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Q3

Evaluate the policies of Lord Curzon and their long term implications on the national movements.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · GS I · 10 marks · The Freedom Struggle

The Freedom Struggle - its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country.

Core demand of the question

- Evaluate the policies of Lord Curzon and their long term implications on the national movements
- Keep the evaluation within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **Curzon pursued efficient empire:** frontier, municipal control, and universities.

The 1904 Universities Act tightened official grip on campuses.

The 1905 Partition of Bengal triggered Swadeshi, boycott, and Extremist politics.

Reunion in 1911 did not erase communal and revolutionary afterlives.

Long term, Curzon expanded the national movement more than he pacified it.

Introduction

- **Curzon (1899-1905) ran a high imperial efficiency:** frontier, university, and a Bengal map. The long-term implication was not a quieter India. It was a wider, angrier national movement.

Body

Policies

- **Frontier and foreign:** Tibet mission, Persian Gulf watch, and a strong-centre ICS style. India was treated as a strategic estate.
- **Calcutta Corporation** and municipal squeeze reduced Indian voice in the capital of the Raj.
- **Indian Universities Act, 1904** tightened official control over senates and affiliation. Education became a nationalist grievance, not only a degree mill.
- The **Partition of Bengal, 1905** split a politically vocal province on a line that Hindus read as a communal cut, even when Curzon spoke of administration.

Immediate national response

- Swadeshi and boycott, the Calcutta and Bengal press, and Extremists around **Tilak**, **Bipin Chandra Pal**, and **Aurobindo** turned petition into a mass economic weapon.
- Moderates still used Congress, but 1905-07 split the method. Curzon's exit did not cancel the partition until 1911.

Long-term implications

- Swadeshi taught later Gandhians the boycott toolkit; it also fed revolutionary cells that outlived Curzon.
- Communal arithmetic of the Bengal cut entered later League and Congress memory, even after reunion.
- University control made campuses a standing nationalist theatre.
- **Evaluation:** Curzon strengthened the Raj's files and weakened its consent. The national movement became more popular, more divided in method, and more sure that efficiency without voice was still Empire.

Flow diagram

Curzon -> Universities Act 1904
Curzon -> Partition 1905
Partition 1905 -> Swadeshi Extremism
Universities Act 1904 -> Swadeshi Extremism
Swadeshi Extremism -> Wider national movement

Conclusion

Curzon's universities policy and the 1905 partition were the policies that mattered most for nationalism. They professionalised imperial control and, in the same stroke, massified protest. The long term was Swadeshi, Extremism, and a politics that never again trusted viceregal 'reform' as a gift.

Facts & figures

Partition of Bengal 1905

Administrative split that nationalists treated as a political amputation; annulled in 1911.

Indian Universities Act 1904

Curzon-era law increasing government control over university governance.

Swadeshi movement

Boycott and national education campaign that massified Bengal politics after 1905.

Calcutta Corporation

Municipal reform that cut Indian representation in the imperial capital.

1911 reunification

Bengal was reunited and the capital moved to Delhi; the political scar remained.