

Directors Letter

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Historical Crisis Committee at SMUSMUN 2024! My name is Finley Rolfe and I am honoured and excited to be your director this year. We will also be joined by our chair and Co-head of the SMUS MUN Club Aidan Mackay and my two knowledgeable crisis staff Sebastien Bixby and Yule Choi.

From my first conference in Grade 8, nervously representing Iceland in the UNODC, to running SMUSMUN and staffing at VMUN my passion for MUN—particularly crisis—has grown exponentially. I have found that MUN has improved my debating, negotiating, and my world knowledge, and I hope new delegates will find the same. I also hope to remove as many of the barriers to entry from MUN as possible and be an approachable and friendly director.

With the fast past and varied nature of the Historical Crisis Committee I recommend all delegates prepare themselves to debate and react to the crisis updates. I encourage all of you to read the background guide thoroughly in order to be prepared for a topic as nuanced and impactful as Indian independence. I believe this particular Crisis should be unique as it takes place over nearly 30 years and runs concurrently to the biggest conflict in human history.

If you have any committee specific questions send me an email at finley.rolfe@smus.ca, for general conference information email Model.un@smus.ca

Best Regards,

Finley Rolfe

Position Papers

A Position Paper serves as a concise presentation of your assignment's stance on the topics under discussion in a specific committee. While there is no rigid format to adhere to, it typically outlines the positions held by the historical figure, highlights relevant actions taken by the figure, and proposes potential solutions endorsed by the figure. **In the Historical Crisis Committee, submission of position papers is required.**

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, their assignment, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

To submit, save the file with the delegate's last name and first name, and send it as a single PDF or Word document attachment via email to the committee's email address, with the subject formatted as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper." Other attachments should not be included. Each position paper will undergo manual review for consideration in the Best Researched award.

The deadline for position papers is: **April 1st 2024 at 11:59 PM**

The designated email address for submission is *Finley.rolfe@smus.ca*

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Indian Independence

Overview

The Indian independence movement, a pivotal chapter in modern history, unfolded against the backdrop of global geopolitical dynamics in the mid-20th century. The Indian subcontinent, under British colonial rule for almost two centuries, became a centre of nationalist aspirations and anti-colonial sentiments. Colonialism, a prevailing force shaping the global order during this period. Characterised by the exploitation and subjugation of indigenous populations by European powers. In the case of India, the British Empire's economic exploitation, cultural imposition, and political dominance fueled resentment and a fervent desire for Indian self-determination.

The movement gained momentum in the early 20th century, with key leaders advocating for independence through various means. Notably, the philosophy of non-violence emerged as a significant and distinctive feature of the Indian struggle for freedom. Proponents of non-violence sought to challenge the oppressive colonial regime through civil disobedience, boycotts, and peaceful protests, capturing the attention and admiration of the international community.

Concurrently to the Independence movement, war crippled the British Empire militarily and drained them economically, prompting a reevaluation of its increasingly expensive colonial holdings. Moreover, India sacrificed millions of soldiers to fight under the British leading to a further mounting pressure from the Indian National Congress and other nationalist groups such as the All India Muslim League for self determination. Changing post-war geopolitical order and pressure from powerful international anti colonialists such as Franklin Delanor Roosevelt, compelled the British to consider granting independence to India.

The Indian independence movement and partition were shaped by the global context of colonialism, the advocacy of non-violence, and the transformative aftermath of the world wars. The journey towards independence was marked by both triumphs and tragedies, leaving an indelible mark on the course of international history and inspiring other independence movements like that in Ghana and Sudan.



Map of British India Circa 1919 (New Zealand History)

Timeline

The Fall of Constantinople (1453) - Mehmed II (The Father of Conquest) takes control of Constantinople on May 29th 1453 disrupting traditional trans- Eurasian land based trade routes resulting in Europeans looking for new maritime routes to get valuable commodities like silk, spices and opium from India.

European Maritime Contact (1498) - Vasco de Gama becomes the first European to reach India via maritime travel arriving on the Western coast of India at Kozhikode on the 20th of May 1498 after sailing around the Cape of Good Hope.

Babur's Invasion (1526) - Babur (Persian: “Tiger”) descendant of Genghis Khan defeated Ibrahim Lodhi at the Battle of Panipat on April 21, 1526. The beginning of the Mughal Empire and the end of the Delhi Sultanate and popularising the use of gunpowder in the Indian subcontinent.

Akbarnama (1590) - Akbar The Great, grandson of Babur ruled the Mughal empire from 11 February 1556 – 27 to October 1605. He expanded the empire via diplomacy, strategic marriages and warfare. Akbar removed the Jizya and sponsored Hindus, Parsis, Christians, and Muslims to engage in religious discussion.

Formation of the British East India Company (1600) - The East India Company was chartered by Queen Elizabeth I on December 31, 1600, marking the beginning of British involvement in India.

The British First Land in India (1608) - The British East India Company land in Surat on August 24, 1608.

The Battle of Suvali (1612) - British win a small naval battle against the Portuguese on November 30th 1612, impressing Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr and securing the *farmān* trade and setting up factories in exchange for naval support.

Battle of Plassey (1757) - The British East India Company's victory solidified its control over parts of India on June 23, 1757.

The Great Bengal Famine (1770) - The first and worst of 12 great Indian famines under the British Raj The Great Bengal Famine killed an estimated 10 million, one third of the population due to drought and heavily exacerbated by British resource extraction, monopolies and failure to intervene.

Sepoy Mutiny (1857) - Indian soldiers rebelled against British rule on May 10, 1857, leading to direct British government control opposed to that of the East India Company.

Formation of the Indian National Congress (1885) - The INC emerged as a platform advocating Indian rights on December 28, 1885.

Formation of the All India Muslim League (1906) - The Muslim League was formed on December 30, 1906, to safeguard Muslim interests.

Partition of Bengal (1905) - The British division triggered nationalist protests on October 16, 1905.

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, Crisis Initiation (1919) - British troops killed unarmed civilians on April 13, 1919, sparking outrage.

Historical Analysis - Colonialism

The 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a surge of European colonial endeavours, and India, under the rule of the British Empire, became a focal point of imperialistic ambitions. The East India Company's annexation of Bengal in 1757 marked the beginning of a systematic colonisation that extended across the subcontinent. The exploitation of India's rich resources, coupled with the imposition of economic policies favouring British interests, served as the bedrock of colonial dominance. The Doctrine of Lapse, introduced by Earl of Dalhousie in the mid-19th century, further exemplified the imperialist mindset, allowing the British to annex Indian princely states if they lacked a male heir.

The socio-cultural ramifications of colonial rule were profound, with the introduction of Western education, legal systems, and administrative structures. While these elements left an enduring impact on modern India, they were also tools of cultural assimilation and control. Economic exploitation was widespread with ships exporting precious stones and devastating famines.

Global colonialism, characterised by the Scramble for Africa and territorial acquisitions in Asia, created an interconnected web of imperial powers vying for dominance. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, where European powers partitioned Africa among themselves, epitomised colonial expansion. The First World War significantly altered the global colonial landscape. India's contribution of soldiers and resources to the war effort was not reciprocated with political concessions.

Historical Analysis - Nonviolence

Examining the history of non-violence in India prior to 1919 offers a nuanced perspective on a unique philosophical and strategic approach to resistance that would later become a hallmark of the Indian independence movement. The roots of non-violence, or "ahimsa" in Sanskrit, can be traced back to ancient Indian philosophies, particularly Jainism and Buddhism, which advocated for non-violent living and compassion towards all living beings. The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a gradual infusion of non-violent principles into the Indian political and social fabric. Notable figures such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Dadabhai Naoroji, prominent leaders in the Indian National Congress, emphasised constitutional methods and peaceful negotiations in their pursuit of political rights for Indians within the British colonial framework.

The advent of the 20th century saw the emergence of leaders who would later become torchbearers of non-violent resistance. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a prominent figure in the Indian Nationalist movement, advocated for Swaraj (self-rule) but also recognized the importance of non-violence as a means of political protest. The 1905 Swadeshi Movement, a response to the partition of Bengal, witnessed a blend of non-violent economic resistance through boycotts and the promotion of indigenous goods. The growing influence of non-violent ideologies was evident in the discourse led by leaders such as Gokhale and Annie Besant, who emphasised peaceful negotiations and dialogue as a means to achieve political objectives.

In conclusion, the period before 1919 in India witnessed the gradual evolution of non-violence as a political and moral force. Influenced by ancient philosophical traditions and the initial strategies of Indian political leaders, non-violence laid the groundwork for the more prominent role it would play in the subsequent decades of the struggle for Indian independence.

Bloc Positions

All India Muslim League

The All India Muslim League seeks to protect the political rights of Muslims within a united India. They advocated for separate electorates, as seen in the 1916 Lucknow Pact with the Indian National Congress. However, some within the league advocate for an entirely separate majority

Muslim nation, while some keep their focus on ensuring Muslim representation in a diverse India.

Indian National Congress

The Indian National Congress, a key political force in the early 20th century, aimed to represent the diverse interests of the Indian population. Led by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress advocated for constitutional reforms and sought political independence from British rule. The Congress initially collaborated with the All India Muslim League in the Lucknow Pact of 1916, displaying a commitment to inclusive representation. Over time, their focus shifted towards a united, independent India, culminating in the country's freedom in 1947.

British Colonialists

British colonialists in India, during the early 20th century, maintained a stance rooted in imperial control. Their objectives were centred on preserving British dominance and economic interests in the subcontinent. The colonial administration, led by officials such as Lord Chelmsford, responded to growing nationalist sentiments with sporadic concessions, yet fundamentally sought to perpetuate British rule. The introduction of reforms, like the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1919, aimed at maintaining control while addressing some Indian demands. However, the ultimate goal for the colonists remained the preservation of British imperial authority in India.

Initiating Crisis

In the wake of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, there has been a seismic shift in public sentiment, fostering a deep sense of resentment and galvanising the demand for self-rule. In other words, the people are furious and support for self rule is at its highest. The incident marks a turning point in Mahatma Gandhi's approach, compelling him to adopt a more active and prominent role in the national struggle. The massacre has become a symbol of British oppression and news of it has spread throughout the subcontinent.

Discussion Questions

1. How can Indians successfully leverage what little power they currently possess in order to gain greater freedoms?
2. How will Muslims and other ethnic and religious minorities be protected under a potential new Indian government?
3. How will foreign powers influence the creation of a potential new state?
4. How will the British government balance control and profit with freedom and self determination?

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