the turn of the century during the course of the Spanish–American War of 1898, the United States had sent troops to wrest the

Philippines' islands from the Spanish.[27] There they soon confronted the new, indigenous Philippines Republic, which the Filipino landowning elite had first established amid the earlier Philippines' revolution against the Spanish in 1896–7, following their supersession of the non-elite Katipunan movement in its leadership. Though the Americans refused to recognise the new Republic and between 1898 and 1902 conducted a bloody conquest of the Philippines, they soon established a close alliance with leading figures in the Filipino elite, who, fearful of popular insurgency against them, soon threw in their lot with the new rulers. Thereafter non-elite movements and non-elite nationalism was often vigorously suppressed.[28]

The Americans nonetheless pursued a policy of what they called 'benevolent assimiliation'. By 1913 70 per cent of government posts were held by western-educated Filipinos; by the late 1920s nearly all of them. During the course of the first decade of American rule, municipal, provincial, and legislative assembly elections were all held, and as early as 1907 a Nacionalistas party under the Philippines' longest-running elite nationalist leaders, Osmena and Quezon, secured 72 per cent of the seats in the American-created legislature, with Osmena becoming its Speaker. From the very beginning there were, moreover, Filipino members of the American colonial executive; while by 1925 the only American in the American Governor-General's Cabinet was the Secretary of Public Instruction.

At the outset there had been a good deal of American opposition to the annexation of the Philippines, and many Americans remained opposed to any involvement in a directly imperial role. Formal empire was never central to the American self-image. In many respects it deeply offended against it. Nor was it important for their economy. The number of Americans employed in the government of the Philippines was never at all large. They were generally well content to allow the Filipino elite a much larger role in the governance of the islands than was ever enjoyed by corresponding colonial elites elsewhere. Even, moreover, before the outbreak of the First World War the Democratic Party in the United States had begun to support independence for the Philippines. In 1916 they secured the passage through the Congress of the Jones Act which promised the Philippines its independence 'as soon as stable government can be established'. In the years that followed a succession of Philippines'

[27] There is a summary of the whole story in H.W. Brands, *Bound to Empire. The United States and the Philippines 1890–1990*, New York 1992, Parts I and II.

[28] It is difficult to think of a better study of 'subaltern' activity in Asia and its repression than R. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910*, Quezon City 1979.

Independence missions thereupon visited Washington so as to secure this. During the 1920s they ran into a number of difficulties with the American Republican Administrations – which by contrast with right-wing regimes elsewhere did not deny the Philippines' right to independence, but simply avowed that it was not as yet ready for it. Since, however, there were clear economic advantages for the Filipino elite in the American connection, and important political ones as well – non-elite movements continued to be suppressed – they were cautious about mobilising mass support against the Americans even whilst regularly proclaiming their nationalist commitments.

With the onset of the depression in the early 1930s and the return of the Democrats to power following the election of Franklin Roosevelt as President in 1932, two further Philippines' Independence missions finally secured a breakthrough. Not least under pressure from the American farming organisations and the American Federation of Labor (which objected to the harm being done to their members' interests by too much Philippines' competition), the passage was eventually attained of two Philippines' independence acts, first the Hare–Hawes–Cutting Act of 1933 which was then amended at Filipino instance and replaced by the Tydings–Macduffie Act of 1934.[29] In this process care was taken to ensure that power would be transferred to a right-wing landed regime,[30] which would remain tied to the United States by fiscal, trade and defence connections, but this was what the Filipino elite wanted too, and thereupon the Philippines finally secured full internal self-government in 1935 with a promise of full independence ten years later.[31]

[29] On the whole story see also U. Mahajani, *Philippine Nationalism. External Challenge and Filipino Response 1565–1946*, St Lucia 1971; S. Karnow, *In Our Image. America's Empire in the Philippines*, London 1990, chs. 4–9; T.A. Agoncillo, *Malolos: The Crisis of the Republic*, Quezon City 1960; R.E. Welch, *Response to Imperialism. The United States and the Philippines American War, 1899–1902*, Chapel Hill 1979; S.C. Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines 1899–1903*, New Haven 1982; P.W. Stanley, *A Nation in the Making: The Philippines and the United States, 1899–1921*, Cambridge, Mass. 1974; Stanley, ed., *Reappraising an Empire: New Perspectives on Philippine–American History*, Cambridge, Mass. 1984; D.R. Sturtevant, *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines, 1849–1940*, Ithaca 1976; G. May, *Social Engineering in the Philippines: The Aims, Execution and Impact of American Colonial Policy*, Westport 1980; N.G. Owen, ed., *Compadre Colonialism, Studies on the Philippines under American Rule*, Ann Arbor 1971; B.R. Churchill, *The Philippine Missions to the United States*, Manila 1983; T.W. Friend, *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929–1946*, New Haven 1965; J.W. Howard, *Mr Justice Murphy*, Princeton 1968, chs. 4 and 5; S. Fine, *Frank Murphy: The New Deal Years*, Chicago 1979, chs. 1–5.

[30] The last Republican Governor-General remarked that its leaders were seeking: 'The Philippines for the Filipino politicians, a small group in the islands who already exercised despotically what powers they have', N. Roosevelt, *The Philippines: a Treasure and a Problem*, New York 1926, pp. 46–7.

[31] It was actually attained in 1946 following upon the end of the Second World War.

All this stood in marked contrast to what was happening in the Netherlands East Indies close by.[32] There the Dutch East Indies Company had first established its trading stations in what is now the Indonesian archipelago back in the seventeenth century. Following upon the supersession of the Company by direct governmental rule at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Dutch came to secure extensive control over Java by 1830, and in the final years of the nineteenth and into the first decades of the twentieth century completed their conquest of the Indonesian archipelago. Considerable numbers of Dutch people thereupon made their homes in the Netherlands Indies. Relative to the overall population there were soon eight times as many of them as there were of their British counterparts in India; while the ratio of European officials to the local population became nearly fifteen times that in India. There were, moreover, almost as many high-ranking Dutch civil service positions in the Indies as in the Netherlands itself.

The first shoots of what was to develop, however, into Indonesia's nationalist movement appeared in the founding of Budi Utomo ('the beautiful endeavour') in 1908. During the course of the First World War this was extensively overtaken by Sarekat Islam, a much larger movement of Indonesia's majority Muslim community, which by 1919 claimed to have two million followers. But because of Communist infiltration, it then began to fall apart, and in 1926–7 there was a spate of Communist-led revolts in Java and Sumatra which the Dutch resolutely repressed. Thereafter the leadership of the Indonesian nationalist movement fell into the hands of secular nationalists, amongst whom the leading figures were Mohammed Hatta, who headed Perhimpunan Indonesia, the organisation of Indonesian students studying in Holland, and the consummate orator and locally educated engineer, Sukarno, who not only succeeded in establishing in 1927 what soon became the Partai Nasional Indonesia, but during 1928 managed to unite a number of other Indonesian movements under an umbrella organisation, the PPPKI.

Back in 1918 the Dutch had begun to establish a Volksraad (People's Council) in the Netherlands Indies – though upon extremely restricted lines. They were not, however, prepared to tolerate Sukarno's increasingly vociferous activities for very long, and in 1929 arrested him, and, following his trial in 1930, sentenced him to four years' imprisonment. As a parting gesture the somewhat liberal-minded Dutch Governor-General, de Graeff, decided to release him in 1931. But upon his release Sukarno found the unity of the Indonesian national movement in considerable

[32] The most useful introduction is M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, London 1981, especially pts II–IV.

disarray. The position worsened when Hatta returned to Indonesia in August 1932, since there soon developed a sharp difference of opinion between them over precisely what anti-colonial policy it would now be best to pursue. Hatta inclined to the view that a class-based cadre-led party would be essential to moving the Dutch, whilst Sukarno instinctively favoured a less structured mass-based multi-class nationalist movement. Before long Hatta gained control of PNI Baru (the new PNI, originally Sukarno's own creation), while Sukarno moved into the leadership of its rival, Partindo. Both then made considerable progress in winning support, particularly in the towns. So much so indeed that de Graeff's much more conservative successor, de Jonge, finally decided in August 1933 to arrest Sukarno and his associates, and then early in 1934 Hatta and his, and to exile them to some distant islands for life. 'If the political independence of the Netherlands-Indies is preached', de Jonge proclaimed in October 1933, '. . . then His Excellency will indeed silence these expressions of the National Movement'.[33] Thereafter the only Indonesian political parties which were allowed to operate at all openly were those prepared to collaborate with the Dutch; and even they received short shrift when in the Soetardjo Petition of 1936 they sought to secure discussions with the Dutch on some modest constitutional reforms. They were not even accorded the benefit of a reply till over two years had passed.[34]

Throughout these years the Dutch remained implacably committed to maintaining their empire in the Indies. It was almost all they had left of their three centuries of overseas endeavour. They remained wedded, moreover, to 'Ruste en Orde' (tranquillity and order) and from the 1930s onwards to 'Rijkseenheid' (imperial unity) as well. Apart from a brief flowering of the more liberal *De Stuw* group in 1930–3 (backed by the Oriental Faculty at Leiden University), most Dutch residents in the Indies were thoroughly conservative, represented from 1929 onwards in the Vaderlandsche Club (and buttressed by the new Indology Faculty at Utrecht University). Major Dutch commercial companies were heavily involved in Indies affairs. Directors of Royal Dutch Shell were both Colonial Ministers and Governor-Generals in a way that was scarcely conceivable elsewhere. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards there was, moreover, a strong belief amongst the Dutch that possession of the Indies was absolutely vital to the economic health of their homeland (perched as it was uncertainly upon the edge of the North Sea). Income remitted to the Netherlands from Indonesia represented an 8 per cent

[33] It was only with the Japanese conquest of the Netherlands East Indies in 1942 that they were eventually released.

[34] S. Abeyasekere, 'The Soetardjo Petition', *Indonesia*, 15, 1973, pp. 81–108.