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The 1857-59 Indian Uprising was a cataclysmic event in the history of the British Empire in India and would witness monumental and shocking scenes of violence on both sides of the conflict. The Uprising has become something much debated and discussed within Indian and British history, and an exploration of the fundamental brutality of the conflict, albeit in this case on the British side, is an important element of better understanding such an important historical event. This article therefore explores the British Army's use of violence against Indian Sepoys and ordinary civilians during the Uprising and works to explore as to whether this approached something akin to a genocide, as has previously been suggested.

Figure 1. 'Blowing from Guns in British India' source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vereshchagin-Blowing_from_Guns_in_British_India.jpg

Introduction

The Indian Uprising of 1857-59 has cast its place in history as one of the most infamous conflicts to take place in the British Empire. India was the crown jewel of the Empire and maintained by the rule of the East India Company (EIC), a vast British trading organisation that had managed to monopolise trade between Europe and the Southern Asian subcontinent effectively from 1757. The Uprising, beginning with a mutiny of the Sepoys at the Meerut barracks of the Bengal Army in May 1857 and spreading throughout other regiments of the Indian Army and into the wider population until its official end in April 1859, shook the Empire to its core. The rebellion would pave the way for almost a century of direct rule by the British Crown who assumed control in 1858. The 1857 conflict itself was ferocious and by no means short of accounts of atrocities committed by both sides. The rebels would commit appalling acts of violence against Europeans, and the British army's mission to control and suppress the Uprising was, as Rudrangshu Mukherjee asserted, 'marked by scenes of violence quite unparalleled in the history of British rule in India.'[1] The British public, feasting on narratives of barbaric slaughter of Europeans in the London Times and other national media outlets, were provided with a plethora of evidence to confirm what they had long suspected the 'savage' Indian race to be capable of at their basest moments. It was this particular portrayal of the natives that led to cries for vengeance across Britain by the public and the press, this call to arms being met by British forces in a severe fashion.

The considerably vicious nature of the rebellion's counterinsurgency has led to suggestions that the violence committed by the British was greater than routine suppression, and instead took on a more grotesque form of violent reaction, possibly even genocide. Most notably this accusation has been levelled by Indian writer and historian Amaresh Misra, who challenges the common consensus that the numbers of deaths of Indians throughout the course of the Uprising amounted to no more than around one hundred thousand, and instead argues that the conflict lasted over a decade and resulted in what he has described publicly as a 'Holocaust, one where millions disappeared…'[2] Misra claims that the British saw this as a 'necessary Holocaust' and cites British labour records in India that show large discrepancies in manpower across the subcontinent pre and post the Uprising as being evidence for the huge numbers of fatalities, even ranging into the millions, that supposedly

[1] Mukherjee, R. *"Satan Let Loose Upon the Earth" The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857'* Past and Present, vol.128, no.1, 1990, p.93

[2] Misra, A. in The Guardian, Friday 24 August 2007 http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/aug/24/india.randeepramesh

occurred.[3] In Misra's view, the British army's reaction to the 1857 Uprising was akin to an act of genocide, hence the reference to the Holocaust, a term unusual when utilised outside of its original context of violent anti-Semitism throughout 1933-45 Nazi Germany and the horrors of the attempted extermination of the Jewish people in Europe. Although Misra's sources of evidence and statistical data for the main line of his argument have been questioned by historians versed in the topic, it is not the aim of this debate to query the numbers of those killed by the British in order to take issue with the idea of 'genocide'. The debate shall instead examine the motives of the British soldiers and officers for exacting the extensive nature of the Uprising's violence, demonstrated in their methods and reasoning throughout the conflict. The problem with basing an accusation largely upon statistical data, i.e., the numbers of those killed, is that it muddies the terminology surrounding the notion of genocide. A statistical approach therefore does not largely take into account motivational reasoning for widespread colonial violence during the Uprising, which is arguably where the real application of the term genocide should be tested.

The difficulties that immediately arise from such an accusation stem from the complexities surrounding the phrase, as differing interpretations of what this word actually embodies are numerous. Genocide, although the term was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1943/44, was by no means a twentieth-century phenomenon, but in wake of the Holocaust the postwar world was perhaps in need of a more extensive expression to define slaughter on such a monumental scale and for such specific reasoning. To reach this expression, Lemkin had combined the Greek *genos* meaning 'race' and the Latin suffix –*cide* for 'kill'.[4] The UN Resolution of 1946 then would expand upon this and defined genocide in international law as 'the denial of the right of existence of entire human groups.'[5] The idea of genocide as the elimination, partial or in whole, of human groups has pervaded much of the understanding of what the term means in both academic and popular form. However, Martin Shaw has asserted that the use of the word has become too common, as allegations of genocide are made often freely to describe a situation where a certain volume of killing has occurred, this blurring an accurate definition or useful application of the term.[6] One may question therefore as to whether an accusation of genocide in reference to the British counterinsurgency in 1857 is also a case of this misuse. Genocide, in a legal sense, must

[3] *Ibid*

[4] S. Totten & P. Bartrop (eds.), *The Genocide Studies Reader*, London, Routledge, 2009, p.4
[5] Ibid
[6] M. Shaw *What is Genocide?* Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007, p.3

go beyond the categories for standard murder of *mens rea* (guilty mind) and *actus reus* (guilty act), but also compose of a third element: *dolus specialis* – the existence of special intent to destroy a group, in part or in whole.[7] This is also sometimes referred to as 'specific intent', denoting the idea that the intention to kill has a particular target, though notably this is largely interchangeable with the former term and is a legal scruple if anything.[8] In terms of the 'group' that the definition refers to, this has usually been exemplified in ethnic, religious or political means, i.e., the mass murder of Muslims due to their religion, hence 'group', could warrant the claim of genocide. Genocide in practice may appear to have a multitude of origins leading to its employment, however *dolus specialis* must arguably be demonstrated along either ethnic, political, or religious lines, as well as other cases of a persecution of pre-determined groups[9], to determine a feasible application of the term.

The notion of genocide therefore contends that a people is physically persecuted due to their being of a particular defined grouping; however, it is also important in terms of the purpose of this debate to establish genocide's distinction from massacre, as both have traits of extreme violence but each contains a vital difference in their manifestations. Jacques Semelin has begun the definition of massacre as a form of collective action aimed at the elimination of civilians, mostly non-combatants, as an act or extension of war.[10] Massacre, therefore, though aimed at a certain people, is not necessarily ethnically, religiously or politically defined, and thus differentiates itself from genocide. Furthermore, Semelin also argues that massacre is employed for partial destruction with the intention of having an impact on the whole community psychologically; in other words the spread of terror amongst the survivors of such a traumatic event can therefore achieve the desired effect without the need for complete extermination.[11] The aspect that also blurs the distinction between genocide and massacre, and something that is central to our discussion, is warfare, and as Adam Jones put it, 'war and genocide are the Siamese twins of history.'[12] Jones sees war as setting ample conditions for genocide as the environment where violence is heightened and legalities are worn can lead to mass violence being inflicted upon groups, particularly in the case where war is fought along ethnic, religious or political divides.[13] The actions of war can be smoke-screened

[7] O. Triffterer (2001). '*Genocide, Its Particular Intent to Destroy in Whole or in Part the Group as Such*' Leiden Journal of International Law, vol.14, p.400
[8] W. A. Schabas (2001). The Jelisic Case and the Mens Rea of the Crime of Genocide. Leiden Journal of International Law, vol.14, p.129
[9] E.g. Gender, Age, Sexuality or political class

[10] J. Semelin, in *Genocide Studies Reader*, p.86
[11] *Ibid.* p.88
[12] A. Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (London: Routledge) 2006, p.48
[13] Ibid, p.49

behind a veil of circumstantial necessities, though in reality they are arguably little different than acts of genocide. The blood lust that is expedited by war, replacing rational psychological and emotional states, can be thus channelled into persecution of particular groups.[14] However, in situations where racial and religious divisions do exist within a warfare environment, the act of massacre may still be the case due to the heightened sense of violence and the desire to escalate the ferocity of the conflict in order to have a devastating psychological effect, as Semelin's contention suggests. This therefore is not necessarily genocide as the 'special intent' is absent. What is clear is that the notions of genocide and massacre are a historical and sociological grey area. For the sake of argument, and in order to help provide a functioning definition in order to facilitate an analysis of the British reaction in 1857, genocide in this instance shall be understood according to the existence of the *dolus specialis* – the violent persecution of a group due to their ethnicity, religion or political leanings. Massacre shall also therefore be defined as likewise a violent action against a mass of people, but without the attachment of a special intention to persecute a particular group.

In light of a brief, but important, exploration of the meanings of genocide and massacre, and an academic construction of a working definition for each term, this paper therefore shall focus on the lengths to which the British forces went to quash the Uprising and their motivations in doing so, before coming to a conclusion as to whether the British soldiers and officers embarked upon genocide or if an alternative conclusion can instead be drawn from the evidence. In order to provide a thorough evaluation of this debate, this paper shall be divided into three sections of theoretical and empirical analysis followed by a final conclusive section. The first section shall explore the foundations of colonial authority and its relationship to violence during the Empire, providing a contextual basis around which the British reaction in 1857 can be better understood in the wider sphere of British imperialism and its forms of authority. The second section will then begin to examine the primary material regarding the British tactics and treatment of the natives during the counterinsurgency. An investigation of the manifestations of colonial violence during the Uprising will be useful in gauging the extent of the suppression and hope to shed some light on how it became such a brutal conflict. The third section will then provide an analysis of the racial, religious or other motivations of the British soldiers in order to search for a direct *dolus specialis*, measuring to what extent this was a violent persecution of a group on prejudicial grounds, or driven by other factors.

[14] *Ibid.*

Finally, a concluding section will hope to draw upon the themes and complexities of the debate and deliver a weighted opinion on whether there are grounds for an accusation of genocide against the British forces in the Uprising. The empirical material shall be drawn from the journals, diaries, memoirs and anecdotes of British officers and soldiers who fought in the Uprising, as well as those of non-combatants. Unfortunately, the period offers little in the way of Indian primary sources due to the illiteracy of many of the Sepoys and natives. However, the candour of the British troops and non-combatants, whom as the following will demonstrate held few reservations in exposing what took place during the counterinsurgency, provides us with a wealth of material with which to explore the theme. Alongside primary accounts and secondary literature, in order to form a theoretical understanding of British colonialist coercion, arguments have been drawn from a number of sources including historians and sociologists versed in the background of sovereign authority and imperial studies. This paper shall therefore explore and try to conclude on to whether the British response to the Uprising could arguably be described as colonial genocide, or whether other explanations in light of a thorough evaluation of alternative motives for violent suppression can provide a more accurate analysis.

The Empire and Authority

The British Empire: Authority and Violence

Considering the historiographical aspect of the rebellion and its relationship to imperial studies in general, the Uprising has produced a vast library of interpretations surrounding the origins, events, and the aftermath of what such a short-lived conflict. In India, historians such as V.D. Savarkar and S.B. Chaudhuri have drummed up a wave of nationalist historiography by trying to depict the Uprising as the First Independence War of India. Chaudhuri has asserted that the fact that 1857 was a rebellion under a nationalist cause with an alliance of an anti-colonial ideology.[15] This however is a fairly teleological approach to the conflict and possibly a forced attempt to fit the event into a general narrative of the fight for Indian independence. British imperialist historians on the other hand have often sought to try and move on from the rebellion in a swift fashion and exonerate the British from much of the wrongdoing in both the causes of the conflict and their conduct throughout.[16] This involved a post-pacification process that established the event as a 'mutiny', therefore confining it to the realms of the army and not the wider population, and also related the crisis to the grievances of the Sepoys related to the

[15] S. B. Chaudhuri, *Theories of the Indian Mutiny, 1857-59: a study of the views of an eminent historian on the subject*, Calcutta, World Press, 1965, p.1

[16] C. Bates, *Subalterns and Raj: South Asia Since 1600*, London, Routledge, 2007, p.57

pig greased rifle ammunition.[17] This possibly was an effort to trivialise the causes of the rebellion and an attempt to confine its roots to the complexities of Oriental religions, mostly alien to most British people at the time. The trend within the British historiography of the Uprising to try and remove Company culpability and focus on moving onwards from the event has also been evident in the general imperialist historiography of the Empire as a whole. Some historians, possibly unwilling to confront the more uncomfortable elements of the British imperial past, have sought to exemplify the perceived good that the empire achieved such as the building of trade networks and export of European 'civilised' culture. Recently however, revisionists, such as Richard Gott, have argued that the British Empire was a rather more conquest-hungry enterprise that relied on rule by force and the subjugation of subaltern classes in order for it to survive.[18] There is also a suggestion that the Empire was largely a military operation invariably tied in with supporting and aiding the expanding trade monopolies, suggesting that British soldiers were often mercenaries for imposing authority and this legionnaire approach could have contributed to a lack of professionalism in colonial conflicts.[19]

Alongside the use of British armed forces as guardians of a growing trade monopoly, due to finite numbers of British soldiers, the colonised often became the colonisers per say, as natives were recruited as police and soldiers throughout the colonies.[20] The reliance in India on natives to impose authority upon other Indians is just one of the numerous contradictions that the Empire managed to conjure up during its reign.[21] It is in one these instances that one can gain some insight into some of the authoritative methods of the colonial administration. A report commissioned in 1854 in India illuminated some of the practices of the colonial authorities when an investigation was launched regarding the supposed use of torture by native police, who were apparently utilising this method in order to gain revenue payments from locals in the Madras area. The report acknowledged that, 'The universal existence of torture as a financial institution of British India is thus officially admitted,' however the head which upon the blame lay was passed over to 'unruly' lower Hindu officials.[22] The use of torture as a

[17] The pig greased cartridges had to be bitten in order to load them into the barrel and thus the pork fat betrayed the Indian soldier's caste, which was reputedly one of the Sepoy's many grievances. Bates, *Subalterns and Raj*, p.65

[18] R. Gott, *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt*, London, Verso Books, 2011, p3

[19] *Ibid*, p.1-2

[20] *Ibid*

[21] G. Rand *'Martial races' and 'imperial subjects': Violence and Governance in Colonial India, 1857–1914.* European Review of History 2006, vol.13, no.1, p.15

[22] K. Marx & F. Engels, *Investigation of Tortures in India* in *On Colonialism*, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960, p.136

mode of colonial authority, despite in this instance being blamed on native police, was arguably a characteristic of British rule in India and possibly across the Empire. The pervasion of torture into methods of colonial authority was evident in India, but in terms of capital punishment it was the act of hanging that would become such an integral part of the British Empire's *modus operandi* when challenged with dissidence. As David Andersen has asserted, the 'rope, the noose, and the drop' have always fascinated the British public who 'always liked a good hanging'.[23] This would certainly seem the case in the British colonies and an interesting point to note, and one central to this debate, is that whilst execution by public hanging in Britain and in other European states would recede by the later eighteenth century, in the colonies it continued to be a visual affair. As Michel Foucault has explored, the results of the reformation of legal and penal systems in Europe led to the dying out of the events that have been described as 'festival of punishments', where crowds would swarm to watch the public execution of criminals and political dissidents.[24] In Foucault's view, this was an important departure from the more medieval methods of public execution and punishment and to a modernising sphere of state retribution, as it left 'the domain of everyday perception and entering that of abstract consciousness' and achieved 'effectiveness from inevitability not visible intensity'.[25] The sense that the most effective deterrent was not the spectacle of punishment but instead what the imagination would have to perceive it to be was a powerful instrument in nineteenth century Britain. The threat of execution remained, however a graphic reminder was unnecessary.

Mass public execution in the British colonies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would not follow the line of Europe and begin to execute behind closed doors, instead keeping this tradition on display, often as an example of colonial supremacy. What this also possibly suggests is that the colonials considered themselves to be outside of the normal confines of European society when it came to enforcing authority. Hannah Arendt has described the British colonists' experience of the 'Dark Continent' of Africa as a place far removed from Europe and 'A world of native savages was a perfect setting for men who had escaped the reality of civilization'.[26] The account of The Times Special Correspondent during 1857, William Russell, concurs, as he exclaims during his journal of the Uprising, 'I

[23] D. Andersen, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's dirty war in Kenya and the end of empire*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2005, p6
[24] M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London: Allen Lane) 1977, pp.8-14
[25] *Ibid*, p.9
[26] H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, London, World Publishing Company, 1961, p.190

believe we permit things to be done in India which we would not permit to be done in Europe, or could not hope to effect without public reprobation'[27] Linked to this is the argument that the colonials' knowledge of the inequalities of the pseudo-rule of law in colonial India could have also encouraged a violent approach to the treatment of Indians. As Elizabeth Kolsky has asserted, the colonials in practice often rejected the British extension of the rule of law that they so famously upheld at home.[28] Opposition arose to trials by native judges and juries, possibly leading to a sense of having few legal restrictions upon British conduct in India.[29] Private Metcalfe demonstrates an example of this in his diary of 1857, as he records how he was excused punishment for beating a native, 'Consequently I gave him a straight one from the shoulder. The commanding officer asked who was by at the time and my comrade corroborated my statement. He then asked the native if it was I who struck him, and he answered in the affirmative, and the verdict was – Serve you right.'[30] Legal inequality was underlined by increasingly racist and superior attitudes towards the Indians in the 19th century, and thus the idea of one law for Europeans and another for natives, would arguably be a central aspect of colonial authority throughout India.

The feeling of liberation outside of the confines of Europe makes an interesting argument for the pervasion of public and wanton violence in the colonies, as does the idea that the colonials were aware of their relative protection from judicial punishment due to an unequal rule of law. Another explanation for this trend of martial authority and extent of capital punishment seen in the colonies could also possibly have been influenced by what has been described as the insecurity of the British Empire. Revisionists have expressed the idea that the British colonial experience was fraught with fear of usurpation by those who they had given power to in order to help police the colonies.[31] In order to quell dissent therefore, a visual demonstration of authority was necessary and during the Uprising, graphic punishment would arguably be key to British strategy. Bernard Cohn has argued colonial authority had to be displayed by the British in India during 1857 in demonstrative form in order to maintain the subjugation of the natives and thus British hegemony.[32] In the aftermath of the Uprising a codified rule of authority was created with the

[27] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, New York, Klaus Reprint Co, 1957, p.114
[28] E. Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 106
[29] Ibid pp. 230-231
[30] H. Metcalfe, *The Chronicle of Private Henry Metcalfe*, London, Cassell, 1953, p.21
[31] C. Bates, *Subalterns and Raj*, p.56
[32] B. S. Cohn, *'Representing Authority in Victorian India'* in *The Invention of Tradition*, E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.165

British Crown assuming the role of governing India, however, until this point, authority lay solely with the EIC and the British army, and their ability to suppress subversion.[33] Periods of mass capital punishment, as seen in 1857 would re-occur, particularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century and early half of the twentieth century. This was arguably when the heyday of the British Empire began to falter and as Arendt has argued, decolonisation often runs parallel to instances of massacre.[34] The era of British colonial history that draws many a parallel with 1857 was the British reaction to the Kenyan Mau Mau insurgency in the 1950s. This was one of the most violent episodes in British imperial history with the state execution of over one thousand Kenyans by hanging, the internment of an estimated 1.5 million in concentration camps and a brutal military campaign fought against the insurgents in the jungles that saw the indiscriminate killing of rural peoples.[35] The methods employed by colonial forces throughout the insurgency would mirror those of 1857, being designed to strike fear into the population. Being careful to avoid teleology, parallels drawn with 1857 are perhaps unmistakable in Kenya, with executions carried out on scant evidence and capital punishment in abundance. The events of the 1950s in Kenya, alongside those in 1857, demonstrate how when the British Empire was confronted this often led to violent reprisals, ending in mass capital punishment to make an example of those who dare challenge colonial authority. The basis of colonial supremacy being directly related to displays of violence would arguably provide impetus for the implementation of counterinsurgency tactics during 1857 that extended this approach to dissidence, resulting in the escalation of violence as a means of showcasing colonial authority. Thus what we must now turn our attention to is the British army's tactics during the Uprising and the manifestations of colonial violence that have led to such accusations as genocide.

Shock and Awe

The discussion thus far has explored how in the colonies capital punishment was often used en masse when the Empire was threatened, and in general colonial violence was demonstrated publicly, even when this trend would begin to die out back in Britain. Violence as an instrument of the colonial state was arguably an integral part of the British Empire and as Gyan Prakash asserts, it was, 'the praxis for colonial governance' in India.[36] Even Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of India, admitted that in his opinion 'the sword was the

[33] *Ibid*, p.164
[34] H. Arendt, *On Violence*, New York, Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1970, p.53
[35] C. Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The brutal end of Empire*, London, Jonathon Cape, 2005, p.xiii.
[36] G. Prakash in G. Rand, *Martial Subjects*, p.1

only validity to title that the British had in India.'[37] Hastings' 'sword' during the Uprising's counterinsurgency was the use of what can be described as 'shock and awe', a tactic whereby immense military suppression vastly overwhelmed the rebellion and thus aimed to put an end to the conflict by escalating violence to a level that would have a demoralising effect upon the population. During the Uprising, this tactic was employed by the British who displayed acts of coercion openly to Indian civilians and Sepoys. The idea was not to weed out the guilty parties, but instead employ a sufficient amount of intimidation in order to literally 'shock' and 'awe' the population into submission. As John Lawrence, the Governor of the Punjab at the time of the rebellion, put it, 'Our object is to make an example and terrify others.'[38] There is a case to make that it was this approach that perhaps led to such a degree of violence and the volume of casualties during the rebellion, however it is important to establish exactly what this tactic embodied and how it was utilised throughout colonial India.

'Shock and Awe' throughout British Imperial history in India

The implementation of shock and awe was a method by which order could be, perceivably, re-established through the use of extreme violence to produce a demoralising effect on the enemy. This technique though was not unique to 1857 in India, as the British response to the independence campaigns of the first half of the twentieth century would go a long way to invest belief in this tactic. In reaction to growing agitation during the 1916-19 period, British forces in India had embarked on a coercive campaign in India, burning villages to the ground, carrying out aerial bombardments on towns, flogging suspected dissidents in public and imposing curfews.[39] One incident that stands out from the period was the Jallianwala Bagh episode of 1919 in Amritsar. This was particularly extreme as what had started as a peaceful protest during a market against the recently introduced Rowlatt Act, which had maintained wartime emergency measures such as the right to imprison without trial, became the site of a massacre. A British officer, General Dyer, ordered his squadron of troops to fire indiscriminately upon the Indians in the square. Victims were unable to flee due to the army's blocking of the only exit and accounts detail no warning or order to disperse before troops were told to commence firing.[40] General Dyer's response in his statement to an investigative panel exploring the event was callous,

> I fired and continue to fire until the crowd dispersed, and I considered this the least

[37] R. Mukherjee, *Satan Let Loose*, p.93
[38] Gov. John Lawrence in *Ibid*, p.112
[39] C. Bates, *Subalterns and Raj*, p.131
[40] N. Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer*, London, Hambledon & London, 2005, pp.259-260

> amount of firing which would produce the necessary moral and widespread effect it was my duty to produce if I was to justify my action… It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect from a military point of view, not only on those present but more specifically throughout the Punjab. There could be no question of undue severity.[41]

Dyer's actions were infamous throughout the Empire and beyond and demonstrated a clear display of physical intimidation upon the Indian population, something Nigel Collett has argued was Dyer's intention before he set out to the Bagh that day, wishing to, 'make a demonstration of strength' to the natives by raising 'the level of violence to a mark sufficient to put a stop to the conspiracy', which was explicitly the aim of the 'shock and awe' method.[42] Jallianwalla Bagh was another dark period of imperialism in India, however the British reaction to the Indian Uprising of 1857 had previously employed this approach on a vast scale.

Capital punishment during the Uprising

Establishing a 'sufficient moral effect', as General Dyer would dub it in 1919, was arguably the central part of the British suppression of the 1857 rebellion. The British response therefore became centred upon a mixture of public capital punishments and indiscriminate killing during the raids of villages and towns, or on marches to captured cities. Execution was the fate for many of those caught by the British, and Fred Roberts' letters provide us with one of the methods that became an integral element of the British counterinsurgency tactics during the conflict: 'blowing from the gun'. This entailed suspected rebels being strapped to the mouth of a cannon and then literally blown apart by the grape shot, a shocking spectacle for anyone to behold. Roberts describing it as 'a rather horrible sight' but 'in these times we cannot be particular,' telling of the officers' views on how to conduct during such a brutal conflict.[43] Wilberforce - an officer who wrote of his march to and storming of Delhi – also provides a more detailed account of this method, 'A hollow square was formed by nine guns on one face, the 35th Infantry [who had rebelled]… were drawn up opposite facing the guns… the next instant their heads flew up into the air, their legs fell forward, and their intestines were blown into the faces of their former comrades who stood watching the scene.'[44] The aim was twofold: firstly it sprayed those watching with the blood and gore of either their friends or fellow countrymen, and secondly it denied the

[41] N. Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar*, p.337
[42] N. Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar*, pp. 252-255
[43] Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, *Letters Written During the Indian Mutiny*, London, Macmillan, 1924, p.13
[44] R. Wilberforce, *Unrecorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny: being personal reminisces of Reginald G. Wilberforce compiled from a diary and letters written on the spot, with illustrations*, London, John Murray, 1894, p.42

victim the chance of a proper burial as the body could not be cremated, central to Muslim belief. Watching this would have been a horrifying experience for natives, in both the sense of its revolting nature but also its religious implications. The British would use this method for some time during the rebellion, until the latter months of the suppression when ammunition was scarce.[45] Its usage exemplifies how the public display of punishment was believed to have been an effective form of retribution when dealing with a rebellious colony.

The tactic of 'blowing from the gun' was used not for convenience but instead for achieving a shocking effect, but when efficiency was necessary hanging was more commonly utilised, as demonstrated in Russell's diary as in one incident a Company official exclaims that, 'he had hanged fifty-four men in a few hours for plundering a village.'[46] General Havelock concurs and comments on the subsequent effect, stating that 'the unrestrained use of the gallows, struck terror into the malcontents.'[47] Much improvisation was used to carry out these mass executions, as one account records, in the event of an absence of gallows by which to hang prisoners, the officers ordered there to be 'mango trees for gibbets and elephants for drops.'[48] The desperation to carry out a public charade of hanging suspected rebels, to such an extent that even a Company elephant was used, possibly demonstrates the importance of showmanship of authority to the colonials as well as the extent of the numbers of those that were executed. These executions were greeted with support in Britain and were fully endorsed by the press, one example from an excerpt in The London Times reads, 'The effect of a summary execution would have been equal to another victory. Every tree and gable-end should have its burden in the shape of a mutineer's carcass.'[49] From the sources it also seems that those hung were often not just confirmed rebels but any captured or suspected. The confirmation of guilt was rarely conducted within a formal setting but often on the spot. As a soldier quoted in Marx's letters, 'Not a day passes but we string up from ten to fifteen of them' and another, 'We hold court-martials on horseback, and every nigger we meet with we either string up or shoot.'[50] The validity of guilt on the part of the suspect was irrefutably debatable and one could suggest that many of those executed for the crime of being a rebel may well have not been guilty. The prevalence of executing individuals on only a whisper of

[45] *Ibid*, p.65
[46] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, p.182
[47] J. Marshman, *Memoirs of Major General Sir Henry Havelock*, London Longman, Green & Co., 1860, p.266
[48] British soldier in R. Gott, *Britain's Empire*, p.456
[49] The London Times, Thursday, October 29th, 1857, Page 8, Issue 22824
[50] Two accounts from British soldiers in K. Marx & F. Engels, *On Colonialism*, p.131

evidence arguably became a characteristic of the British reaction.

Indiscriminate killing

If the capital execution of suspected rebels occurred without a firm conviction of guilt and in the corrupt court of a horseback judge, then one could suggest that the violence of the counterinsurgency in general would take on a largely arbitrary form. To understand the nature of indiscriminate killing however, one also has to take into account the nature of the battles during the Uprising and how these differed from what the British army were accustomed. During the rebellion, much of the fighting took place in small skirmishes, raids on towns and sieges of cities. The close quarters and spontaneous nature of the fighting, to which the British were unaccustomed, became a form of guerrilla warfare, in particular when battles were fought in the re-taking of major cities and strategic outpost, such as at Delhi and Lucknow. The intense nature of close-quarters battle led perhaps to widespread killing, as soldiers were unsure of who was and who wasn't a rebel. Roberts recalls the chaos that ensued once the soldiers had entered a town and their intentions thereafter, 'Soldiers get into a town, and cannot be expected to distinguish between the guilty and innocent in the heat of the moment,' and as Forbes-Mitchell also describes during the siege of Lucknow, 'we found every door and window of the palace buildings barricaded, and every loop-hole defended by an invisible enemy… I need not describe the fight. It raged for about two hours from court to court, and from room to room.'[51] Charles Griffiths too paints a frantic picture of the British relief of cities, in this case Delhi, 'From every window and door, from loopholes in the buildings, and from the tops of the houses, a storm of musketry saluted us on every side…'[52] The nature of guerrilla conflict may have aggravated an attitude towards indiscriminate killing, as the British may not have taken the care to establish a combatant from a non-combatant in such fraught conditions. This was often difficult, and Mukherjee has argued that the breakdown of British authority in Kanpur once General Wheeler's force had been captured led many of the surrounding residents to take up arms and join the mutineers and as a result haphazard killing was the British approach in response.[53] This does not however either excuse the actions of the British or remove from the fact that much of the killing was often fickle, and the literature is filled with instances of seemingly unnecessary acts of violence by British troops. An example of this in Russell's diary makes for harrowing reading

[51] W. Forbes Mitchell, *Reminisces of the Great Mutiny, 1857-59*, New Delhi, Asian Education Services, 2002, p.210
[52] C. Griffiths, *A Narrative of the Siege of Delhi*, London, John Murray, 1910, p.159
[53] R Mukherjee, *Satan Let Loose*, p.99

as a British Officer, approached by a 'Kashmir boy… leading a blind and aged man, and throwing himself at the feet of the officer, asked for protection', the reaction of the Officer however was to, 'draw his revolver' and after his gun failed him thrice, 'the fourth time… the gallant officer succeeded and the boy's life blood flowed at his feet.'[54] Kaye also records how often non-combatants became victims of the British counter-insurgency, in this example describing the fate of the native inhabitants of Allahabad: "there is no darker cloud than that which gathered over Allahabad in this terrible summer… the aged, women and children, are sacrificed... They were not deliberately hanged, but burnt to death in their villages."[55] Indiscriminate killing became a prevalent element of the British reaction to the uprising and can go some way to explaining the extent of the fatality rate of non-combatants during the conflict.

Infamous characters

The indiscriminate killing that would become such a feature of British aggression during the conflict would be exacerbated by the actions of those in command of the British troops during the counterinsurgency, and one of the most poignant aspects of the literature is the infamy some of these British commanders would achieve amongst both the British army and rebel ranks. Colonel Neill, one of the most infamous and severe commanders of the British forces in India, would help lead the counter-insurgency from the outbreak of the Uprising until his death in battle in September 1857 near Lucknow. General Havelock had a high level of contact with Neill and chronicles his severity at Allahabad, 'The disaffected portion of the town was burnt, every malignant who could be identified was executed, and a salutary dread was diffused through the neighbouring country,' and later 'As the column defiled through the town, the natives are said to have hastened their doors… the remembrance of Colonel Neill's executions effectively prevented any tangible demonstration of hatred.'[56] Neill's preceding executions on the march to Allahabad in June were recounted as being arbitrary, one account recording, 'the old, the young, women and children, none were neglected… Every day we led expeditions to burn and destroy… day by day we have strung up eight or nine men' and another describes at how troops were encouraged to engage in 'peppering away at niggers', which the narrator 'enjoyed amazingly.'[57] Neill's infamous penchant for extreme violence spread throughout both the British army and rebel camps, and some have even suggested that his actions instead of

[54] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, p.110
[55] J. Kaye in R. Mukherjee, *Satan Let Loose*, p.111
[56] J. Marshman, *Memoirs of Major General Sir Henry Havelock*, pp.267-269
[57] British soldier in R. Gott, *Britain's Empire,* p.457

producing the intended effect of suppressing the rebellion in fact sparked further mutinies in reaction to the atrocities he ordered to be committed.[58] Even from within his own regiment did Neill receive criticism, in one tragi-comedic account Russell recalls, 'When Neill marched from Allahabad, his executions were so numerous and so indiscriminate, that one of the officers attached to his column had to remonstrate with him on the ground that if he depopulated the country he could get no supplies for the men.'[59] Neill at one point even recognises the extent of his actions, 'Havelock left me with sixty-nine sowars who behaved badly before the enemy… I would have disposed of them otherwise but here they add to my weakness.'[60] The most frequently recorded story of Neill was his punishment of prisoners at Cawnpore, who he believed had committed the infamous slaughter of European women and children. In his letter that was printed in The Times, Neill describes his actions:

> the chief rebels I make clean up a portion of the pool of blood, still two inches deep, in the shed where the fearful murder and mutilation of women and children took place… My object is to inflict a fearful punishment for a revolting, cowardly, barbarous deed, and to strike terror into these rebels. The first I caught was… a high caste Brahmin, who tried to resist my order… a few lashes made the miscreant accomplish his task. When done, he was taken out and immediately hanged, and after death buried in a ditch on the roadside.[61]

Neill's words echo that of General Dyer's description of 'sufficient moral effect' in 1919. Accounts of this event do vary in their detail: Forbes-Mitchell recalls that prisoners were made to 'crouch down, and with their mouths lick clean a square foot of the blood soaked floor before being taken to the gallows and hanged' and in Kaye's secondary account of General Neill he also concurs that licking the blood of the massacred Europeans was included in the punishment ritual.[62] Not only did Neill confine the limits of his wrath to his own regiment's handiwork, but ordered others to proceed in the same manner. His orders to Major Renaud for the march his Cawnpore are telling:

> 4th: All Sepoys found, without papers, from regiments that have mutinied… to be hanged forthwith… also all of the Sepoys of the 6th and 37th Regiments not on passport. Futtehpore to be promptly attacked, the Patan quarters to be destroyed, all in it killed, in fact, make an example of this place.
>
> 7th: The object in attacking villages and Futtehpore is to execute vengeance, and let

[58] *Ibid*, p.456
[59] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, p.45
[60] General J. Neill, Cawnpore, 25th July 1857 in G. W. Forrest (eds.) *Selections from the letters, despatches and other state papers from the Government of India, 1857-58*, Calcutta, Military Dept. Press, 1893, p.155
[61] From General Neill's personal letter dated August 1st 1857 in *The London Times*, Monday, Sep 28, 1857; pg. 8; Issue 22797
[62] W. Forbes-Mitchell, *Reminisces of the Great Mutiny*, p.20; John William Kaye, *Lives of Indian Officers: illustrative of the history of the civil and military services of India*, London, A. Strahan, 1867, p.382

> it amply be taken… If the Deputy Collector is taken, hang him, and have his head cut off and stuck up on one of the principal buildings (Mahomedan) in the town.[63]

It is evident that by ordering actions such as displaying the decapitated head of a leading town figure and letting 'vengeance' be 'amply taken,' Neill wishes to demonstrate the full extent of colonial might. Russell's diary records the aftermath of Renaud's march from Allahabad, describing Renaud as 'emulous of Neill' and 'executions of the natives in the line of the march were indiscriminate to the last degree… In two days forty-two men were hanged on the roadside, and a batch of twelve men were executed because their faces were 'turned the wrong way' when they were met on the march.'[64] The 'exhibition of stern justice'[65], as Kaye conservatively describes it, was an instrument employed by a number of the higher command who would achieve a similar cult status. In another example a British officer, Reginald Wilberforce, is quite taken with a certain General Nicholson, so famed for his love of the noose when dealing with natives that one conversation between two soldiers reads: "Jack the General's here"; "How do you know?"; "Why look over there; there's his mark", as it turns out, what the soldier was asked to look at was a set of gallows, each full with a set of six hanging rebels.[66] Nicholson's attitude to indiscriminate killing is also showcased by Wilberforce, who records, 'Few courts-martial were held by Nicholson; his dictum, 'The punishment of mutiny is death', obviated any necessity for trials.'[67] It is clear that a recurrent element of commanders' orders during the Uprising usually centred around the idea of no mercy for natives and instead hang or shoot most on suspicion to make an example and facilitate the counterinsurgency. This also leads to the idea that of those caught few were ever given the option to prove their innocence, if it would have been believed in the first place.

Treatment of prisoners and 'No Quarter'

The infamy of the British commanders during the Uprising and their clear intentions to meet the Indian threat with their own brand of ferocity lent itself to a policy of 'no mercy' for prisoners. Wilberforce provides a bleak anecdote of this when he describes the conflict as, 'no civilized war' and thus, 'no quarter was ever asked for, even if it had been it never would have been given.'[68] Another episode recounts how the prisoners were disposed of on grounds of efficiency:

> Just before we got to Lahore, a native regiment broke away… he caught up with them some 125 miles away… The officer

[63] General Neill's orders to Major Renaud in Ibid, p.375
[64] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary* 282
[65] J. Kaye, *Lives of Indian Officers*, p.416
[66] R. Wilberforce, *Unrecorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny*, p.39
[67] *Ibid*, p.39
[68] *Ibid*, p.218

> was in a dilemma: he could not let the Sepoys escape… managed to march them into a building, and when night came on, he stuffed up all the air-holes, so that in the morning, when the doors opened there was no one to come out.[69]

This account is also recorded by one Frederick Cooper who has a slightly different telling, recalling that some in the room did survive, however, 'They were taken out next day and shot, in batches of ten.'[70] Cooper also registers that these were prisoners who had taken no part in the mutiny, being disarmed beforehand.[71] Roberts is also ruthless when dealing with suspects, 'When a prisoner is brought in, I am the first to call out to have him hanged, knowing that unless the severest measures are adopted we shall have no end to our war.'[72] Thomas Lowe further exemplifies this trend in his memoirs, as he warns of the risk associated with leaving potential rebels alive, 'to spare the rebel whose hands were raised in supplication, was to receive a bullet in the back, an instant after mercy had stayed the avenging arm.'[73] Thus in Lowe's experience the general practice was prisoners being, 'ranged in one long line and blindfolded… a long rattle of musketry swept this fleshy wall of miscreants from their earthly existence.'[74] The general pervading attitude of the British troops seemed to be that of such a brutal conflict called for equally brutal measures to be taken. As the Roberts excerpt demonstrates, there was possibly a belief that by killing prisoners and demonstrating 'severest measures', the rebellion could effectively be subdued.

As the primary material has demonstrated, there was throughout the suppression of the 1857 rebellion the sense that an escalated level of violence must be forced upon the Indians in order to stamp out the rebellion. This led to a public demonstration of executions as well as the prevalence of indiscriminate killing and no mercy being given to prisoners. The infamy that some of the British higher command achieved throughout the Uprising was in direct relation to the severity of their approach to the counterinsurgency, and in the case of some this would be embodied by a clear tactic of shooting first and asking questions later. The tactical use of 'shock and awe' was widespread during the counterinsurgency and some could argue that its use was devastatingly effective, as the rebellion was suppressed within a fairly short amount of time in comparison to its expanse. The violence of 1857 however was not committed without motivation by the soldiers who carried it out and the commanders

[69] *Ibid*, p.20
[70] Frederick Cooper in R. Gott, *Britain's Empire*, p.46
[71] *Ibid*
[72] F. Roberts, *Letters Written During the Indian Mutiny*, p.140
[73] T. Lowe, *Central India During the Rebellion of 1857 and 1858*, London, Longman, Green & Co., 1860, ix
[74] *Ibid*, p.104

who ordered its instigation. It is to these motivations that we must now direct our examination in order to further explore the question as to whether the British can conceivably be accused of genocide during the Uprising.

Motivations – Racism, Religion, Revenge and Chaos

The extensive nature of colonial violence in India during the Uprising was a stark feature of the counterinsurgency and was evidently encouraged by the higher powers of the British army, whilst also being endorsed by a public and media back in Britain. As Indian historian Sabyasachi Battacharya has argued, whereas the Europeans who died at the hands of the Indians were often the victims of the violence of a leaderless mob, the cruelty that the British inflicted on the Indians came from an army, choosing to behave like a mob.[75] What is important henceforth is to establish the reasons that motivated the British to behave in this way, as this can help the debate illuminate the question as to whether the response took on the form of colonial genocide, testing as to whether there are grounds for the application of the term due to the existence of a *dolus specialis* in the manner of the British campaign.

Racial motivations

Considering the language of the soldiers' accounts in the sources, there are clear elements of pervading racial prejudice. Indians are frequently referred to as 'niggers', or as Lowe describes them, 'a debased race' and 'unscrupulous liars'.[76] In Russell's diary even the treatment of those loyal to the British was racist, one incident recalling how he witnessed the 'licking', or beating, of 'So-and-So's servants', describing it as 'a savage, beastly and degrading custom.'[77] Another occurrence in Russell's diary recounts a time when he saw idle Indians being attacked by what he described as 'a great British lion with his eyes flashing fire… a huge stick in his fist,' who decides to, 'rush among the coolies' and beat them until they were left 'maimed and bleeding'. When Russell confronts him, the soldier responds 'those lazy scoundrels are engaged to do our work, and they sneak off whenever they can.'[78] There was certainly a widespread British attitude towards the Indians as a disloyal, lazy and inferior race, consistent with the growth of white supremacist ideas that had permeated throughout Europe in the nineteenth century. The Indians are also frequently dehumanised by the British, something that Joanna Bourke argues is an

[75] Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (eds.) *Rethinking 1857*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2007, p.46

[76] T. Lowe, *Central India During the Rebellion of 1857 and 1858*, p.128
[77] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, p.129
[78] *Ibid*, p.285

essential component of facilitating the killing of the enemy.[79] It is in wartime environments Bourke emphasises that with the establishment of the idea of an inferior race, and in theatres of war where the battle is fought between two different ethnicities, atrocities and massacres are more likely to occur.[80] The description of the Indians as 'wild beasts' helps to negate them the qualities of human beings and therefore the killing and spread of terror is perhaps easier rationalised by the British. [81] The British were quick to establish themselves as the superior race in their minds, possibly in order to make allowances for their actions. Private Metcalfe's statement, 'we were soldiers – they were fiends', and an anecdote in *The Times*, 'they were literally torn asunder by the laughing fiends,' demonstrates how the British to separated themselves from the Indians in the theatre of war.[82] The idea of a soldier classically denoted conduct and bravery, and by casting the Indians as 'fiends' it denied them these qualities. This sense of 'other' arguably emboldens the British with a sense of duty to purge the savage races for their wrongdoing, as demonstrated by Wilberforce's who, 'can't wait to get a slap at these niggers' for what they had done to insult the Empire.[83] Racial prejudices are therefore clear throughout the Uprising, however one could also argue that this was a consequential and not causative factor in the escalation of violence. It is evident that the soldiers establish a sense of 'us' and 'them', however this is perhaps a natural consequence of war in such an environment, and whereabouts race facilitated the violence of warfare it did not explicitly cause it.

Religious motivations

If race was possibly a facilitator but not a causative factor, another similar motivation that must be explored was the role of religion. It is difficult to argue that the Uprising was not a conflict dominated by religion. As Mukerhjee has asserted, the conflict 'displayed a very strong religious fervour', this also emphasised by S. Malik who argued that the interpretations of 1857 in British accounts have often taken on a form of Anglican evangelistic zeal.[84] There is, from the primary material, a clear sense that to some this was a war of the civilising forces of Christianity against the heathens of India, and it was army's job to act as a 'military

[79] Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: face to face killing in twentieth century warfare*, London, Granta Books, 1999, p.101
[80] *Ibid*, 151
[81] K. Roy, *'Combat, Combat Motivation and the Construction of Identities'* in Crispin Bates & Gavin Rand, *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857: Volume 4: Military Aspects of the Indian Uprising*, Sage Publications, 2013, p.28
[82] H. Metcalfe, *Diary of Private Henry Metcalfe*, p.53; *The Times*, Thursday, Sep 17, 1857; pg. 9; Issue 22788 from The Times Digital Archive Online
[83] R. Wilberforce, *Unrecorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny*, p.21
[84] R. Mukherjee, *Satan Let Loose*, p.94; S. Malik in C. Bates & M. Carter '*Holy Warriors: Religion as Military Modus Operandi'* in *Military Aspects of the Indian Uprising*, p.43

wing' of 'holy warriors' and to civilise the country.[85] General Neill's actions at Cawnpore for example, display clear religious motivations to defile the Indians as they are forced to lick the blood from the floor of the house in which European women and children were slaughtered, automatically betraying their caste, and Neill also states after the punishment ritual how he, 'cannot help seeing that His finger is in all of this'[86] Edwardes even contends how Neill's actions there were driven by 'Evangelical fury' as he laid down punishment, 'smugly quoting Holy Writ as a justification for the abominable tortures.'[87] Sir Colin Campbell goes further in his memoirs, arguing that, 'Neill did things more than the massacre… He seems to have affected a religious call to blood.'[88] Amongst the British non-combatants there also existed the idea of British superiority due to religion and the penalty that would be paid for taking a Christian life, demonstrated by Miss Haldane to an Indian trying to help her in her escape from Delhi, as she remonstrates to this particular native, 'for every European or Christian life they would pay back tenfold, and that if we were killed, our four lives would lie at this door and he would pay for them.'[89]

The role of religion was also important regarding punishments of suspected rebels, as accounts detail how the British were 'sewing Mohammedans in pig-skins, smearing them with pork-fat before execution,' these actions again religiously humiliating and defiling the Indians.[90] The idea of religion as means of establishing difference and superiority would infiltrate far through the ranks of the British army throughout the conflict and Edwardes sees many of the British soldiers as having believed that this was a war between Christianity and the Hindu and Islamic religions, which further facilitated the violence.[91] Some of the primary material accounts for a millenarian nature to the conflict, for example Russell's tale of a soldier who implies 'a miraculous interposition had diverted the infidel missile', referring to a church cross that hadn't been shot through by Indian bullets but the metal ball below it had; in fact, as Russell states, 'the cross was solid whilst it was evident the ball was hollow.'[92] Forbes-Mitchell also records how one particular soldier, known as Quaker Wallace, strode into battle whilst reciting the 116th Psalm:

> I love, the Lord, because my voice and prayers, He die hear. I, while I live, will call on Him, Who bow'd to me his ear
>
> Then furthermore this soldier,

[85] C. Bates, *Military Aspects of the Indian Uprising*, p.53
[86] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, xvi
[87] *Ibid*, xvii
[88] Sir Colin Campbell in *Ibid*, xvi
[89] J. Haldane, *The Story of Our Escape from Delhi in 1857*, Agra: Brown and Sons, 1888, p.18
[90] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, p.161
[91] *Ibid*, xvii
[92] *Ibid*, p.177

> plunged into the Secundrabâgh quoting the next verse at every shot fired from his rifle and at each thrust given by his bayonet: I'll of salvation take the cup, On God's name will call; I'll pay my vows now to the Lord Before His people all.[93]

Incidents such as these demonstrate that for some of the British soldiery there was an element of evangelical zeal in the way they went about the suppression. On the other hand one could also argue that this was a natural response in times of war against another religion and a heightened sense of Christian duty was nothing untoward. Britain at the time was a frivolously Christian country, and it has been suggested that this religious fervour was exaggerated even more so during the Uprising than in India.[94] There are other instances where the role of religion clearly did motivate some to carry out certain actions. Wilberforce elicits how, 'my great desire was to get a shell inside… that great Mosque… some one found the correct elevation… then we sent shell after shell into the great Mosque.'[95] It seems fairly futile to exact punishment on a religious building just for the sake of destroying it, considering it is unlikely that there were any rebels inside and it was a clear waste of British ammunition. It is possible that the destruction of the Mosque provided Wilberforce with a sense of gratification for having attacked one of the most distinct symbols of Islam. This therefore can suggest that the religious motivations of some soldiers were significant, but can this really afford the suggestion that the killing took place due to the aspect of religion? Instead perhaps religion provided a clear distinction of 'us' and 'them' that was feasibly natural in such an environment, especially one where the religious element of the conflict was so prevalent. This however was again, as this discussion lent to racial motivation, a reflection of the nature of the conflict rather than a motivation for widespread and indiscriminate killing.

Vengeance and chaos

If racial and religious elements were perhaps not causative factors in creating the level of violence and indiscriminate killing witnessed during the British counterinsurgency of 1857, then one must explore other possible motivations that brought this about. Vengeance has been another motivation cited for the extents to which British soldiers and commanders went to exact punishment upon the Indians for the rebels' atrocities. Events such as those at Cawnpore were vividly described, often mythologised and exaggerated throughout the British camps and led to reprisals being severe. Forbes-Mitchell recalls the urgency to exact revenge, 'the throats of our men were hoarse with shouting,

[93] W. Forbes Mitchell, *Reminisces of the Great Mutiny*, pp.53-56
[94] C. Bates, *Military Aspects of the Indian Uprising*, p.43
[95] R. Wilberforce, *Unrecorded Chapter of the Indian Mutiny*, p.198

"Cawnpore! You bloody murderers!" This was also encouraged by the higher command, Sir Colin Campbell exclaiming to the 93rd Regiment post-battle, 'you have bravely done your share of this morning's work, and Cawnpore is avenged!'[96] As Edwardes argues, the massacre at Cawnpore released the British soldiers onto a bloodthirsty rampage that took on the form of a 'retributive savagery' whenever they had the opportunity to exercise revenge.[97]The British media would provide impetus for soldier's actions, urging the harshest treatment of the natives and scolding the government for thinking otherwise. One report warns, "Can there really be a policy more suicidal than when the whole country is swarming with rebels… for a Government to exhibit itself as afraid to act with severity."[98] Such barbaric activity, such as the killing of European women and children, would therefore justify, for the British, a martial response, and it has been suggested that in times of war justification can be important for an escalation of violence, as due to its instrumental nature it requires a perceived end to justify its means.[99] What one must consider however is that the use of Indian atrocities, namely those at Cawnpore, as motivating factors for wanton colonial violence, is possibly a limited argument as in fact much of the British killing also occurred prior to confirmed knowledge of the event.[100] The butcher of the Indians at Cawnpore, Neill, even initially dismissed the story as a fable and the full truth of the massacre was not properly confirmed until the British re-entered the city and discovered the scene of the event.[101] The idea of revenge therefore, though perhaps playing a part in the later stages of the Uprising, was an unlikely motivation for the slaughter of Indian civilians that was carried out in the earlier stages.

In light of the fact that revenge is unlikely to have been a significant factor driving the British troops to commit atrocities throughout the majority of the violent episodes of the counterinsurgency, perhaps a more analytical explanation stems from the chaotic nature of the reaction to the rebellion by the British and the breakdown in order throughout the army. Looting and plunder are highlighted in the literature as features of the suppression, in particular during the British recapture of cities. The violent environment that looting and plunder created could therefore have assisted the prevalent nature of widespread killing. Roberts remembers how in the relief of

[96] J. Newsinger, *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire*, London, Bookmarks, 2006, p.75; W. Forbes Mitchell, *Reminisces of the Great Mutiny*, p.57
[97] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, xiv
[98] The Times, Thursday, October 29th, 1857, Page 8, Issue 22824
[99] H. Arendt, *On Violence*, p.51

[100] D. Judd, *The British Imperial Experience, from 1765 to the present*, London, Harper Collins, 1996, p.73
[101] J. Marshman, *Memoirs of Sir Henry Havelock*, pp.282-314;

captured Delhi looting and plundering was rampant, 'our men now sack and destroy all the Native ones [houses]' and how the soldiers engaged in 'killing every man we came across… Everybody was turned out of the city, and all the houses were plundered.'[102] The breakdown in order was seemingly well beyond the authority of the officers, as Charles Griffiths records, despite there being strict orders in Delhi not to loot, 'it was impossible to check the evil.'[103] The result of this level of frenzied attack on the rebels and occupiers of Delhi had dire consequences, as soldiers 'brooked no interference when in the act of securing booty,' which led to widespread slaughter, Roberts describing the scene in Delhi where, 'In one pit upwards of 500 bodies were thrown… nearly 2000 Pandies were on the ground dead or dying.'[104] Alcohol also often fuelled the British attacks on rebel-held cities or towns, to such an extent that it's seizure was ordered to be controlled by Havelock, 'I have ordered all the beer, wine, spirits and every drinkable thing at Cawnpore to be purchased by the Commissariat… it will be guarded by a few good men; if it remained at Cawnpore… I should not have a sober soldier in camp.'[105] Roberts also emphasises the level to which the drunkenness effected the soldiers, 'All the old Officers were completely at their wits' ends… the shops with beer and brandy had all been left open, and several of our men got drunk, others could not find their regiments.'[106] The pervasion of insobriety throughout the army was commonplace and can go some way to explaining the particularly disordered nature of British relief efforts that often ended in wanton plunder. Havelock provides what he believes are the reasons for the level of looting that occurred, citing that soldiers were 'exasperated beyond bounds by the perfidious and brutal massacre of their fellow countrymen and women, and they considered the plunder of the town in which these atrocities had been perpetrated as an act of righteous retribution.'[107] This is perhaps somewhat facetious however as why the British troops would have believed that plundering European shops and Indian homes, which would have offered them little following the lengthy siege of the town, would deliver vengeance for the deaths of Europeans, is questionable. Nonetheless, it is evident that the British efforts to recapture cities did lead to plunder and high levels of uncontrolled

[102] F. Roberts, *Letters Written during the Indian Mutiny*, pp.60-68
[103] C. Griffiths, *A Narrative of the Siege of Delhi*, p.197
[104] C. Griffiths, *A Narrative of the Siege of Delhi*, p.197; F. Roberts, *Letters Written during the Indian Mutiny*, p.103
[105] Telegram from Brigadier General Havelock to CinC, Camp Nabobgunge, Cawnpore and Allahabad, 19th July 1857, *Selections from the letters, despatches and other state papers from the Government of India*, p.97
[106] F. Roberts, *Letters Written during the Indian Mutiny*, p.64
[107] J. Marshman, *Memoirs of Sir Henry Havelock*, p.323.

violence on the part of British troops, and can go some way to explaining the levels of Indian casualties. The unprofessional nature of the British troops would be further compelled by the guerrilla nature of battles throughout the Uprising, and as Griffiths describes from his experiences in Delhi, 'There is nothing so destructive of the morale and discipline of soldiers as street-fighting.'[108] The panic created by this intense and close quarters sort of combat, fought in cities where it was not clear who was an insurgent and who wasn't, could have led to a motive for widespread slaughter.[109]

When searching for motivations to explain the level of violence that the counterinsurgency experienced therefore, if one is to rest their case with racial or religious prejudices this would perhaps be a short-sighted explanation as they were arguably products of the natural divisions in a war that was fought between two different races and contained strong religious elements, and not causative factors. Their exaggeration during the war would be, as Donald Bloxham has argued, a case of the 'motions of battle' fuelling 'the emotions that would sustain them.'[110] Motivations were perhaps instead not pre-meditated or prejudicial, but the outcome of a breakdown in professional conduct of the army faced with a new mode of conflict, coupled with an overriding order to deliver a significant demoralising blow to the rebellion through widespread and indiscriminate violence.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to examine the notion that the British reaction to the Indian Uprising became something of a colonial genocide. A theoretical discussion of the forms of British colonial authority has provided us with a general understanding of the suppressive nature of colonial rule and following this a study of the letters, journals and anecdotes of soldiers and non-combatants during the conflict has both illuminated the methods and practices of the counterinsurgency as well as helped construct an analysis of the possible motivations of the British in employing such widespread violent campaign. This conclusion shall intend to draw together the arguments and findings from the preceding discussion and attempt to gauge whether an accusation of colonial genocide is warranted, or whether there are other, and perhaps more accurate, ways of characterising the colonial violence throughout the Uprising.

The first part of this paper, that explored the methods by which colonial authority was expressed, should therefore provide little shock when considering the coercive approach to suppressing the rebellion that the British

[108] C. Griffiths, *A Narrative of the Siege of Delhi*, p.163
[109] W. Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, xviii
[110] D. Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide*, Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.265

decided upon in 1857. Retribution for challenges to colonial authority were historically both a martial and visual affair, and this would furthermore be embodied within the 'shock and awe' tactic that the British employed in order to crush the rebellion in 1857. This tactic arguably contributed to the swift escalation of coercion, as its foundational nature was to heighten the level of violence to a point that would produce a sufficiently demoralising effect. As demonstrated in the empirical analysis, the British Army's higher command implemented this tactic by ordering capital executions on a vast scale as well as encouraging a policy of widespread slaughter on marches and raids on towns and villages. The British had a firm policy of taking no prisoners and often embarked on indiscriminate killing sprees that targeted non-combatants as well as rebels, going well beyond the bounds of the battlefield. The battlefield itself was also often unclear during the Uprising, in particular in the case of the relief of cities where guerrilla warfare challenged the British with a type of conflict with which they were entirely uncomfortable. Having established the great degree of arbitrary killing during the 1857 counterinsurgency and the conditions that allowed this to occur, motives for the extent of the colonial violence are thereby the means by which an accusation of genocide can be tried. When considering the motivations that exacerbated the level of killing that was implemented by the British during 1857, one is nonetheless tempted to employ the premise that it was racially and/or religiously conceived, as there were clear racial prejudices and a quantity of religious fundamentalism throughout the Uprising. However one must also be careful to note that these were possibly not the causal factors that drove on the colonial violence, but instead the consequential elements of a wartime environment where the conflict was fought between two different creeds and two opposing religions. Whilst racial prejudice was demonstrated by the British troops, and there were instances where Christianity seems to have driven forward the suppressive efforts, this is more than likely a product of the war itself rather than a catalyst for slaughter. Vengeance too can be confused with a causative factor, as some have argued that the extent of British colonial violence lent itself to a blood lust to avenge the deaths of European non-combatants. However as the preceding discussion has asserted, many of the most violent episodes of colonial suppression in fact occurred before knowledge of events such as Cawnpore were confirmed, and in the earlier stages of the counterinsurgency, therefore one could arguably discount this theory.

If one can possibly disregard racial and religious prejudices as non-causative and vengeance as inconsistent with the chronology of the Uprising, the *dolus specialis* that one

searches for when trying to examine what Amaresh Misra has famously described as colonial genocide by the British in 1857, was perhaps instead a partially abstract motive after all.[111] The British did arguably embark on a campaign of wanton slaughter, however its foundations were based upon the premises of massacre, not genocide, and motivated by the belief that a significant level of physical violence could 'shock and awe' the rebellion out of India. The abstract, or indirect, elements that would intensify this to the point that it was almost uncontrollable were the frantic response to guerrilla warfare that saw a widespread martial reaction directed at the Indian population, as in these conditions anyone could conceivably be a rebel in the colonials' eyes, and a breakdown in the order of the army. This collapse of professionalism occurred particularly in the relief of cities, which is where the concentration of guerrilla fighting occurred, also as a result of drunkenness throughout the British regiments and a clear desire to loot and plunder. Therefore the existence of 'special intent' is absent in the case of the British suppression, as the intent is only partial i.e. the order to implement 'shock and awe', which was not racially or religiously conceived, but a military tactic. Thus a campaign marred with the committing of many a massacre, instead of genocide, is perhaps a more accurate way of characterising British colonial violence during the Uprising. This conclusion has not in any way tried to excuse the actions of the British, or remove from the fact that the counterinsurgency was extensively severe, however to wrongly accuse an event of genocide is to further contribute to an overuse of the term and the dilution of its meaning, as well as do an injustice to historical incidents where this term rightfully applies. Thus in the case of 1857, the British counterinsurgency must be understood as the tactical implication of massacre on an extensive scale in India in order to suppress the rebellion, alongside a chaotic and violent military campaign that spiralled out of control, but arguably cannot be viewed as colonial genocide.

[111] Amaresh Misra in The Guardian, Friday 24 August 2007 http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/aug/24/india.randeepramesh

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