ABROGATION OF SOVEREIGNTY IN COLONIAL INDIA:

The 1857 Indian Sepoy Mutiny, 1919 Amritsar Massacre, and Dearth of Effective Accountability Measures

By RAHEEM UZ ZAMAN

Abstract

One of the ways Great Britain executed their colonial project in India was by abrogating the sovereignty of the people. I classify the "abrogation of sovereignty" (a historical injustice) via the case studies of the 1857 Indian Sepoy Mutiny and the 1919 Amritsar Massacre. In addition to the absence of personal freedom, the most significant similarity of the former and latter event was the dearth of effective accountability measures. In this essay I endeavour to investigate the reasoning behind the 'accountability vacuum' created by Britain. Hence, the paper is structured into three different sections. The first section delves deeper into the specifics of the abrogation of sovereignty. The second section grapples with theoretical explanations of historical injustice, justice, and accountability. Section three indicates the accountability measures that seem to be absent associated with the Amritsar Massacre and Sepoy Mutiny and discusses the possible reasons behind the absence.

71

Introduction

Colonialism has plagued the world for centuries.[1] Not surprisingly, the United Kingdom (UK), the most dominant political force before WWII, had the most colonial possessions, with 115 territories.[2] One of the most profitable colonies for the former global superpower was the Indian subcontinent. The East Indian Company (EIC), the private entity that ruled over India for a century, and later the British Raj (Crown rule in undivided India)

---

[1] I acknowledge that colonialism is more than a phenomenon of the past; it continues to shape the contemporary social, economic, and political conditions of post-colonial and settler-colonial states. In the context of this essay, the 1857 Indian Sepoy Mutiny, 1919 Amritsar Massacre and the deficiency of effective accountability measures associated with these two historical events (inter alia) are significant reasons behind the present socio-economic and political conditions of the Indian Subcontinent.

[2] Niall McCarthy, "Europe's champions of colonisation," *Statista*, July 6, 2015, https://www.statista.com/chart/3615/europes-champions-of-colonisation/.

benefitted immensely at the expense of the local populace.[3] Before delving into the specific subcategories of colonialism, there is a need to define the broad concept. According to Kumar Jha, colonialism is a sophisticated concept with socio-economic and political dimensions.[4] Researchers commonly refer to it as the expansion of extreme capitalist intentions by a powerful actor or state, which involves absolute control over the "land, people, and resources."[5] Also, colonialism is a practice that entails the "subjugation of one people to another."[6]

72

Kumar Jha further states that Britain, until the early 20th century, was the flag-bearer of the colonial system of governance—no other imperial power came near their economic and military might.[7] This scholar also mentions that the colonizer's ruthless and iniquitous economic policies enabled them to create astronomical wealth for the empire. The imperialist perspective is closely related to colonialism; the former is a significant part of the latter's nature.[8] Kumar Jha also argues that from an economic perspective, imperialism is an "outlet for surplus."[9] However, non-economic explanations define imperialism as a political strategy—where the state desires "unlimited forcible expansion" to enlarge its sphere of influence.[10]

---

[3] Niraj Kumar Jha, "Interpreting Colonialism and Nationalism," in *A History of Colonial India: 1757 to 1947*, ed. Himanshu Roy and Jawaid Alam (Routledge, 2022), 1; Deepshikha Shahi, "Contested Histories of 1857 and the (re) construction of the Indian Nation-State," in *A History of Colonial India: 1757 to 1947*, ed. Himanshu Roy and Jawaid Alam (Routledge, 2022), 57.

[4] Kumar Jha, "Interpreting Colonialism and Nationalism," 1-2.

[5] Ibid., 1.

[6] Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy, "Colonialism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, May 9, 2006, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/.

[7] Kumar Jha, "Interpreting Colonialism and Nationalism," 2-3.

[8] Ibid., 3

[9] Ibid., 3.

[10] Ibid., 5.

73

Due to the vast array of historical injustices associated with colonialism (cultural imperialism, land theft and the seizure of cultural property), I have chosen to narrow down to the "abrogation of sovereignty" in colonial India. Specifically, what I mean by the abrogation of sovereignty is the inability of the Indian people during the colonial era to be autonomous actors. The 1857 Indian Sepoy Mutiny and the 1919 Amritsar Massacre are pertinent examples of this specific strand of historical injustice. The most significant similarity of these two cases of historical injustice is the dearth of effective accountability measures. I seek to probe why that is the case. Hence, this essay is divided into four sections. The first section delves deeper into the injustice under investigation. As for the second part, I grapple with some theoretical explanations of historical injustice/justice and accountability. Section three demonstrates the absence of effective accountability measures and discusses the possible reasons behind the absence. The last section provides a conclusion to summarize the argument.

Perpetrators of Historical Injustice: The EIC and the British Raj

From 1757 to 1947, self-governance for the Indian people ceased to exist. The directors of the EIC effectively ruled over the Indian subcontinent for a century—under a royal charter granted by the British Crown, which was

extended every 20 years.[11] After the 1857 Indian Sepoy Mutiny, the 1858 Government of India Act enforced the transfer of all colonial possessions and administrative powers from the EIC to the British Crown.[12] In other words, the Sepoy Mutiny triggered the transfer of power, as it challenged the presence of Great Britain in the Indian subcontinent.

A year before the end of the EIC's regime, new rifles were brought to India, which required the sepoys (local Indian soldiers) to bite cartridges made from cow and pig fat.[13] As cows are sacred in Hinduism and pigs are haram (forbidden) in Islam, this policy decision infuriated the Hindu and Muslim soldiers of the army.[14] Thus, as Shahi notes, these Indian soldiers lacked the freedom of choice, which caused them to rebel against their superiors. Dawn articulates that although thousands of British soldiers died amid the mutiny, there were also Indian casualties, not only during the rebellion but also in its aftermath.[15] Dawn further notes that evidence shows that the British Raj pursued a decade-long murderous campaign after the 1857 Indian Mutiny to stamp down political dissidents and

---

[11] UK Parliament, "East India Company and Raj 1785-1858," 2023, https://onedrive.live.com/personal/00423dda7849d582/_layouts/15/doc.aspx?resid=80a63727-fb8c-464c-95ad-53ca2bed3b3b&cid=00423dda7849d582&ct=1743757183328&wdOrigin=OFFICECOM-WEB.START.EDGEWORTH&wdPreviousSessionSrc=HarmonyWeb&wdPreviousSession=6a8a43d7-b819-4d34-9432-05561219cae5.

[12] UK Parliament, "East India Company and Raj 1785-1858."

[13]"Millions Died After 1857 War of Independence: Historian," *Dawn* News, August 25, 2007, https://www.dawn.com/news/262820/millions-died-after-1857-war-of-independence-historian.; Shahi, "Contested Histories of 1857 and the (re)construction of the Indian Nation-State," 62.

[14] Shahi, "Contested Histories of 1857 and the (re)construction of the Indian Nation-State," 57.

[15] "Millions Died After 1857 War of Independence: Historian."

75 seditionaries. The mutiny on its own is an early indication of the Indian people desiring some form of sovereignty over their motherland.

Before tackling the specific injustice (Amritsar Massacre) that took place in British India, it is essential to examine the concept of Indian nationalism, one of the main reasons behind the repressive activities of the British colonizers. On the topic of Indian nationalism, Alam postulates that Gandhi's campaign politics in the early 20th century evoked a sense of national identity in the Indian community.[16] To challenge the imperial dominance of the British Raj, local Indian political actors "devised an ideology of Indian nationalism" to make the Indian people realize that they belong to the same motherland.[17] Creating a concrete national identity was a necessary step towards potential sovereignty for the Indian people.[18] Alam suggests that many political leaders, including the most charismatic individual of them all, Gandhi, accepted this fact about the local Indian populace.

After coming back to India from South Africa in 1915, on the advice of his mentor, Gokhale, Gandhi took a hiatus from politics to observe the political climate of that time.[19] Alam notes that less than a year after returning to India, Gandhi got involved in local political issues with his charismatic appeal—but a few years later, he moved onto the national stage. Alam further states that Gandhi had a unique way of conducting campaign politics, commonly

---

[16] Jawaid Alam, "Gandhi and nationalist politics," in *A History of Colonial India: 1757 to 1947*, ed. Himanshu Roy and Jawaid Alam (Routledge, 2022), 130.

[17] Kumar Jha, "Interpreting Colonialism and Nationalism," 15.

[18] Alam, "Gandhi and Nationalist Politics," 130; Kumar Jha, "Interpreting Colonialism and Nationalism," 1.

[19] Alam, "Gandhi and Nationalist Politics," 130.

known as "satyagraha." This concept means "holding onto truth" and addressing evil or oppressors through non-violent means.[20] Gandhi exercised this campaign method for the first time when the Indian imperial government made the repressive Rowlatt Act law in March 1919.[21]

Immediately after the Rowlatt Bills were enacted, thousands of Indians in colonial India gathered for public meetings and peacefully protested this arbitrary law.[22] Alam mentions that the Rowlatt Satyagraha, also referred to as a hartal in Hindi or Urdu, was utilized by the Indian people all over the country (from Chennai to Amritsar). However, he further notes that in Delhi, due to some form of miscommunication, there were violent clashes between the demonstrators and the police. Alam also states that Gandhi disapproved of this violence, as it did not align with the Satyagraha philosophical movement. Shortly after making this statement, Gandhi was arrested by colonial forces on 9 April—which led to further widespread political instability in British India.[23] Apart from Delhi, Alam notes that Punjab was the hotspot of violence between protesters and law enforcement, specifically the cities of Lahore and Amritsar. It is in the latter city where the worst human tragedy occurred during the British Raj.

On 13 April 1919, protestors of the Sikh religion, but also some Muslims and Hindus, had a public gathering in Jallianwala Bagh (Garden or Park), Amritsar, Punjab, to discuss the unjust Rowlatt Act implemented by the British

---

[20] Dr. Anil Dutta Mishra, "Satyagrah," *Indian National Congress*, March 6, 2021, https://inc.in/congress-sandesh/dandi-anniversary-march/satyagraha-1.

[21] Alam, "Gandhi and Nationalist Politics," 132.

[22] Ibid., 132-134.

[23] Ibid., 133.

77 Raj.[24] Alam notes that as there was a mandatory curfew under this legislation, and mass demonstrations were also prohibited—permitting the British Army to take swift and inhumane action against the people gathered in the public park.[25] On the command of Brigadier-General Dyer, lower-ranking British soldiers opened fire at the protestors at Jallianwala Bagh—which resulted in 379 deaths and 1,270 injuries, according to official numbers.[26] However, the actual numbers are considerably higher.[27] Alam further postulates that General Dyer's decision to open fire was majorly influenced by racist thoughts towards the Indians.[28] This historic event is known as the Amritsar Massacre in intellectual and public circles and is widely considered a "black day in the annals of British India."[29]Although the Rowlatt Satyagraha did not achieve its objectives, it helped develop Indian nationalism and catapulted Gandhi to new political heights.[30]

Literature Review: Historical Injustice/Justice and Accountability

---

[24] Ibid., 133; Clive Baldwin, "UK: A Century After the Amritsar Massacre, London Still Kicks Its Atrocities Under the Rug," *Human Rights Watch*, April 12, 2019, https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/12/uk-century-after-amritsar-massacre-london-still-kicks-its-atrocities-under-rug; Abhishyant Kidangoor, "A Century After a Massacre in India During British Colonial Rule, the U.K. Faces Demands for an Apology," *Time Magazine*, April 12, 2019, https://time.com/5566864/india-massacre-apology/.

[25] Alam "Gandhi and Nationalist Politics," 130.

[26] Ibid., 133.

[27] Kidangoor, "A Century After a Massacre in India During British Colonial Rule, the U.K. Faces Demands for an Apology."

[28] Alam, "Gandhi and Nationalist Politics," 133-134.

[29] Sir Valentine Chirol, *India Old and New* (MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1921), 183, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15586/15586-h/15586-h.htm#CHAPTER_IX.

[30] Alam, "Gandhi and Nationalist Politics," 134.

When referencing historical injustice and justice, memory plays a crucial role. Richard Terdiman argues that "memory is the past made present."[31] What Terdimen means by this quote is that although being affiliated with the past, memories are relevant in present times when specific segments of society discuss them frequently. On this topic, Neumann and Thompson postulate that injustices that fade away as time passes resurface in the public realm when the victims' family members remember the atrocities committed by past governments.[32] These scholars further emphasize that such memories are bolstered via depictions in film and literature. Regarding this specific point, Neumann and Thompson provide examples of Caroline Elkins' book *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* and David Anderson's work *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and End of Empire*, both of which were published in 2005. Both these publications commented on the British-led Kenyan detention camps outside Kenya, which influenced the Kenyan government and inspired them to demand an apology from the British government.[33] In the case of the Amritsar Massacre, Kim Wagner brought this historical injustice into the limelight by publishing his book—*Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre*.[34]

---

[31] Klaus Neumann and Janna Thompson, "Introduction: Beyond the Legalist Paradigm," in *Historical Justice and Memory*, ed. Klaus Neumann and Janna Thompson (University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 3.

[32] Ibid., 6.

[33] David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and End of Empire* (W.W. Norton, 2005), 9-181; Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (Henry Holt and Company, 2005).

[34] Kim Wagner, *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre* (Yale University Press, 2019).

79

Neumann and Thompson further note that memories of certain injustices are captured through public memorials, commemorative statues, and special museum sections.[35] The Jallianwala Bagh Memorial Park in Amritsar, Punjab, before its "Disneyfication" in 2019, encapsulated memories of India's dark colonial history.[36] According to Suri and the BBC, Disneyfication is a term that critics have used to describe the revamped Jallianwala Bagh Memorial Park.[37] In other words, these commentators argue that the gaudy statues created by the contemporary Indian government in the new memorial park obfuscate the true meaning of the place, which is to pay respect to the victims and contemplate the dark colonial history of India. Connecting to the re-emergence of memory politics, all this remembering of historical injustices is related to the "memory boom" in the 1980s and 1990s, which led to the demand for redress and the development of memory studies.[38]

As for Rothberg, he critiques the "competitive memory" approach of other commentators or individuals.[39] These people erroneously compare different historical injustices by considering one more prominent than the

---

[35] Neumann and Thompson, "Introduction: Beyond the Legalist Paradigm," 9.
[36]"Jallianwala Bagh: Indian Outrage over Revamp of Memorial," *BBC News*, August 31, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-58382434; Manveena Suri, "India Massacre Memorial's Lights-and-Lasers 'Makeover' Attracts Controversy," *CNN*, August 31, 2021, https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/amritsar-massacre-jallianwala-bagh-punjab-india-modi-intl-hnk/index.html.
[37] Suri, "India Massacre Memorial's Lights-and-Lasers 'Makeover' Attracts Controversy,"; *BBC News*, "Jallianwala Bagh: Indian Outrage over Revamp of Memorial."
[38] Neumann and Thompson, "Introduction: Beyond the Legalist Paradigm," 10.
[39] Michael Rothberg, "Introduction: Theorizing Multidirectional Memory in a Transnational Age," in *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford University Press, 2009), 1-29.

other, and they often overemphasize the role of identity in structuring one's perception.[40] Rothberg argues that instead of adopting such a divisive method, memory should be considered in terms of multidirectionality—where different memories interact with one another to create a "productive, intercultural dynamic."[41] Applying the theory of multi-directionality to the abrogation of sovereignty in India, memories such as the Amritsar Massacre and Indian Sepoy Mutiny can become a form of "multidirectional memory" by relating them to the Kenyan Mau Mau rebel mass murder committed by the British colonial administration.

Other authors critically evaluate the connection of redress with historical injustice. Henderson and Wakeham articulate that redress should mean remedying or compensating for a historical wrong or grievance, as certain past injustices have shaped contemporary state-society relations.[42] According to these scholars, particular attention should be given to how past events are interconnected to the present socio-political environment.[43] However, this specific template of redress, its meaning and function, is often ignored by today's settler-colonial and former colonial governments, as they primarily emphasize a "presentist" view of the historical wrong, thus undermining the prior historical events that influenced the modern world.[44] Henderson and Wakeham further critique that this rationale mirrors the current flawed approach adopted by settler-colonial and former colonial regimes, displaying "magnanimity" by providing political apologies without

---

[40] Ibid., 3.

[41] Ibid., 3.

[42] Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, "Introduction," in *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture of Redress*, ed. Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 3-27.

[43] Ibid., 3.

[44] Ibid., 4.

81 properly delving into the historical context.[45] To analyze historical injustice in this essay, the abrogation of sovereignty in British India (illustrated via the 1857 Indian Mutiny and the 1919 Amritsar Massacre) must be associated with accountability.

There is a breadth of scholarship on accountability. Recently, there has been a proliferation of the word "accountability" in the realm of world politics and academic scholarship—so much so that the term is regarded as the "Über-concept" of the new century.[46] Bovens et al. state that "concepts of accountability" have been a significant source of discussion in academia of different disciplines.[47] These scholars further note that although there are a lot of similarities or commonalities in disciplines' perspectives concerning accountability mechanisms, they are oblivious to this fact and therefore do not embrace each other's rationale. Thus, due to fragmentation and contention created by different viewpoints in social science, business studies, and law, Bovens et al. postulate that an emphasis should be given to unifying all these perspectives on the concept of accountability. In the following paragraphs, I delve deeper into the differing definitions of accountability, as stated by political scientists, social psychologists, public administration scholars, international relations experts, lawyers, and business administration professionals. However, before doing that, there is a need to discuss the historical roots of accountability.

---

[45] Ibid., 7.

[46] Mark Bovens, Thomas Schillemans, and Robert Goodin, "Public Accountability," *The Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability*, (Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-20, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199641253.013.0012.

[47] Ibid., 2.

Although the "concept" of accountability is relatively recent, its practices have existed for centuries.[48] Bovens et al. suggest that in ancient times, accountability was regarded as keeping an account of all the assets and liabilities of states and actors.[49] However, these scholars also note that in medieval times, accountability had a relational element—where an individual or group of people was required to be accountable to someone higher up in the socio-political hierarchy. Not surprisingly, this explanation of accountability mirrors that of social psychologists.[50] Also, Bovens et al. note, on the other hand, that in contrast to social psychology's significant emphasis on individualism, the field of public administration focuses on the "public character of formal accountability."[51] In other words, these intellectuals postulate that public administration professionals stress the structural elements of accountability concerning the public service.

As for political scientists, they see accountability as something related to the concept of power.[52] Bovens et al. state that intellectuals examine the intricate relationship between politicians, civil servants, and the electorate in this discipline. Bovens et al. further note that, unlike social psychologists, political scientists emphasize punishment in accountability. In other words, "Accountability=Punishment" permeates the political science literature.[53] Furthermore, these scholars also suggest that in International Relations (IR), which is

---

[48] Ibid., 2.

[49] Ibid., 3.

[50] Ibid., 4.

[51] Ibid., 5.

[52] Ibid., 5.

[53] Ibid., 5.

83 closely related to the field of political science, there is an internationalization of the relationship between accountability and historical injustice. To be more specific, Bovens et al. mention that, contrary to the research in political science, IR scholars stress rights and interest-based analysis of accountability.[54] In addition to the IR perspective, constitutional law experts emphasize an empirical and normative view of political accountability: what norms/values/customs do or ought to shape political accountability?[55] To combat the fragmented approaches of accountability in many disciplines, these scholars note that the core of accountability is similar in each academic field stated above. Before describing Stranger-Ross and James's argument on social accountability, I will thoroughly explain accountability as a virtue and mechanism.

Bovens et al. postulate that accountability is first used as a virtue.[56] In this argument, affect/emotion is attached to accountability.[57] These scholars note that state governments and other entities use it as a tool in their professions. Moreover, rather than solely focusing on "institutional mechanisms," accountability as a virtue emphasizes "defining and preventing undesirable behaviour."[58] According to Bovens et al., in addition to the information mentioned above, government officials must meet a specific or defined standard; if they do not, they must be held accountable for their actions. On the other hand, institutions and other entities utilize accountability as a socio-political mechanism more so than accountability as

---

[54] Ibid., 4-5.

[55] Ibid., 6.

[56] Ibid., 8.

[57] Ibid., 8.

[58] Ibid., 8.

a virtue.[59] Bovens et al. describe this type of accountability as the institutional mechanisms—parliamentary question period, organizational audits, and board meetings—that certified individuals can use to keep checks and balances on certain people.

Towards the end of the 20th century, the then Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney, apologized to the Japanese Canadians regarding the past injustices committed against them by former Canadian governments.[60] Stanger-Ross and James note that in this formal political apology, Mulroney was explicitly referring to the internment of Japanese Canadians during WWII, the placelessness that these people had to face due to the dispossession of their properties by the state, and the subsequent sale of Japanese Canadian possessions without consent. On top of a formal political apology, reparations were also offered to affected Japanese Canadians—which included individual compensation worth $21,000, a sum of $12 million granted to the Japanese Canadian community as a whole, and pardoning those convicted under the War Measures Act.[61] Stanger-Ross and James do not downplay the significance of the redress package and the political apology but rather argue about the "impermanence of political apologies," as it fails to historicize the specific historical injustice properly and does not delve into its social context.[62]

---

[59] Ibid., 9.

[60] Jordan Stanger-Ross and Matt James, "Social Accountability after Political Apologies," in *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians*, ed. Jordan Stanger-Ross (McGill—Queen's University Press, 2020), 454.

[61] Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (Raincoast Books, 2005), 9.

[62] Stanger-Ross and James, "Social Accountability after Political Apologies," 455.

85   Stanger-Ross and James stress three aspects of social accountability to combat the flaws associated with political apologies. First, they emphasize the need to focus on the racist structures that imbued Canadian society.[63] According to these scholars, what this means is that specific laws enacted by the government racialized Japanese Canadians, and the Cunningham v. Homma judicial decision, which went against the Japanese Canadian (Homma), constitutionalized racism. Second, Stanger-Ross and James (2020) note the salience of path-dependent analysis, a series of choices taken by governmental actors that led to the historical injustice that Japanese Canadians faced.[64]

   Finally, the role that the public played in promoting and lobbying for racist activities and acts concerning Japanese Canadians goes under the radar in formal political apologies.[65] These intellectuals also state that White Canadians who advocated selling Japanese Canadian properties bought these possessions themselves, thus creating generational wealth that can still be seen in affluent areas such as downtown Vancouver. In a thorough and sophisticated manner, the next section of this essay will connect some of the historical injustice/justice and accountability literature to the cases of the Indian Sepoy Mutiny and the Amritsar Massacre (which allude to the abrogation of sovereignty in British India). It would do that by stating some of the minor accountability measures taken, the unfortunate absence of most kinds of accountability, and the reasons behind this absence.

---

[63] Ibid., 461-463.

[64] Ibid., 463-469.

[65] Ibid., 470.

The Absence of Accountability: Exploring Possible Reasons

Almost no action has been taken by the British government to address the atrocities of Amritsar and the Sepoy Mutiny. General Dyer (the army officer who authorized the firing order in Amritsar), after a public inquiry, was only relieved of his duties and sent back to the U.K.—where the British media and the public declared him a "hero," not the Butcher of Amritsar.[66] This accountability measure initiated by the British colonial government reflects the "accountability=punishment" perspective that political scientists emphasize, which has been described in Bovens et al.'s journal article.[67] Nevertheless, this response is not sufficient, as it was only taken in the immediate aftermath of the massacre. The contemporary British government "deeply regrets" the incident; however, they have not given any formal political apology— which is the first step for one reckoning with its dark past.[68] In 1997, Queen Elizabeth II visited the Amritsar Massacre memorial —and then David Cameroon, the former PM of the U.K., made the same journey in 2013.[69] However, neither of them apologized for the historical wrong. As for the theorized decade-long massacre that succeeded the Indian-Sepoy Mutiny and the killings of Indian soldiers that also happened during this rebellion, not much accountability progress has been made on that front.

---

[66] Baldwin, "UK," 4-5.

[67] Bovens, Schillemans and Goodin, "Public Accountability," 1-20.

[68] Baldwin, "UK," 4-5; Kidangoor, "A Century After a Massacre in India During British Colonial Rule, the U.K. Faces Demands for an Apology"; Wagner, "Viewpoint: Should Britain apologise for Amritsar Massacre?"

[69] Wagner,"Viewpoint: Should Britain apologise for Amritsar Massacre?" 11-12.

87   Concerning the historical injustice under investigation, many kinds of accountability have no presence for distinct reasons. There is a lack of social accountability both as a virtue and a mechanism in the above-mentioned historical wrongs. Political apologies, which is the bare minimum form of accountability and what is the basis of Stanger-Ross and James' critique as it lacks social accountability mechanisms, are invisible for both the Amritsar Massacre and the Indian Sepoy Mutiny. Once the U.K. government provides a formal political apology, only then can we determine what aspects of social accountability (structural racism, individual/institutional agency, and public responsibility) are absent from it.

As for accountability as a virtue and mechanism, it ceases to exist when referencing the cases above. However, one may say that the 2019 statement made by Theresa May, former PM of the U.K., regarding the Amritsar Massacre during a parliamentary session alludes to a form of both accountability as a virtue and mechanism.[70] Nevertheless, I would argue that this was a political decision made by May due to the incident's 100th anniversary, so there is an absence of accountability as a virtue and mechanism.

One plausible reason for the lack of accountability mechanisms to address the abrogation of sovereignty in British India could be the fear from the British government that a precedent might be set. In other words, there is a high possibility that other countries may demand accountability for the historical wrongs that happened to them. For instance, after providing a formal political apology and redress package to the Mau Mau rebels in Kenya, the British government warned other former colonial territories

---

[70] Baldwin, "UK"; Kidangoor, "A Century After a Massacre in India During British Colonial Rule, the U.K. Faces Demands for an Apology," 7.

not to consider this a precedent.[71] This example displays **88**
precisely why the current U.K. regime is reluctant to pull
the accountability trigger concerning the Amritsar Massacre
and the Indian Sepoy Mutiny, as it may open a Pandora's
box of problems for the British.

Conclusion

Abrogation of sovereignty, which is a subcategory
of colonialism, is a historical injustice that the Indian
subcontinent faced that has still not been fully addressed
with proper accountability measures. Scholars emphasize
how historical injustices shape contemporary state-society
relations.[72] In the case of British India, the scars and trauma
associated with the Indian Sepoy Mutiny and Amritsar
Massacre have now been passed down to the descendants
of victims and the decolonized government; these are the
people who still desire accountability. Unless a change in
government occurs, it is unlikely that Great Britain will
provide a formal political apology. If it does happen, the
apology should entail social accountability mechanisms and
virtuous discourse/policies, as it would bring closure to the
victims' family members and partitioned India.

---

[71] Neumann and Thompson, "Introduction," 4.
[72] Henderson and Wakeham, "Introduction," 3-27.

89 **References**

Alam, Jawaid. "Gandhi and Nationalist Politics." In *History of Colonial India: 1757 to 1947*. Edited by Himanshu. Roy & Jawaid. Alam. Routledge, 2022.

Anderson, David. *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*. W.W. Norton, 2005.

Baldwin, Clive. "UK: A Century After the Amritsar Massacre, London Still Kicks Its Atrocities Under the Rug." *Human Rights Watch*, April 12, 2019 https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/12/uk-century-after-amritsar-massacre-london-still-kicks-its-atrocities-under-rug.

———. "Jallianwala Bagh: Indian outrage over revamp of Memorial." *BBC News*. August 31, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-58382434.

Bovens, Mark, Thomas Schillemans, Robert Goodin. "Public Accountability." In *The Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability*. Oxford University Press, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199641253.013.0012.

Chirol, Valentine. *India: Old and New*. Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1921. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15586/15586-h/15586-h.htm#CHAPTER_IX.

———. "Millions Died After 1857 War of Independence: Historian." *Dawn News*, August 25, 2007. https://www.dawn.com/news/262820/millions-died-after-1857-war-of-independence-historian

Elkins, Caroline. *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*. Henry Holt & Company, 2005.

Henderson, Jennifer and Pauline Wakeham. "Introduction." In
    *Reconciling Canada: Critical Perspectives on the Culture
    of Redress*. Edited by Jennifer Henderson and Pauline
    Wakeham. University of Toronto Press, 2013.

Kidangoor, Abhishyant. "A Century After a Massacre in India
    During British Colonial Rule, the U.K. Faces Demands for
    an Apology." *Time* Magazine. April 12, 2019, https://
    time.com/5566864/india-massacre-apology/.

Kohn, Margaret and Kavita Reddy. "Colonialism." *Stanford
    Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, May 9, 2006. https://
    plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/.

Kumar Jha, Niraj. "Interpreting Colonialism and Nationalism."
    In *History of Colonial India: 1757 to 1947*. Edited by
    Himanshu Roy and Jawaid Alam. Routledge, 2022.

McCarthy, Niall. "Infographic: Europe's champions of
    colonization." *Statista Daily Data*. July 6, 2015. https://
    www.statista.com/chart/3615/europes-champions-of-
    colonisation/.

Miki, Roy. *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for
    Justice*. Raincoast Books, 2005.

Mishra, Anil Dutta. "Satyagraha." *Indian National Congress*.
    March 6, 2021. https://www.inc.in/congress-sandesh/
    dandi-anniversary-march/satyagraha-1.

Neumann, Klaus and Janna Thompson. "Introduction: Beyond
    the Legalist Paradigm." In *Historical Justice and Memory*.
    Edited by Klaus Neumann and Janna Thompson. The
    University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

91

Rothberg, Michael. "Introduction: Theorizing Multidirectional Memory in a Transnational Age." In *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in an Age of Decolonization.* Edited by Michael Rothberg. Stanford University Press, 2009.

Shahi, Deepshika. "Contested Histories of 1857 and the (Re) Construction of the Indian Nation State." In *History of Colonial India: 1757 to 1947*. Edited by Himanshu Roy and Jawaid Alam. Routledge, 2022.

Stranger-Ross, Jordan and Matt James. "Social Accountability after Political Apologies." In *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians*. Edited by Jordan Stranger-Ross. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020.

Suri, Manveena. "India Massacre Memorial's lights-and-lasers "makeover" attracts controversy." *CNN*. August 31, 2021. https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/amritsar-massacre-jallianwala-bagh-punjab-india-modi-intl-hnk/index.html.

UK Parliament. "East India Company and Raj 1785-1858." https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/ evolutionofparliament/legislativescrutiny/parliament-and-empire/parliament-and-the-american-colonies-before-1765/east-india-company-and-raj-1785-1858/.

Wagner, Kim. "Viewpoint: Should Britain apologise for the Amritsar Massacre?" *BBC* News. February 19, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-47070534.

Wagner, Kim. *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre*. Yale University Press, 2019.