An Analysis of Intelligence Informer network during the British conquest of India
Shabir Ahmad Reshi¹ & Dr. Seema Dwivedi²

¹Research Scholar, Department of History, Dr. C.V Raman University, Bilaspur, INDIA
²Head of Department, Department of History, Dr. C.V Raman University, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, INDIA

Abstract: Informers play an important role for executing the designs of the intelligence officers and the state policies by procuring intelligence and other related data’s which help in the formulation of the policies and programmes of the parent state. During British conquest of India, intelligence officers without proper informer base in the mainland of India doesn’t yield any results till the british introduced policy of recruiting informers, which later molded the direction of the british in suppressing Indian agitations especially during the revolt of 1857. The informer base of British grew with the span of time and helps them to pre judge the designs of Indian nationalist leaders. During the early years of the British in India, they try to block different channels of information meant for the nationalist leaders and later subverge the same channels for their own needs by stick and carrot policy. British recruited informers from different sections of people in the informer network which later proved beneficial for them and resulted in the British rule till 1947 in India.

Keywords: Intelligence, Informers, Spies, Rebels

I. INTRODUCTION
British forces met with many losses during the early era of expansion in India due to week intelligence network and presence of informers in the interior of the country. During wars with the Marathas and Mysore between 1778 and 1783, the British effort nearly came to grief when the fast cavalry of its enemies caught its armies badly off balance. Knowledge of the interior of the country, its manufactures, population and agricultural statistics, remained similarly patchy. But with the passage of time, British felt the need for developing informers in different parts of their interest, which resulted in the establishment of strong information centers at different places and yielded desired results for british. In 1808 the Maratha ruler, Jaswant Rao Holkar, remarked on the invaders practice and favorite object of receiving intelligence of all occurrences and transactions in every quarter. Well-informed residents and Company news writers reported from all the major Indian courts. The army had created specialist posts and intelligence units. Surveyors and amateur ethnographers had traversed much of central India. Informers were infiltrated in different sections of the society. However, the effective implementation of Intelligence tactics including recruitment of local informers and remuneration for the same came into force during the suppression of revolt of 1857 and later developed in the institutionalization of intelligence gathering processes in the british political scene of India.

II. METHODOLOGY
Documents related to the intelligence and the informers working for British are not completely declassified and are still kept away from the loop of common man due to the security reasons. However, with an intention to establish the authenticities and credibility of the documents available to us, the method of corroborative evidences has been followed wherever necessary. While utilising the diaries and memories personal prejudices and biases have been eliminated to the extent possible. Simply narration of facts and historical method of exposition has been followed in the development of the present article.

III. OBJECTIVES
- To trace the development of intelligence informers/spies in India during british period
- To establish the importance of informers during the suppression of revolts in British India
- Trace the role of different informers in devising policies and programmes of British in India
- To highlight the role of many British informers.
IV. DISCUSSION

Many runners were used by both British and the local powers for the transfer of intelligence and also interception in times of need. During the prelude to the Mysore War of 1799, Neil Edmonstone of the Persian Department ordered Mahomed Waris, a wealthy merchant and ship-owner of Thaumumar, who controlled the intelligence/information route between north and south and employed by both British and Marathas to intercept the mails of Bugaji Pandit, Maratha ambassador at Mysore. The intercepted letters included a number sent to the ambassador by the agent at Cuttack of the great Calcutta and Banaras banking firm of Manohar Das under seal of his master. Later, the banker's agent complained to the Maratha Governor of his duplicity in the British interest, which resulted in the exposure of the Mohammed Waris. This incident made British determined to create new channels of information and break down the communications of their political rivals. In order to create new routes for the regular transmission of information and personnel, the British needed to have access to the great labour force represented by the harkaras, the hierarchy of agents from the highly educated to the lowly and in the modern sense we can say were freelance intelligence officers. Some running-spies were officials of royal households or direct dependants of magnates and British officials. Others formed 'intelligence communities' organized under headmen or merchant financiers who were employed by anyone who could afford their services.

As Human intelligence became more important and also needed to understand the enemy and to chalk war plans and during British rule certain communities, such as the 'Mewias' of Rajasthan, who had been mentioned in Mughal sources, retained their reputation as intelligence workers. In Mysore, the Sultans relied heavily on the nomadic Bedar tribe as an intelligence community. Bedars provided harkaras, post-runners and guides for the military, and a large group of them was settled within a few miles of Tipu's capital at Seringapatam. Bedars were also recruited into British service as informers.

In plain areas of north India, a variety of village and township watch-and-ward agencies worked as informers of the British. However, in large towns and big cities, police officials mainly controlled the informer base of the British and feed them with important intelligence. In the countryside the watch-and-ward system remained part of the specialist service agencies supported on percentages of the revenue or grain heap. Going by a variety of names chaukidars, gorais with official surveillance duties. The British tried, without a great deal of success, to subordinate them to police power and also enlist them into campaigns against female infanticide, widow-burning and illicit liquor distilling. The communities of locally-based runners often overlapped with the watch-and-ward agents, reflecting the indigenous idea that informational services formed an inter-locking package. Thus, for instance, in the Banaras region the gorait was a watch-and-ward agent for the community and an informer to the police. These community watchmen derived information from unofficial sources, particularly the midwives and barbers who arranged marriage alliances, announced births, marriages and deaths to chief inhabitants, and generally kept up with village gossip.

During the revolt of 1857, Banaras, like Lahore, saw a rapid reassertion of British control. The authorities were able to act quickly when news of the Meerut mutinies came in. Here the Brahmin royal family used its agents to inform the authorities on the course of rural rebellion among its rivals, the declining Rajput clans of the hinterland. The descendants of that most typical of all 'native informants', Maulvi Abdul Kadir Khan, kept a close eye on dissidence among the Muslim weavers and workers of the town. Spies were set on members of the exiled Delhi royal family in Banaras. These far flung branches had long acted as a network of supporters and agents for the Delhi court. Authorities at Agra like other places began to get the situation under control by August, 1857 with the help of informers. Also, Intelligence Department was formed under William Muir at Agra which also employed a large body of well paid and confidential agents who scouts enemy lines and maintained the links between the forces advancing on Kanpur and the British force besieging Delhi. Muir's also prepared daily diaries of intelligence for Colvin and, after Colvin's death, for E.A. Reade who became Acting Lieutenant-Governor as per the intelligence reports. William Muir's closest informant during the revolt was Ghanshyam Das Chaubey, brother of Raja Jai Kishan Das, a landlord. The main motivational force for the Hindu landlord family was that, they viewed the revolt as to restore the Muslim rule in India. In Lucknow, Lieutenant Herbert Bruce with the help of an Indian, Manraj, clerk in the Etawah District Office sent his own agents to spy on the rebel armies and kept notes on the plunder of villages by insurgents. Other agents were also used to launch psychological war in Lucknow against the rebel forces. An agent, Khageswara, was sent to Lucknow to paste the notices on the walls, which later help to demoralize the rebel camp. The intelligence provided by Mirza Abbas Beg, an informer of British related to the position of rebel gun emplacements played an important role during anti-rebel operations by British in Lucknow and help in regaining control over Lucknow. W.S.R. Hudson had also set up more direct spy networks in Delhi by mid-August, 1857. Hodson was aided by Maulvi Rajab Ali, Henry Lawrence's confidential informer and a Munshi throughout the early administration of the Punjab. Hostility to the Sikhs appears to have motivated his early connection with the British. The intelligence which came to Rajab Ali came via Jhind, a Sikh State and was written in Urdu on small pieces of Indian paper which could be folded up and hidden in a stick or in cloth, which give a dramatic picture of the gradual eclipse of rebel hopes. These agents were well aware of the types of intelligence needed by their masters and used to feed the
British with intelligence on the condition of rebel forces, their powers, their weaknesses and their weapon holdings including the morale and dissentions among the rebel forces. The Rebellion was catalyst to many changes which decisively reshaped the information order of colonial India in the later nineteenth century. It also brought many changes in the field of intelligence and British reinforced their internal control over the towns in the wake of the Rebellion and put in place new methods of formal and informal surveillance. By 1860s, most district superintendents of police had effective systems of spies and informers which they used to contain urban robberies, grain riots and outbreaks of sectarian violence during festivals. To mold the public opinion in India, British started to scrutinize the press. While putting censorship on the newspapers and other pamphlets published by the Indians known for promoting anti British feelings among the general public, British employed its sympathizers in the news writers business in order to mold the ideology the general public. Munshi Sadha Sukh Lal, a loyalist who managed to run a newspaper in order to mould the Indian public. Officials were even more ambivalent about the value of entering the public arena directly by sponsoring editors or newspapers. They made some efforts to use the patronage of the Education Department to reward and punish editors.

Other institutionalised changes were also observed during post mutiny era and new institution especially for intelligence gathering was created. For Example, A small cell for a "Special Branch" was established in 1887, as by that time the Thuggee and Dacoity department had more or less ceased to exist. In 1904, on Frazier Commission’s recommendations, a Central Criminal Intelligence Department, under an IG was created, in line with the provincial CID to collect, collate and communicate information, under condition of frank and cordial cooperation, between the Centre and the provinces, without taking away the responsibilities of the local Government.

V. FINDINGS

- Low caste people were mainly recruited as informers by British during the early phase of British colonization of India.
- Intelligence informers played an important role during the revolt of 1857 and later helped to maintain surveillance on the Indian National Congress leadership.
- The success of the British in suppressing the different revolt and regaining the political ground in India is attributed to the developing of new channels of intelligence by the British and establishment of effective intelligence network with the employment of Indian spies in gathering of intelligence.
- They were now much more effective at anticipating the alliances and armed resistance of the Indian states. In large measure, this was because they were forewarned by increasingly effective systems of intelligence.
- In order to limit possible danger from the press without completely hamstringing it, the government introduced a series of severe but flexible controls. Surveillance of vernacular newspapers was increased.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

Most sophisticated and effective intelligence is only possible through Human intelligence (HUMINT) with the help of informers. In modern era, emphasis is being given on Technical intelligence (TECHINT), but it is necessary for any state to understand and study Morale, internal problems etc of the non state extremist players which is not possible through TECHINT. Lessons can be learnt from British conquest of India pertaining to the establishment of informed networks to control the nationalist feelings among Indians to design policies against terrorism and other extremist groups.

REFERENCES
[5] Director Public Instruction to Govt, 18 Feb. 1870, NWP General Procs., 19 Mar. 1870
[7] G.F. Barnes, Commander Cis-Sutledge Division to Sec. Chief Commander Punjab, 2 June 1857
[12] N. Banner, Burned. Controversial literature and political control in British India, 1907-4
[13] Reports of spies in Delhi during the siege of Delhi, Montgomery Papers, 3, 174201, OIOC