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History

Paper 1J (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 02 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

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## Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

### Paper 1J (AS): Specimen question paper

#### 02 'British policies towards India completely changed in the years 1857 to 1877.'

**Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.**

(25 marks)

#### Student Response

The year 1857 is often taken as a key turning point in Britain's policies towards India owing to the Indian Mutiny. Grievances about pay, conditions and religious insensitivity related to the introduction of new rifle cartridges led to a wider rebellion among the sepoy of the Bengal army and the slaughter of British officers, wives and children. Whilst vast areas of India remained untouched, the impact the rebellion on British authority was sufficient to cause a series of complete changes in politics, the military and public opinion in the years from 1857 to 1877, and in the development of the economy and, more gradually, in education.

The most obvious and far reaching change in British policy to India was political, with the introduction of the Government of India Act in 1858. This transferred all the political powers enjoyed by the East India Company directly to the British Crown and furthermore meant that Queen Victoria became the Queen of India. In order to bolster support from the Indian nobility, the loyalty of the majority of India's princes was recognised through the removal of the much hated doctrine of lapse and an elaborate hierarchy of status was created conferring prestige on the princes. This particular policy had a degree of continuity insofar as Europeans had always had to work with the existing rulers in India, but the significance of the change was that it formalised such arrangements with Victoria as the princes' undisputed superior. Another key political development during this period was the creation of a new structure to govern India. The November 1858 Proclamation created the position of Secretary of State for India to be advised by the Council of India which consisted of fifteen members who had experience of India. This was designed to limit the worst excesses that had occurred under the East India Company and give the British Government the ability to direct policy in India. Meanwhile, the position of Governor-General became known as the Viceroy, emphasising the fact that he was now the monarch's representative in India as well as head of the Government in India. Overall, British policies in terms of political control completely changed in this period as they constituted a clear signal that Britain was to exercise total authority over her Indian subjects, a point reinforced with Victoria becoming Empress of India 1877.

Alongside political changes, the period 1857-77 also included significant military reforms. The British Indian army was immediately reformed as a result of the Mutiny. The armies of the East India Company were brought under the control of the British Crown. Elements that had been disloyal to the British were disbanded and recruitment increased from more loyal sections of Indian society, the Sikh, North West Muslim and Ghurkha communities. The number of British officers and troops was increased to improve control and greater respect shown to sepoy beliefs and traditions and Indian regiments were not permitted to have artillery in order to safeguard against future revolts. Whilst further military changes occurred after this period with the Kitchener reforms in 1903, the transfer of military power from the East India Company to the British Crown represented a complete change from before 1857.

Alongside political and military developments there was also a marked change in British attitudes towards Indians between 1857 and 1877. Victorian morals had been outraged by the (sometimes exaggerated) tales of torture, rape and the killing of women and children in 1857. The brutality of British reprisals created fear, hatred and greater separation where coexistence, or in some cases British admiration for an unfamiliar culture, had been the norm. Whilst superior attitudes towards 'native populations' existed before the Mutiny, the violence served to harden these beliefs and create a greater degree of separation between the British and the Indians, even though the majority had not rebelled. The need for stability against this background was reflected by significant legal change during the 1860s. East India Company courts were merged with the Crown courts and the British introduced a system based largely on English law. However, after the Mutiny there was also a growing recognition that imposing European cultural values on the Indian population could prove counter-productive so greater care was taken over religiously sensitive areas in relation to the registering of women for census purposes or the age at which children could marry. Mindful of such religious sensitivities British missionary activity was also discouraged. The events of 1857 clearly had a profound impact on British policies to India, both in the political and military sense, but also in the way the British public and the British in India, perceived Indians themselves.

In terms of the economy it could be argued that British policies in the period 1857-1877 certainly grew but did not completely change. The East India Company had already established an overwhelmingly significant economic presence in India, dominating European trade to the subcontinent and involving itself in the lucrative markets of jute, cotton, saltpetre and opium. Moreover, India provided a profitable market for British goods before 1857. The Company's monopoly on trade in India had ended in 1833 and so an increasing number of British and European traders and merchants had already started to establish themselves. Bringing India under British political control led to far greater British and European investment after 1857, with the number of tea plantations increasing from one in 1851 to 295 by 1871. Similarly, the first railways started to be developed in the 1850s, with 15,000 miles of track laid by 1880. However, though the first European-style factories were introduced in the 1850s, the vast majority of manufactured goods still came from Britain during this period and there was virtually no heavy industry. By 1877 the majority of Indians remained engaged in subsistence farming, suggesting that British policies to India had not yet caused complete economic change, with the major changes in Indian economic development such as the growth in domestic production of cotton coming later in the decades after 1877.

A final aspect of British policy in India that developed rather than completely changed was that of education. The need for British educational influence in India was championed by Macaulay as early as 1835. The creation of an education system to create anglicised Indians to serve as go-betweens in assisting the British to manage their interests in the sub-continent was therefore well established before 1857. Despite a background of some government hostility in London, a clear commitment to a western form of instruction conducted in English was achieved. Hundreds of schools were founded and the tens of thousands of Indians educated, a third of whom entered into public administration. Moreover the first universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were established in 1857, at the start of the period in question. This policy of providing an English education therefore was not a complete change, as it started before 1857, but it continued to develop to meet the needs of the Raj over the next decades.

In conclusion, whilst there had been attempts to curtail the powers of the East India Company before 1857, and education reforms were established as early as 1835, it is fair to say that British policies towards India did change significantly, if not completely, in the years 1857-1877. The Mutiny reshaped the way in which India was governed and how the military was structured and organised in the subcontinent. Moreover, the shock that the brutality of the Mutiny caused shifted political and public attitudes towards Indians and the nature of colonialism. Whilst any change took time to take effect, the formal transfer of power to Britain, greater economic development, the

position of Viceroy and Victoria's crowning as Queen Empress during this period are sufficient in scale to suggest that British policies in India underwent a complete change from 1857-1877.

**Commentary – Level 5**

This is an excellent response; detailed, accurate and with range in relation to how policies changed and why. The only weakness is the extent which there is a consistent assessment of 'complete' change, although there are references to this towards the end of the answer and the conclusion reaches a judgement as to whether change was complete. Given the detail, control and relevance, this is a strong Level 5 response.