

# The Origin and Ideological Foundation of the First Provisional Government of Raja Mahendra Pratap

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## Abstract

This Paper tries to scrutinise the origins and ideological foundations of the First Provisional Government of India established by Raja Mahendra Pratap at Kabul in 1915 during World War I. It conducts a critical examination of the prevailing political conditions and the pace of the national movement led by the Indian National Congress. By exploring the historical background and global context, this study highlights the ideological pillars of the first provisional government of India and its significance in the broader Indian national freedom movement. This study also highlights the role and ability of Raja Mahendra Pratap to garner diplomatic support and establish a parallel government of India, challenging the colonial authority and internationalising the question of Indian freedom. By utilising a diverse array of sources, this study posits that while the Provisional Government did not succeed in instigating a comprehensive revolution, it played a crucial catalytic role in radicalising the discourse of Indian nationalism, providing an ideological ground to revolutionary activities, influencing Indian leaders to fight for complete independence and linking it to global anti-imperialist movements

**Keywords:** Raja Mahendra Pratap, Provisional Government, Ideological Foundation, Global Context, Historical Background, Diplomatic Efforts, Extremists, Revolutionaries, Indian National Congress, Moderate Politics, Kabul, Afghanistan, Germany, Kaiser, Hardayal, Shyamji Krishan Verma, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya.

## Introduction

The outstanding endeavour for national freedom in India has assimilated numerous streams, embodying diverse ideologies, philosophies, and activities over the course of its existence, and such a range of congregating trends has supported the exceptional struggle throughout its historical trajectory. The Indian revolutionary movement constituted a significant and indispensable element of that monumental quest for liberation. It emerged from the anti-British mass movements of the nineteenth century, under analogous historical, social, economic, and psychological conditions that catalysed the emergence of the national movement as a cohesive entity. Indeed, it represented not only the militantly inclined faction of the Indian national movement but also ideological differences with the mainstream Movement led by the Indian National Congress. The coercion imposed by colonial authorities domestically forced these patriots to seek refuge and the freedom to carry out activities in various foreign nations. The early revolutionaries abroad, such as Shyamji Krishna Varma and Madame Cama, established their centres in London and Paris,

respectively, at the start of the twentieth century, where they carried out anti-British propaganda and organisational efforts, thereby inspiring other Indian revolutionaries to follow their example in foreign lands.

During World War I, a significant sub-trend subsequently emerged within the revolutionary ranks, wherein individuals aspired to exploit the wartime circumstances to their benefit by nurturing amicable relations with various anti-British foreign governments and securing their active support and assistance, both financially and militarily, to orchestrate a liberation campaign from abroad aimed at freeing India through armed conflict. Efforts were exerted to engage foreign governments not solely on an individual basis but through an established diplomatic framework of inter-state relationships, wherein the Indian state would be represented by a government in exile. The esteemed proponent of such an initiative was Raja Mahendra Pratap, President of the Kabul-based 'Provisional Government of India,' which constituted the first Indian national government-in-exile and the initial parallel government of the Indian national revolutionaries in relation to the colonial authorities. This innovative experiment was subsequently emulated by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose during the World War II era through the 'Azad Hind Government' (Patnaik, 2005, pp. 13-14).

The first phase of the 20th century initiated a momentous change in the Indian aspiration for independence. Although the Indian National Congress primarily championed moderate nationalist strategies centred on petitions and legislative reforms, a bolder and transnational form of resistance took shape, surpassing India's geographical boundaries. This innovative framework was exemplified by the formation of the Provisional Government of India in Kabul (1915–1919), which represented the first formal effort to establish an independent Indian state in exile, led by Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh (Chandra, 1990, pp-112-135). The declaration of this government exemplified a substantial departure from the constitutional and dialogue-based methods of the Indian National Congress, signifying a shift towards a militarised, diplomatic, and global strategy opposing British colonial authority.

The commencement of the First World War (1914–1918) established a conducive setting for revolutionaries to execute anti-imperialist plans. The British Empire's preoccupation with the conflict, in conjunction with the global anti-colonial movements going on in the Middle East and Ireland and support from rival powers, notably Germany and the Ottoman Empire, motivated Indian revolutionaries to mobilise on a large scale. Under these circumstances, Indian expatriates, mainly members of the Ghadar Party, started collaboration with Germany to dismantle British authority (Sareen, 1979, pp. 116). Kabul was the place where the Provisional Government of India was formed on December 1, 1915.

The first provisional government at Kabul, ideologically, aspired to be a secular, independent, and republican government of India, encompassing the vision of creating a religiously tolerant and social justice-based society (Patnaik, 1992, pp. 218). Raja Mahendra Pratap, acting as president of this government, sought to secure diplomatic recognition on an international level and succeeded in gaining international support, especially from Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and Afghanistan. Although ultimately unsuccessful in realising its immediate military and political goals, the Kabul government exerted a profound influence on the trajectory of Indian nationalism. It effectively internationalised the Indian independence struggle, inspired future revolutionary endeavours, and symbolised the ethos of unwavering resistance.

However, historians have rarely addressed the substantive importance and impact of this government. Historians in pre-independence and post-independence India have not properly included the history of this provisional government, primarily because of the prevailing trend of historiography that focused mainly

on the Indian National Congress and marginalized all other national currents challenging British rule in India. Secondly, the revolutionary ideology adopted by this government did not align with Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, and Gandhi was the central figure of the Congress.

Its legacy can be discerned in subsequent revolutionary initiatives, most notably in the Azad Hind Government, which was established by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in 1943 and adhered to an analogous framework (Patnaik,2005).By utilising a diverse array of sources, this study posits that while the Provisional Government did not succeed in instigating a comprehensive revolution, it played a crucial catalytic role in radicalising the discourse of Indian nationalism, providing an ideological ground to revolutionary activities, influencing Indian leaders to fight for complete independence and linking it to global anti-imperialist movements (Singh,2005, p.42).

## **Historical Background and Global Context**

### **The Pre-War Indian Political Landscape (1890s–1914)**

At the dawn of the 20th century, British colonial rule in India was under growing strain. The initial phase of nationalist resistance had largely been constitutional in nature, led by the Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885 and dominated by moderate leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Firozeshah Mehta. The initial leaders of Congress emphasised petitions, reforms, and appeals to British liberalism. However, by the early 1900s, disillusionment with British responses gave rise to more radical voices, notably Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Lala Lajpat Rai, collectively referred to as the Lal-Bal-Pal trio.

The Partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon ignited the flame of nationalism, giving rise to widespread unrest, uniting not only moderates and extremists but also giving rise to revolutionary activism. This era witnessed the emergence of revolutionary organisations, such as 'Anushilan Samiti' in Bengal and 'Abhinav Bharat' in Maharashtra, which advocated armed insurrection. However, unification of moderates and extremists proved very brief as the difference of ideologies between moderates and extremists resulted in the Surat Split of 1907 that fragmented the national movement in India till 1916. Taking advantage of the Surat split, British authority suppressed extremists and appeased moderates. The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 were targeted at pacifying liberal congress leaders, which introduced limited electoral reforms but also started communal representation, sowing the seeds of long-term Hindu-Muslim conflict. There was an increasing disappointment with the workings of Congress, and the British government was increasingly taking repressive measures against revolutionary activities in India. This situation forced many radicals to look out for opportunities abroad. These radicals assumed the current global politics in favour as the rise of imperialist rivalries. Between 1908 and 1915, no major challenge to the British came from within India; it came from revolutionaries either working in India or working abroad. Revolutionary challenge from abroad made the government nervous as it was ideologically strong, organised and had global links.

### **The Rise of Indian Revolutionaries in Exile and Raja Mahendra Pratap**

While the Indian freedom struggle under Congress witnessed stagnation within the borders of India, due to developments after the Surat split, a revolutionary challenge to the British government came from abroad. The Ghadar Movement, the Berlin Committee, and the formation of the first provisional government of India in Kabul are some examples of revolutionary activities organised from foreign lands. These exiled revolutionaries, whether forced or voluntary, found ideological allies in countries like

Germany and the Ottoman Empire, which were hostile to Britishers during the First World War. Their struggle went beyond mere personal bravery and took the form of military revolt, establishing diplomatic relations, spreading nationalist propaganda, and creating a provisional government to assert India's right to self-determination.

Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh, a visionary nationalist, educationist, social reformer, and revolutionary in exile, was among the prominent leaders of this movement. Born into a princely family in 1886, Raja Mahendra Pratap chose to abandon his royal privileges to dedicate himself to the cause of Indian independence. After the commencement of the Great War, Pratap travelled to Europe and met Shyamji Krishna Verma and Hardayal at Geneva, who were active revolutionaries of the Gadhar Party. Hardayal introduced Pratap to the German Consul-General. In conversation with Hardayal, Pratap expressed the possibility of India's freedom and asked Hardayal to go to Germany and seek Germany's support for the Indian cause. Replying to Pratap's curiosity, Hardayal told Pratap that some of his fellow revolutionaries were active there in Germany. Now, Pratap turned to the German Consul-General and asked if he could arrange a meeting between him and the Kaiser to discuss his plan and course of action, but he got a negative answer from the General. The General said to Pratap that he himself could not see the Kaiser and advised him to go to Germany and see things for himself. Perhaps Hardayal and the German Consul did not trust Pratap at once, as it was their first meeting, or they might be testing his zeal and commitment. Seeing Hardayal's neutral or rather discouraging stance, Pratap managed to meet Virendra Nath Chattopadhyay. Virendra Nath Chattopadhyay was convinced by Pratap's plan and assured him that Kaiser would definitely meet with him once he was sacrificing everything. A meeting with Kaiser was arranged by Chattopadhyay and the same German Consul who initially showed no interest in Pratap. Pratap and Kaiser had a meeting of twenty minutes in the presence of Mr Zimmerman, the vice minister of foreign affairs in the Imperial Palace of Tiergarten. Here, Pratap discussed his plan with Kaiser, which was accepted by Kaiser, and a mission was sent to Afghanistan under the leadership of Pratap and accompanied by Dr Von Henting (German diplomat) and Moulana Barkatullah (Pratap, 1947, pp.38-43). En route to this mission, Pratap met the Sultan of Turkey and managed to get a letter of introduction to the Amir of Afghanistan (Pratap, 1947, pp.44). Thus, in 1915, with the support of the then Emir of Afghanistan, he established the Provisional Government of India in Kabul, proclaiming himself as its President. This was the first government-in-exile to challenge British colonial authority, with Maulana Barkatullah as Prime Minister and Ubaidullah Sindhi as Home Minister.

The question arises why Pratap was chosen as head of the German mission when renowned revolutionaries of the Gadhar movement like Shyamji Krishan Verma, Hardayal, and Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya were already in talks with the German government. Raja Mahendra Pratap was selected as the official head of the German mission to Afghanistan due to several key factors, despite the presence of other Indian revolutionaries. His selection was mainly based on his prominent social standing, his personal initiative, and the German planners' need for a figurehead with significant influence and presence. Furthermore, the German government wanted a figure who could be relied on to cover German expenses once India gained independence. Lastly, it was Pratap's plan that was presented to the German government, securing the support of Indian Rajas and Nawabs for an armed uprising across India, with foreign assistance, involving an invasion through the Afghan border simultaneously (Hughes, 2002, pp. 457).

Pratap's efforts were very important and unique as they symbolised the global dimension of the Indian freedom struggle. Following Kautilya's doctrine, the enemy of the enemy is a friend, he tried to get support from the nations that were enemies of the British, particularly from Germany. Due to his diplomatic travels

and negotiations, he emerged as a central figure in the internationalisation of India's independence movement. He faced British hostility and exile for thirty-two years, but his commitment to the ideals of freedom, social justice, and world peace remained unshakable. The revolutionary activities in exile, with Raja Mahendra Pratap at the forefront, represent a critical but often underappreciated chapter in the history of India's struggle for independence. His valour and global vision laid the groundwork for future diplomatic and revolutionary strategies against colonialism.

### **The First World War: An Opportunity for Global Revolt**

The outbreak of World War I in July 1914 created a rare opportunity for Indian revolutionaries. Britain's preoccupation with the war effort, its strained resources, and growing unrest within its colonies made it vulnerable to internal rebellion and external pressure. Revolutionaries sought to exploit this situation by coordinating global efforts to incite an uprising in India ([Patnaik, 2005, pp-13](#)). Germany, then at war with Britain, saw value in supporting Indian revolutionaries as part of a broader imperial destabilisation campaign. This alignment of interests led to what historians refer to as the Hindu-German Conspiracy, in which Germany provided arms, logistical aid, and propaganda support to Indian revolutionaries operating in Europe, the U.S., and Asia ([Hughes, 2002, pp-448](#)).

In this context, a plan was developed to trigger a mutiny within the British Indian Army, particularly in Punjab and Bengal, using Ghadar activists returning from the U.S. and Canada. However, British intelligence, which had established a global surveillance network (notably the Indian Political Intelligence Office in London), intercepted many of these plans. The Ghadar Conspiracy of 1915 ultimately failed, with numerous arrests, trials, and executions, including that of Kartar Singh Sarabha, aged just 19 ([Sareen, 1979, pp.](#)).

Nonetheless, the idea of an armed revolution did not die; instead, it was modified. With direct insurrection proving difficult, revolutionaries pivoted toward diplomacy, targeting Britain's enemies abroad to form strategic alliances. In this context, Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh, a princely figure from Hathras who had turned against British rule, became the central figure in a new phase of revolutionary planning. After negotiations with the German Emperor, he travelled to Afghanistan in 1915, with the support of German and Turkish officials. There, with the backing of Emir Habibullah Khan, and joined by key revolutionaries like Maulavi Barkatullah, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, and Champak Raman Pillai, he established the Provisional Government of India in Kabul on 1 December 1915.

Afghanistan was chosen as a suitable country to carry out an uprising in India, as it shared a long and porous border with India and had always been a zone of strategic tension for the British Raj. The memory of the Anglo-Afghan Wars (especially the disastrous First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839–42) continued to haunt British policymakers. Afghanistan's geographic position made it a perfect staging ground for any attempt to infiltrate India.

### **Establishment and Structure of the Provisional Government of India (1915–1919)**

The Provisional Government of India was officially established in Kabul on 1 December 1915, amidst the turbulence of the First World War. It was the first such Indian government formed outside of colonial control and reflected the desire of Indian revolutionaries to proclaim independence beyond petitions or negotiations. The initiative was led by Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh, who was accompanied by Maulavi Barkatullah, Ubaidullah Sindhi, and Champak Raman Pillai, each representing different strands of Indian political and religious life ([Krishnteerth, 2013, pp.50-52](#)).

This group received assistance from German and Turkish diplomatic networks. Germany, as a wartime adversary of Britain, provided financial and logistical support as part of a broader campaign to fuel unrest in British colonies, particularly in India. This collaboration was part of what the Britishers termed it the Hindu–German Conspiracy, though the name does not suit, as neither this provisional government got support from any Hindu group nor were all its members Hindus. The structure of the government comprised Raja Mahendra Pratap as President, Maulavi Barkatullah as Prime Minister, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi as Home Minister, and Champak Raman Pillai as Foreign Minister.

These figures, though diverse in background, were united by their anti-colonial ideology. Importantly, the government attempted to present itself as representative of all Indian communities, showing a vision of India, including Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. This unity was critical to its legitimacy. It called for Purna Swaraj (complete independence) decades before the Congress adopted the term in 1929. This government was founded on the principle that Indians had the right to govern themselves and determine their own destiny, which later echoed in the agenda of the Indian National Congress.

The Kabul Government issued a proclamation, which was unique in the sense it addressed almost all groups and classes, i.e. calling upon Indian Rajas, Nawabs, Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Parsis and native Christians as well as Indians serving in Military and Police, to stand against the British and guaranteed them that the new government would uphold justice, religious equality, and social welfare ([Krishnteerth, 2013](#)).

### **Diplomatic Efforts and International Outreach**

One of the core functions of the Provisional Government was diplomacy. Raja Mahendra Pratap believed that to succeed, India's independence movement needed international recognition and strategic support. He embarked on a number of missions to gain the favour of global powers. Raja Mahendra Pratap even met with Lenin in Petrograd in 1919, expressing a willingness to work with the Bolsheviks to free India from British imperialism. However, geopolitical constraints and internal issues in Russia had limited sustained cooperation ([Pratap, 1947, pp.55-62 & Bose, p.336](#)).

### **Organisational Challenges and Limitations**

Despite the clear ideology and bold vision, the Provisional Government faced substantial limitations; unlike the INA of Subhas Bose, the Provisional Government had no standing Army. Moreover, it failed to get official recognition from any powerful country. It was left vulnerable due to dependency on German and Ottoman support, and when World War I concluded against these powers, no choice was left for this government. Lastly, the Kabul government did not have direct contact with the masses in India, and it could not establish communication with underground revolutionaries in India. Leaders of this government believed that Indian native rulers and the public would rise to their call; however, their assessment of the political awakening among the common masses and the patriotism of native rulers proved incorrect.

With the end of World War I in 1918 and the assassination of Emir Habibullah in 1919, the political space in Afghanistan changed dramatically. The new Afghan regime under Amanullah Khan initiated its own war of independence against Britain and was less willing to support Indian revolutionaries whose presence might provoke British retaliation. By 1922, the Provisional Government effectively ceased to function. Most of its members either returned to exile in Europe or India or sought asylum elsewhere ([Singh, 2005, pp.41-42](#)).

The Provisional Government of India in Kabul led by Raja Mahendra Pratap, was a bold attempt at asserting Indian independence through diplomacy and revolutionary vision. While it failed to realise its immediate objectives, its establishment was a landmark moment in the history of India's anti-colonial movement, showcasing a unified vision of secular, republican India, which marked early efforts to internationalise the freedom struggle. It proved to be precedent-setting diplomatic activism by Indian revolutionaries, which had ideological Significance and a political legacy.

### **Ideological Foundations and Significance**

The establishment of the First Provisional Government of India was more than an armed or diplomatic manoeuvre. It was a declaration of an alternative Indian state. Its ideology was deeply rooted in anti-colonialism, secularism, Hindu-Muslim unity, and internationalism, connecting India's struggle to the broader global revolt against imperialism.

Raja Mahendra Pratap viewed this government as an “embassy of free India” abroad. His vision, detailed in his biography, structure of the provisional government and its proclamations, was of an inclusive, federal Indian republic that would ensure justice for all religious and social groups. The Support for this effort also came from the Ottoman Empire, where Indian Muslim revolutionaries hoped to connect the Caliphate's cause (Pan-Islamism) with India's liberation ([Rawat,2022, p.14](#)), and Raja Mahendra Pratap cleverly utilised the opportunity for India's cause. He understood the need of Hindu-Muslim Unity before Gandhi's Khilafat movement, and skilfully diverted the zeal of Pan-Islamism to India's freedom.

Discontent at home, radicalised Indian diaspora, a global war that weakened Britain, and revolutionary networks linking Europe, Asia, and the Middle East collectively created a perfect storm by 1915. The stage was thus set for an unprecedented experiment: the creation of an exiled Indian government, supported by hostile powers, aiming to overthrow colonial rule not through appeals or petitions, but through diplomacy, revolution, and global alliances.

### **Revolutionary Ideology: A Counter-Narrative to Colonial Legitimacy**

Pratap's Provisional Government of India (1915–1919) presented an alternative political framework to the British colonial state. While the incremental reforms were pursued by moderate nationalists under the Congress banner, the Kabul Government dared to declare full sovereignty, thus rejecting the very legitimacy of British rule in India. Its ideological foundation was cemented with anti-imperialism, secular nationalism, social justice, and pan-Indian unity. These all-ideological stances taken by this government were radical at a time when the Indian National Congress was still demanding reforms.

Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh, within the capacity of president of the provisional government of India, issued a proclamation, emphasising the necessity of armed struggle to overthrow the colonial government. He declared, “*Our Indian brothers must understand that the attainment of privileges offered by World War I costs nations ages of warfare and loss of life and property; however, it's a luck of India that the provisional government of India had concluded a treaty with Axis powers to expel British rule. He further appealed to all Indians to rise and expel the English from India*” ([Krishnteerth,2013, pp.58](#)). This declaration shows a profound psychological and political break from the moderate politics of the Indian National Congress as well as personal bravery and terrifying methods of revolutionaries.

### **Secularism and Hindu-Muslim Unity**

At the times when the colonial government tried its best to divide India on communal lines by partitioning

Bengal and introducing Minto-Morley Reforms, the Kabul Government showed explicit commitment to secularism and inter-religious cooperation, which were the most remarkable ideological pillars of the provisional government. Setting a precedent for inclusive nationalism, this government comprised Hindu (Mahendra Pratap), Muslim (Maulavi Barkatullah, Ubaidullah Sindhi), Sikh (Sardar Harnam Singh, Dr. Mathura Singh, Gujjar Singh alias Udhham Singh), and a South Indian Hindu revolutionary, Champak Raman Pillai. Thus, the government sought to forge pan-Indian unity transcending communal lines and regional boundaries, a strong response to the British colonial strategy of “divide and rule” ([Krishnteerth,2013, p.52](#)).

This inclusive, multi-faith ideology resonated later in the Congress-League pact of 1916 and the Khilafat movement of 1919. This ideology not only brought together Hindus and Muslims but also countered both colonial and sectarian narratives that sought to divide the Indian population till 1922. Between 1916 and 1922, a strong fraternity was shown by both Hindus and Muslims against British rule ([Chandra,1990, p.406](#)).

### Unity of Indians

After its establishment, the provisional government of India, in its proclamation circulated to the Indian populace, appealed to Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Parsis, Nawabs, princes, and soldiers of the British police and Army to unite against the oppressive British rule by any means, including armed rebellion. The appeals made by the Kabul government were to each Indian, as it addressed all religions and classes of India. It shows that the leaders of the Kabul government were convinced that a true revolution can only happen once all Indians are united ([Krishnteerth,2013, pp.58&59](#)). What a visionary approach Raja Mahendra Pratap and his associates had, as till now the biggest political party (INC) had not addressed all classes of India from its platform.

### Internationalism and Anti-Imperial Diplomacy

A distinguishing ideological element of the Kabul Government was Internationalism. Raja Mahendra Pratap and his companion revolutionaries viewed India's freedom as part of a global anti-imperialist movement rather than an isolated national goal, which is evident from the fact that they sought coalitions not only with the Central Powers (Germany and Turkey) but also, with the Tsarist, Kerensky and Bolshevik regimes of Russia ([Pratap,1947, pp.55-58, Rawat,2022, pp.11-17 & Stolte,2012](#)).

In 1919, Raja Mahendra Pratap undertook a visit to Moscow, during which he engaged in discussions with Vladimir Lenin, in pursuit of Russian assistance for the liberation of India. As noted by Ashok Kumar Patnaik, Pratap's journey to Petrograd was intended to secure tangible support for Indian independence and to gain recognition for the government of Kabul. Although he did not subscribe to Marxist ideology, Pratap found himself significantly influenced by the proclamations, such as the Decree on Peace (November 1917), The Rights of the People of Russia, and The Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People (January 1918), which were articulated by the nascent Soviet government. This ideological alignment is what prompted him to travel to Russia, seeking a potential avenue for financial, political, and ethical backing ([Patnaik,2005, p. 22](#)).

The Provisional Government of Raja Mahendra Pratap, thus, helped locate India's struggle within a transnational context. This ideological shift became a defining feature of later movements, especially that of Subhas Chandra Bose, who also envisioned India's liberation as part of a global realignment against colonialism.

### The Revolutionary Alternative to Congress Politics

Since its formation in 1885 to 1905, the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of liberals, remained committed to working within the colonial legal framework. The Congress demanded reforms and more representation in legislation, not even dominion status till 1928. It was only in 1928 that dominion status was formally expressed in the Nehru Report. Further, it was the Lahore Session of 1929, when, under the pressure of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, the Indian National Congress put the demand of Purna Swaraj (Bandhopadhyaya, 2009, pp.212-313).

In contrast, the Kabul Government declared full independence in 1915 and actively worked to dismantle colonial power, both ideologically and diplomatically. Its goal was to replace the colonial state, not reform it. This government issued proclamations to Indians, which were signed by Raja Mahendra Pratap within the capacity of the president of the first provisional Government and engaged independently in to diplomatic ties with sovereign powers. While Congress was still sending petitions to the British Parliament, the Kabul Government was sending envoys to Nepal, Turkey, Germany, and Russia (Pratap, 1947, pp.56-58).

This divergence in ideology and actions represented two competing visions of nationalism, one, the Moderate constitutionalism, as practised by the Congress, and the other, the Militant revolution and international diplomacy, as modelled by the Provisional Government.

Though the Congress eventually incorporated elements of the revolutionary agenda under leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru, when Congress passed a resolution for complete independence and included a social and economic agenda to its working at Karachi (Chandra, 1990, pp.245-252), it was the Kabul Government that first articulated a radical, independent Indian state, unbound by colonial negotiations.

### Symbolism and Psychological Impact

In spite of a lack of military resources, the Kabul Government had massive symbolic value. For the first time, Indian leaders had created a government-in-exile that claimed to represent the will of the Indian people, free from British coercion.

Though symbolic, this defiance was particularly powerful because it gave hope to other revolutionary groups. Members of the Ghadar Party, despite the failure of their Feb 1915 uprising, viewed the Kabul Government as an ideological continuation of their efforts. In the 1920s and 1930s, younger revolutionaries, such as Bhagat Singh and his Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), also drew inspiration from these early efforts at armed and ideological resistance.

Moreover, the government's emphasis on diplomacy and global alliances planted seeds for the strategic thinking that would characterise later movements. For example, the Azad Hind Government, formed by Subhas Chandra Bose in 1943, explicitly invoked the legacy of Mahendra Pratap's Kabul Government.

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