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**ANALYSIS ON VETERANS AND CULTURAL  
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# Analysis on Veterans and Cultural Cleansing In the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent

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**Abstract – In the context of Partition, two competing hypotheses for Partition ethnic cleansing can be examined: whether the ethnic cleansing was largely appropriative to cleanse the minority to seize either their goods or to displace them from lucrative economic roles that would benefit private individuals or whether ethnic cleansing served a purpose to reduce economic competition for a group or to ensure the majority's control of politics.**

**We have chosen to focus our empirical analysis on religious homogenization, minority and co-religionist majority knows, as we feel these are good gauges of the processes of ethnic cleansing that took place during the Partition of India. Yet a natural question that remains is whether the patterns of ethnic cleansing actually also reacts the violence that took place during the Partition as well.**

**Keywords: Veterans, Cultural Cleansing, Indian Subcontinent**

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## INTRODUCTION

The partition of ethnically-diverse regions into homogeneous 'homelands' has been often mooted as a solution to the most pressing convicts around the world. While there is some debate on whether partitions actually correlate with subsequent reductions in civil war in cross-country analyses [Khalid Shamsul Hasan, 2005], the logic of simply separating ethnic groups across national boundaries continues to have appeal in both policy and academic circles.

A large and growing body of evidence has examined the relationships between ethnic diversity and civil convict, both internationally and within India.<sup>5</sup> Cross-country evidence suggests that societies with "polarization", which is maximized when there are two roughly equal sized groups, appear to experience more convict [S.S. Pirzada, 1970]. Further, the degree of polarization may be more likely to result in convict when the winning group chooses "public" allocations that affect all, rather than when the contest is over private goods. In the context of Partition, two competing hypotheses for Partition ethnic cleansing can be examined: whether the ethnic cleansing was largely appropriative {to cleanse the minority to seize either their goods or to displace them from lucrative economic roles that would benefit private individuals {or whether ethnic cleansing served a "public" purpose {to reduce economic competition for a group or to ensure the majority's control of politics. We will provide evidence for the public nature of ethnic cleansing in

India's partition, and the heightened role that combat experience played in more polarized districts.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The Partition of India on religious grounds in August, 1947, looms large as a cautionary tale to advocates of partition as a means for peace. India's partition led to one of the largest forced migrations in world history, with an estimated 17.9 million people leaving their homes 3.4 million members of religious minority groups{ Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan, and Muslims in independent India{ went "missing" by 1951 (Bharadwaj, Khwaja, and Mian 2008a). Areas which experienced the worst violence during the Partition of India continue to have tiny minority populations more than 50 years later. Pakistan acquired a subgroup of disproportionately literate immigrants who played an important role in its subsequent politics, while forced migration appears to have led India's immigrants to switch to non-agricultural professions that may have played a role in accelerating the process of its industrialization (Bharadwaj, Khwaja, and Mian 2008).

Was the catastrophe at the Partition of India inevitable? Could the most vulnerable areas and populations have been predicted more accurately? What lessons can we draw from India's experience for ethnically mixed regions elsewhere? This study seeks to address these questions using a newly assembled set of district-level data drawn from across undivided India. In particular, the study

assesses the determinants of religious homogenization and minority outflows in Indian districts between 1931 and 1951, and highlights the role played by combat veterans in these outflows. During the Second World War, united India mustered an army of 2.5 million that fought the Axis in Africa, Europe and Southeast Asia. This was the largest volunteer army in the history of the world. While recruitment into this volunteer army was clearly not random, the study exploits the arbitrary nature of assignment of army units to different campaigns and periods of time at the frontline in World War II to instead examine the role of human capital gained in combat on ethnic cleansing during the subsequent Partition of India.

One strength of our empirical approach is that, unlike most of the qualitative literature, we not only look at areas where violence was pervasive during Partition but also areas that were relatively peaceful, despite possessing polarized populations. The latter areas naturally are those where the "dog did not bark" and thus qualitative evidence on why peace persisted in these areas during the Partition is relatively hard to find. However, it is useful to compare the experience of the Indian police in the ethnically-mixed United Provinces, which was seen as a potential centre for Partition violence, during the large-scale rural rebellion that occurred during the 'Quit India' movement of 1942. The violence of the 'Quit India' movement was most severe in the United Provinces, with the government losing administrative control of several districts. However, the traditional police approach of restoring authority (charging at protestors with batons, called lathes remained successful at dispersing mobs of over five hundred people. Armed mainly with nineteenth century muskets, 62 policemen at the Madhuban station held off a mob of 4000 that sought to kill them (Government of the United Provinces 1943). These areas remained relatively peaceful in 1947. In common with other episodes of civil tension and ethnic riots, the willingness to use force by the authorities appeared to have been sufficient at deterring violence.

In contrast, in 1947, the Punjab Boundary Force found countryside not easily intimidated even by seasoned and heavily armed troops like themselves. They encountered resistance and counterattacks in many places. What seems to have been happening was that the army was being challenged by experts, by people who had formerly served within its ranks.

We have chosen to focus our empirical analysis on religious homogenization, minority outflows and co-religionist majority groups as we feel these are good gauges of the processes of ethnic cleansing that took place during the Partition of India. Yet a natural question that remains is whether the patterns of ethnic cleansing actually also reflect the violence that took place during the Partition as well.

Data on partition violence are unreliable and biased for a variety of reasons. Official government records become increasingly unreliable in mid-1947 because

of the breakdown of the police and local administration in the worst-affected areas, as well as political pressures for officials not to record crimes committed by politically powerful individuals, especially individuals who officials feared would be their superiors after the country's independence in August.

### An overlooked history of India's 1947 partition:

Despite major methodological strides<sup>1</sup> made in recent years, most studies of India's 1947 Partition continue to remain focused on the two better-known cases of Punjab and Bengal. Remarkably little is known about other partition sites – the Sylhet district of colonial Assam, for instance – which was ceded to (East) Pakistan following the outcome of a referendum held on July 6 and 7, 1947 according to Mountbatten's partition plan of June 3, 1947. Besides a small Hindu pocket consisting of Ratabari, Patherkandi, Hailakandi and half of Karimganj thana, the rest of the district left Assam/India to join East Pakistan. Sixty years afterwards, the stories of such lesser known partition sites face the danger of being overlooked and forgotten by what may be called "mainstream" partition historiography unless documented without delay. Because oral history uses spoken sources, even in the absence of written documentation oral historians are able to document the histories of groups which have long been out of historical focus [Erland Jansson, 1988].

Given that the people who can remember and retell the story of the 1947 Partition are more than 80 years old now, this task assumes even greater urgency. Of late, historians in south Asia have been using non-traditional sources like memories, folk history and popular fiction to shed new light on the experiences of ordinary people whose lives were thrown into turmoil by the 1947 Partition. Their studies have helped flesh out the heterogeneity and the unevenness in the experience of Partition and generated a debate among academics. But in spite of vast and rich research, this "new" history still falls short of providing a wide-ranging view of the local nuances of Partition of India due to its near exclusive focus on Punjab and Bengal. Against this background, it may be interesting to turn the lens further east and north of Bengal, to look at a third site of partition, the district of Silet in the erstwhile colonial province of Assam.

### CONCLUSION:

Although communal rifts started once again in Sindh, now under the influence of the 1947 partition, the communal harmony remained undamaged. The province had inherited a tradition of religious tolerance from the Mirs (the Muslim rulers displaced by the British conquest). Thus, the separation from India engendered a sense of insecurity amongst the Hindus, but there was less general disposition to give way to panic or despair. The Sindh Hindu Mahasabha's membership consisted of Hindu zamindars who aligned with the Independent Muslim Party, which

consisted of the Muslim landed gentry. Religion obviously played no divisive role here as they joined hands to protect their class interest.

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