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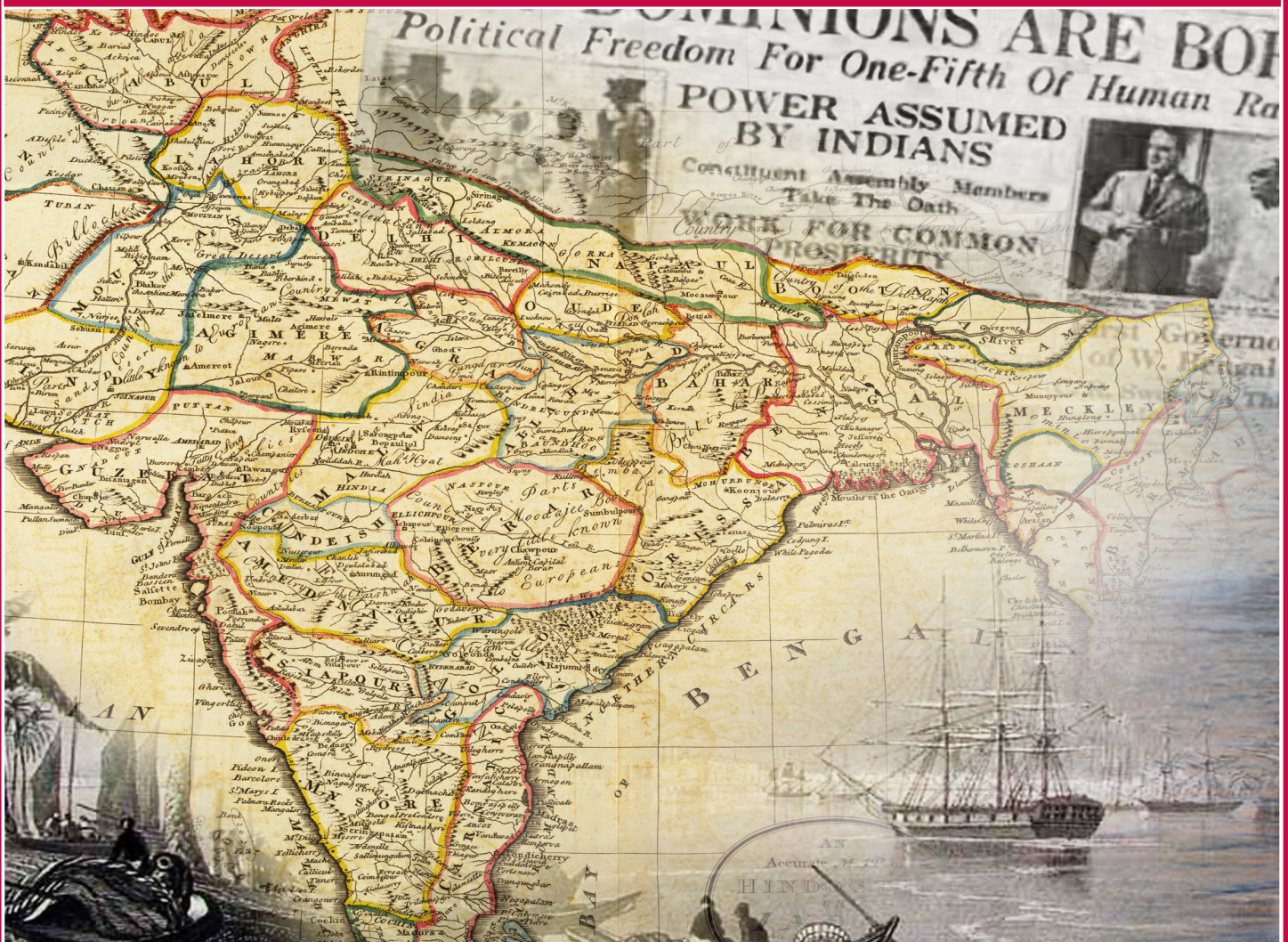
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Indian Independence and the Question of Partition



THE CHOICES PROGRAM

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Director
Susan Graseck

Administrative Manager
Kathleen Magiera

Communications & Marketing
Jillian McGuire Turbitt

Curriculum Development Director
Andy Blackadar

Curriculum Writer
Susannah Bechtel

Curriculum Writer
Sarah Massey

Professional Development Director
Mimi Stephens

Program Associate
Leah Elliott

Program Associate
Maya Lindberg

Video & New Media Producer
Tanya Waldburger

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Sudeshna Banerjee
Professor of History
Jadavpur University

David Gilmartin
Professor of History
North Carolina State University

Sumit Guha
Professor of History
Rutgers University

John C. Hudson
Director of the Geography Program
Associate Director, Environmental Sciences Program
Northwestern University

Ayesha Jalal
Professor of History
Tufts University

Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar
Professor of History
Brown University

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THE CHOICES PROGRAM is a program of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. CHOICES was established to help citizens think constructively about foreign policy issues, to improve participatory citizenship skills, and to encourage public judgement on policy issues.



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Introduction: Independence and Partition

The Indian subcontinent—present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—appears in newspaper headlines today for everything from rapid economic growth and riveting elections, to nuclear weapons and factory fires. Yet, less than a century ago, international headlines focused on one event in particular: the partition (division) of British India.

In August 1947, British withdrawal from the subcontinent brought an end to two centuries of colonial rule in India. This process of decolonization occurred at the same time as another momentous event, the partition of the unified subcontinent into two separate countries, India and Pakistan. (Bangladesh was formed decades later.)

The division of British India into two countries was one of the most volatile events of the twentieth century. More than one million people died and millions more became refugees in the years following partition. These consequences were unanticipated by the Indian politicians and British authorities who negotiated the terms of partition. The general public experienced widespread loss and hardship due to the decisions made by a handful of people. For decades, refugees traveled by trains or walked miles on foot to escape violence and fear.

The bloody process of partition overshadowed an objective Indians had long been fighting for—the end of British rule. In the mid-nineteenth century, the British Crown declared the Indian subcontinent a colony of its vast empire and began to exploit its people and land for economic profit. Where towns once existed, the British built railroads. In once diverse communities, the British segregated housing between Europeans and Indians. While the British claimed they were “civilizing” a barbaric and racially inferior nation, civility rarely characterized their treatment of the people they governed.

Indians’ struggle for freedom from colonial rule amidst war, famine, and political change was a movement that inspired groups across the world to protest oppression carried out by governments. From prominent figures like Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah, to local political and religious leaders, to everyday people, their stories of resistance have lasting impacts even today.

Historians who study these events grapple with important questions. Why did mass migration and violence overshadow Indian independence? What role did religion play in dividing communities? Was partition, the creation of India and Pakistan, inevitable? The answers to these questions and others are not only found in the decades prior to August 1947, but also hundreds of years earlier.

In the following pages, you will explore the history of Indian independence and partition. In Part I, you will read about how the British East India Company entered the Mughal Empire and established authority in the subcontinent. Part II explores life under British rule and Indians’ calls for independence. The reading culminates with an in-depth look at the debates on independence and partition in the province of Bengal. The Epilogue examines the outcome of independence negotiations and the legacies of partition in Bengal and other provinces that exist to this day.

Part I: Empires in India

Before the Indian subcontinent became a colony of the British Empire, a different power—the Mughal Empire—governed almost the entire region. At the height of Mughal rule, merchants working for the British East India Company sailed to the subcontinent seeking opportunities to trade and compete with their European rivals in the region. The British East India Company’s commercial, political, and military activities over two centuries paved the way for British rule in the subcontinent between 1858 and 1947.

In Part I, you will read about the politics and economy of the Mughal Empire. You will then explore the workings of the British East India Company and how its quest for control over trade in the region laid the foundation for the British Empire in India.

The Mughal Empire

When the British first arrived on the Indian subcontinent, they were a small group of traders entering one of the largest and most successful empires of the time—the Mughal Empire. The Mughals ruled over a territory that spanned from present-day Pakistan to the southern region of modern India. Trade routes linked the Mughals to the globe, while a common culture of architecture, art, religion, and literature connected people within the subcontinent. To understand how the subcontinent came to be ruled by the British, it is necessary to understand the Mughal Empire.

How did the Mughal Empire begin?

In the 1520s, Mughal warriors from Central Asia invaded and conquered Hindu and Muslim kingdoms in the northwestern part of the subcontinent. The leader of these Mughal invasions, Babur, was a descendant of Genghis Khan (the thirteenth-century emperor of the



Mughal art, architecture, and culture blended Indian, Persian, and Islamic styles. One of the most famous examples of Mughal architecture is the Taj Mahal, a mausoleum built out of white marble for Emperor Shah Jahan’s (r. 1628–58) wife.

Mongol Empire) and Timur (the fourteenth-century ruler in Central Asia). Babur’s conquests were crucial for creating an expansive Mughal Empire.

Military campaigns under the third Mughal emperor, Akbar (r. 1556–1605), greatly expanded the empire. Conquests under Akbar brought the northeastern region of Bengal, one of the best lands for agriculture and commerce, under Mughal control. Over two centuries later, Bengal would become valuable to Europeans seeking to profit from Indian trade.

“The Great [Mughal], considering his territories, his wealth, and his rich commodities, is the greatest known King of the east, if not of the world...”

—Father Edward Terry, chaplain to Thomas Roe, a member of the British House of Commons, 1616–1619

At the height of the empire, the Mughals ruled over somewhere between 100 and 150 million people. Eighty to 90 percent of the

Part I Definitions

Indian Subcontinent—The peninsula in South Asia, which includes the present-day territories of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Under British rule, the entire Indian subcontinent was referred to as “India.”

Provinces—Smaller administrative units within British India (similar to states in the United States).

Exports—Goods shipped to other countries.

Mercantile Class—Middle-class merchants, bankers, and traders who profited from increased trade on the subcontinent.

people living under Mughal rule were Hindu, Christian, Jewish, or had other religious identities. For the most part, the Mughals, who were Muslim, did not impose Islamic laws on the communities they ruled and tolerated other religions.

How did Emperor Akbar structure the empire?

As early as the 1560s, the Mughal Empire had a government system in place to collect taxes and recruit soldiers. Under Emperor Akbar, this was called the *mansabdari* system (*mansab* means rank). *Mansabdars*, nobles appointed by the emperor, were assigned to a specific territory and expected to recruit anywhere between ten to several thousand cavalry for the Mughal army. In return, *mansabdars* received the right to collect taxes on the land. *Mansabdars* came from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds, yet communicated in Persian.

In 1580, Akbar divided the territories of the Mughal Empire into provinces with districts and subdistricts. This step improved the organization of the empire and allowed the Mughals to better control vast stretches of land. Over the next hundred years, the empire continued to expand across the subcontinent.

How did a scarcity of agricultural lands weaken Mughal authority?

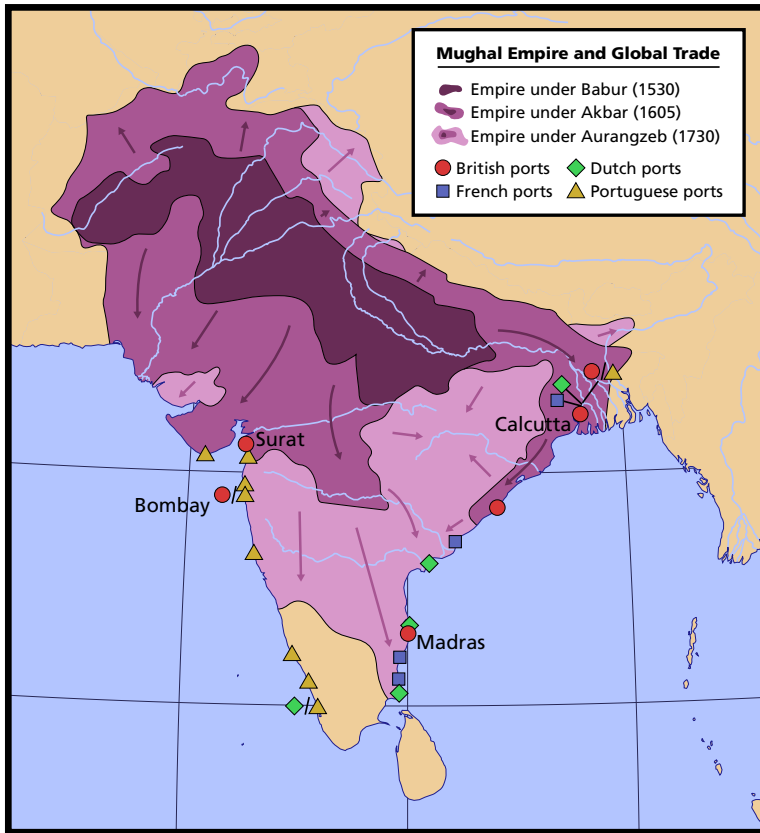
During the late seventeenth century, the Mughals’ ongoing attempts to expand southward created a serious crisis for the *mansabdari* system. Although the Mughal Empire controlled almost the entire subcontinent, there was a severe shortage of agricultural land that could be offered to the growing number of *mansabdars*. Many *mansabdars* who expected to receive a tract of land as payment for their services were left empty-handed. These unfulfilled promises weakened the loyalty between the emperor and his *mansabdars* and sparked discontent among many who had been trusted allies of the empire.

Who challenged the authority of the Mughal Empire?

Facing debt, Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707) raised taxes on agricultural lands and areas that were part of overland trade routes. With higher taxes, the emperor hoped to cover the costs of the large imperial army and continue territorial expansion. For many members of Indian society, the tax increases were a difficult, if not impossible, burden to bear. As a result, dissatisfied *mansabdars* and peasants challenged the emperor’s authority. More unrest soon followed.

Following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the Mughal Empire faced several other challenges—invasions by foreign forces, the rise of regional rulers, and the growing presence of European trade companies on the eastern and western coasts of the subcontinent.

In the 1730s, the Mughals lost large tracts of territory in the central subcontinent to the Marathas, a group of Hindu warriors. Persian and Afghan warriors invading from the northwest conquered other Mughal territories and formed regional kingdoms. Within the empire, peasant communities such as the Sikhs (a religious minority in the northwest) and Jats (an agricultural group in the north) also rose up to form independent states.



By the 1740s, the highest-ranking *mansabdars*, who served as governors in the provinces of Bengal, Awadh, and the Deccan, declared their independence from the emperor. These newly independent rulers were known as *nawabs* and would come to play a key role in the negotiations over trade rights with European companies.

The era of strong Mughal control over the subcontinent had come to an end. As the Mughal Empire weakened, European trade companies saw an opportunity to take control over trading rights and territories in the Indian subcontinent. As the strongest trading company in the region, the British East India Company plotted to seize control over profitable regions. Over time, the British East India Company would become a conquering power with the desire to rule all of India.

The British East India Company

At the turn of the seventeenth century, a group of British traders sailed to the subcon-

continent to enter the spice trade. Under the name of the British East India Company, they quickly formed relationships with Indian traders and authorities in the port cities that dotted the coast. While Company members focused on business during their first one hundred years in India, they eventually found that territorial control was necessary to dominate trade in the region. With time, almost the entire Indian subcontinent would fall under British influence.

What was the British East India Company?

The British East India Company (first called the English East India Company) was established by a royal decree from the queen of England in 1600. The Company, a joint-stock corporation, was not funded by the British government, but by individual shareholders.

Investors made payments up front to fund long trade voyages and, in return, the Company promised them a portion of the profits.

The British East India Company was created to compete with Dutch traders, who were shipping goods to Europe from the “East” and making spices expensive to purchase. When members of the Company first set sail, they planned to set up posts in the East Indies (modern-day Indonesia), which were territories known for spices. But when the British arrived, the Dutch refused to give them access to their ports. As a backup plan, the Company traveled to nearby India where it negotiated with the Mughal emperor to carry out trade in the subcontinent. In 1617, the Mughal Empire gave the Company permission to establish warehouses for storing goods in Surat, a city on the western coast.

The Company mainly operated from three ports during its first century in India—Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras (see map). At first, the Company traded bullion—gold and sil-

ver—for Indian pepper. With time, the British also shipped spices, coffee, textiles, and other goods to Europe. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Company had transformed the coastal towns of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, three major cities for the export of cotton textiles, into headquarters for its growing enterprise. The British called these commercial bases “presidencies.”

Why did Mughal rulers want to negotiate with the British?

When the British East India Company arrived in India, the Mughal emperor was reluctant to negotiate with more European traders. But realizing that new competition could weaken the growing influence of Dutch and Portuguese companies, the Mughals soon granted the British formal rights to trade.

The structure of the British East India Company also posed less of a threat to the Mughals. Other groups, such as the Portuguese, were run by their governments and often mixed trade with conquest and religious conversion. The Company, however, was owned by individual investors. It had the flexibility to conduct business with local merchants and politicians without involving the British Crown.

As time went on, it became difficult for the Company to remain uninvolved in politics.

In the 1700s, some regional rulers offered the British trading rights in exchange for military assistance. The Royal British Navy, which was stationed along the Indian coast to intimidate the French, carried out the orders of various Mughal rulers. The Company found it increasingly challenging to sustain its reputation as solely a trading business.

How did increased trade along the coast change the Mughal Empire?

By the early 1700s, global commerce had changed the economy and politics of the Mughal Empire. The growth of oceanic trade gave certain groups—merchants, bankers, and landowners—more access to wealth and resources. These groups formed an Indian mercantile class that handled issues related to trade. Bankers financed new business operations, while merchants worked with local producers to meet the rising demand for Indian goods abroad.

Other changes occurred within the Mughal administration. Responsibilities once reserved for appointed Mughal officials were shared with the developing mercantile class. For example, merchants and bankers began to collect taxes for the empire from local and foreign traders.

The British East India Company had connections to the individuals gaining authority

Global Trade

Trade networks across the Indian Ocean linked the economies, religions, and cultures of China, western Asia (including the Indian subcontinent), and Arabia. At the start of the sixteenth century, several decades before the establishment of the Mughal Empire, Portuguese traders set up coastal settlements in the Indian subcontinent. Other Europeans—the Dutch, French, and English—followed. European traders hoped to profit from valuable Indian commodities such as spices, coffee, and textiles. The expanding Mughal Empire came to rely more heavily on profits from oceanic trade. Simultaneously, the British became the most powerful group of traders in the region.

“The commerce of India is courted by all the trading nations in the world, and probably has been so from the earliest ages: the greatest share of it is now centered in England.”

—Excerpt from *Geography for Youth, or a Plain and Easy Introduction to the Science of Geography, for the Use of Young Gentlemen and Ladies*, a geography textbook used in Great Britain, 1782

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection. Public Domain.



A British ship sailing down the Ganges river in Bihar, a province neighboring Bengal. Circa 1791.

in the empire. These were the same trading families, merchants, and bankers they had been negotiating with for years. The Company would take advantage of these relationships to increase its economic and political power in India.

What events led to a confrontation between the Company and the nawab of Bengal?

In the mid-1700s, the British East India Company’s profits from trade were rapidly growing. The Company shipped 75 percent of its exports from the port of Calcutta, the provincial capital of Bengal. Wanting more revenue, Company members began trading grains and other goods not included in their original trade contract with the *nawab* of Bengal. The Company did not request permission from the *nawab* before proceeding with its plan.

Around this time, Britain was fighting a war against France, Prussia, and Spain (the War of Austrian Succession) in Europe and along the Indian coast. To protect its trade posts from French threats, the British East India Company built fortifications around its warehouses in Calcutta.

The new *nawab* of Bengal, Siraj-ud-daula, interpreted the Company’s illegal trading and new military fortifications as a direct threat

to his authority. In June 1756, the *nawab* sent troops to Calcutta and imprisoned anyone associated with the Company. Forty British members died while being held in captivity. (The British later named this event the “Black Hole of Calcutta.”) The situation greatly startled the British who realized they could lose valuable trade if Mughal authorities continued to challenge them.

British Expansion Begins with Bengal

The confrontation between the *nawab* of Bengal and the Company in 1756 was a sign that the British were walking a fine line. How could the Company continue to grow if Mughal and regional authorities wanted to restrain it? British efforts to resolve this issue quickly entangled them in the politics of Bengal and India at large.

How did the Company intervene in the politics of Bengal?

Given that Bengal was the Company’s most profitable port, General Robert Clive traveled from Madras to address the situation. He quickly devised a scheme to replace the local *nawab*. Clive wanted a ruler who would be more favorable to the Company regarding taxes and rights to trade from the port of Calcutta.

Clive turned to Indian groups displeased with Siraj-ud-daula for support: bankers and merchants who were upset with the *nawab* for overtaxing their businesses, and the Mughal emperor who was troubled by the *nawab's* attempts to make Bengal an independent state. Along with Clive, these groups and the *nawab's* second-in-command, Mir Jafar, agreed to force Siraj-ud-daula out of office. At an event known to the British as the Battle of Plassey, Clive's forces quickly defeated the *nawab's* army. Only a few shots were fired before Siraj-ud-daula agreed to resign. As planned, Mir Jafar became the new *nawab* of Bengal.

After the battle, Mir Jafar did not honor the financial promises he had made to the Company. Yet again, the British negotiated with local groups and political elites to overthrow Mir Jafar. As various leaders filled the position of the *nawab* of Bengal, none could fully satisfy the increasing demands of the British East India Company.

“And this is the way your Gentlemen behave; they make a disturbance all over my country, plunder the people, injure and disgrace my servants.... They forcibly take away the goods and commodities of the peasants, merchants, etc., for a fourth part of their value....”

—Mir Kasim, *nawab* of Bengal, in a letter to the British governor of Bengal, May 1762

How did the Company gain control of Bengal?

Some Indians in Bengal opposed the Company's growing political involvement. In 1764, a former *nawab* convinced the Mughal emperor and the *nawab* of Awadh to send Indian troops to challenge the British. In the Battle of Buxar, the Company's army defeated the emperor's regiment.

In the treaty following the battle, the Company received rights to control the political offices and military forces in Bengal. The Company now governed the province even though on paper it still belonged to the Mughal Empire. Warren Hastings was named the

first governor-general of the territory. Control of Bengal was a critical first step to the British controlling other regions in India. With the taxes collected in Bengal, the Company had the funds it needed to expand into other parts of the subcontinent.

“[B]engal is the brightest jewel in the British Crown, though at present in a rude and unpolished state; that if it be once properly improved and burnished, it will eclipse every thing of the kind that has been yet seen in the world; but that if it be once suffered to drop out and be lost, the crown will lose half its splendor and dignity.”

—Robert Clive, speaking before the British Parliament, 1772

How did the Company incorporate religion into the laws of Bengal?

By seizing control of Bengal, the Company could now regulate the province's laws, tax collection, and other government functions. Although Mughal legal traditions were in place to govern Indians, the Company wanted to implement new laws. However, the Company believed that its own legal system, that of Great Britain, was not an option for Bengal. Even though British officials had worked in India for centuries, they perceived Indians to be too foreign and less civilized than white Europeans.

The British believed that Indians should instead be governed by the “original” laws of their land. Company officials turned to the most ancient texts they could find, which happened to be religious. They hired Indian translators to interpret the *Vedas* and the *Qur'an* (see box on page 8). With these translations, the British crafted two different legal codes, one for Hindus and the other for Muslims. By only offering two religious codes, the Company ignored the fact that some Indians were Sikhs, Christians, or atheists.

The insistence by the British that Hindus and Muslims were fundamentally different, and needed to be ruled with separate laws,

set in motion a trend of dividing communities along religious lines.

Why did the British government take a more active role in India?

The Company made large profits in Bengal, but a series of political and military scandals put it on the verge of bankruptcy. In London, rumors of corrupt Company officials had caused the price of the Company's stock to drop. Facing bankruptcy, the Company turned to the British government for loans to stay afloat. Many members of the British government supported the Company either politically or financially, but feared growing demands among the British public to put an end to the Company's mismanagement.

To curb corruption, the British Parliament implemented the Regulating Act of 1773, which gave the British government the right to regulate Company activities. The directors

of the Company were required to send documents on all civil and military activity and revenue in India to the British government in London. The act was not always effective due to the distance between London and the colonial capital of Calcutta.

To fix some of the limitations of the Regulating Act, the British Parliament implemented Pitt's India Act of 1784. The act set up a Board of Control in London to review Company activities. The Company kept its right to control trade, but all other activities would come under the regular review of the British government. Over time, the British government placed even more restrictions on the Company.

How did the British change the land system in Bengal?

In India, land was not something individuals owned, but something one inherited or received from the emperor. The Mughal

Hinduism and Islam

Hinduism and Islam are two major religions on the Indian subcontinent. Today, the majority of people on the subcontinent practice Hinduism, while a large minority identify as Muslim. Others identify as Sikh, Jain, Christian, agnostic, and atheist.

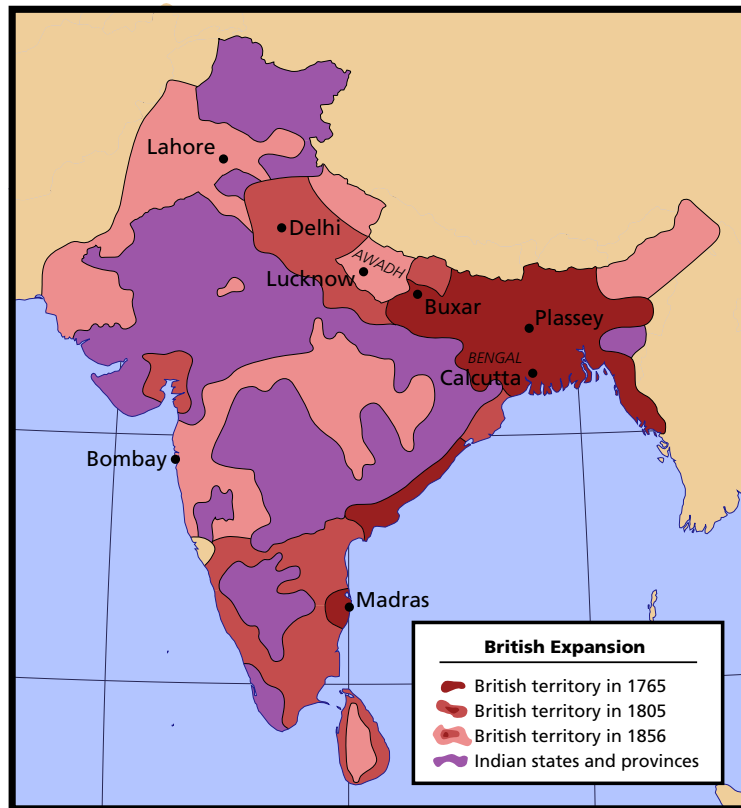
The term "**Hinduism**" was not used to define a unified religious group until India was colonized by the British in the 1800s. While a variety of Hindu beliefs have similar ancient roots, people adhering to these beliefs previously identified with smaller religious groups, or sects.

A few ancient texts are central to many forms of Hinduism. The *Vedas*, a collection of sacred writings, include prayers, hymns, philosophy, and guidelines for earthly life, and the *Bhagavad Gita* addresses how followers show their devotion to God. Multiple gods and goddesses appear in Hindu texts, but most Hindus are monotheistic (worship one god). Monotheistic Hindus believe in an ultimate God who represents the qualities of other gods, some more than others. Many Hindus also believe in reincarnation or *samsara*, life on earth after death.

Islam originated in the 600s with a man named Muhammad who lived in Mecca (a city in present-day Saudi Arabia). Muslims believe that Muhammad was the final prophet sent by God to receive and share God's will. The Prophet shared the words of God with others who recorded his revelations in the *Qur'an*, a sacred Islamic text. The Five Pillars of Islam come from the *Qur'an*: faith in God, ritual prayer, giving to those in need, fasting, and visiting Mecca.

Similar to Hinduism, the way Islam is practiced depends on where Muslims live, their family traditions, and the division they follow. There are two main branches (or sects) of Islam: Sunni and Shi'i. Differences among these groups began over who they believe was appointed to lead the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Also, some Shi'i Muslims believe that religious and political authority is represented together through *imams*, or religious guides, while some Sunni Muslims believe in separate political and religious authorities.

Direct and Indirect Rule



By 1850, the Company directly ruled 60 percent of the subcontinent (one million square miles). The Company ruled the remaining 40 percent indirectly.

The British East India Company controlled new territories in the Indian subcontinent through direct and indirect rule.

Bengal is an example of a region that fell under the **direct rule** of the Company by an official treaty. In territories under direct control, the Company collected taxes on the land, structured the legal system, and made decisions to wage war.

Indirect rule meant that the Company influenced certain provinces without formally governing them. In exchange for the Company's military protection against revolts and invasions, Indian rulers (often called "princes") gave the Company access to goods and trade. In some cases, they paid the British directly. The British favored indirect rule in the provinces they believed were less profitable.

government, local land revenue collectors (*zamindars*), and peasants working the land all shared rights to the property. The British were stunned by this system. From their perspective, individual property ownership was necessary for economic success, stability, and proper taxation. In 1793, the British passed the Bengal Permanent Settlement Act at the urging of the second governor-general, Charles Cornwallis. The law granted official land ownership to *zamindars* in Bengal. *Zamindars* could keep the land or sell their property if they were unable to pay taxes.

“The security of private property is the greatest encouragement to industry, on which the wealth of every state depends.”

—Warren Hastings, first governor-general, writing to the Board of Directors, 1772

The Permanent Settlement Act most drastically affected Indian peasants (small farmers), who were left without any rights to the land they and their families had worked on for generations. Peasants became renters of the land and were forced to pay the *zamindars*. (Unlike Bengal, in other parts of the subcontinent—Madras, Bombay, and Punjab—the British gave large numbers of peasants property rights.) Within the first twenty years, over a third of Bengal's land was sold to new owners. Workers who could not afford to pay the newly imposed rents were forced to move. The outcome of the Permanent Settlement Act worsened the situation for Indians already struggling with the lingering hardships of famine that swept the region in 1769.

How did the British treat Indians in the government?

When the Company first gained control of Bengal, most Indians holding administrative positions in the province kept their jobs. With time, the British belief that they were racially superior to Indians changed the structure of the government. It became clear that the British did not believe Indians should represent the British government. In 1793, the British created the Indian Civil Service to train British citizens to replace Indian revenue collectors, police officers, and judges. In 1802, the College of Fort William at Calcutta was opened to teach incoming British workers languages in the region. More and more Indians lost their jobs or were demoted.

“I observe with great concern the system of depressing [Indians] adopted by the present government

and imitated in the manners of almost every European. They are excluded from all posts of great respectability.... The functions of magistrate and judge are performed by Europeans who know neither the laws nor the language of the country, and with an enormous expense to the Company.”

—General Palmer in a letter to Warren Hastings, October 10, 1802

How did the British treat Indians in the military?

The Company needed forces to support its expansion on the subcontinent and reinforce British troops throughout the globe. Therefore, the Company recruited *sepoys* (Indian soldiers) to join its military. A clear hierarchy existed between British and Indian soldiers; the British filled positions of authority, while Indians remained in lower ranks.

The Trial of Warren Hastings

“[W]e have brought before your Lordships the first man in rank.... [O]ne in whom all the frauds, all the [stealing], all the violence, all the tyranny, in India are embodied, disciplined, and arrayed.” —Edmund Burke, February 15, 1788

In 1788, the first governor-general of Bengal, Warren Hastings, was brought to trial in Britain on charges of corruption and fraud. The prosecution, led by Edmund Burke, provided evidence of Hastings accepting bribes from local Indian rulers and abusing his authority at the expense of the Indian people. During his first years as governor-general, Hastings fixed prices for agricultural products and other goods at low rates in order to sell them for large profits abroad. Fixed prices meant lower incomes for Indians and left Bengal stricken with poverty and famine.

Burke appealed to the British Parliament on the grounds that “natural law” called for the protection of all people, colonized or not, against the political and economic abuse of Hastings. Given the recent loss of the American colonies, Burke also argued that Britain needed to begin recognizing the plight of those living under its governance. Despite Burke’s appeals to a higher sense of justice, the British Parliament acquitted (excused) Hastings in 1795.

The seven-year trial of Warren Hastings was important because it raised questions about the nature and accountability of British rule in India. It also involved the British public in grappling with these questions. Who was the British East India Company accountable to? What rights and freedoms did the people of India have under British governance?

“According to the judgement that you shall give upon the past transactions in India... the whole character of your future government in that distant empire will be unalterably decided.” —Edmund Burke, 1788



Felice Beato, 1857-8. Wikimedia Commons.

Photograph of a division in the British East India Company's Madras Army. These *sepoys* helped the British put down rebellions in Lucknow in November 1857.

At first, the British made an effort to be sensitive to the religious beliefs and rituals of the *sepoys*. Eventually, British tolerance began to shift. Religious discrimination and racism characterized many Indians' experiences in the military.

“But, over and above those considerations, it may be said with great truth, that such is the aversion which the English openly show for the company of natives; and such the [disgust] which they betray for them, that no love, and no coalition...can take root between the conquerors and the conquered....”

—Ghulam Husain Khan Tabatabai, writer and historian based in Calcutta, 1789

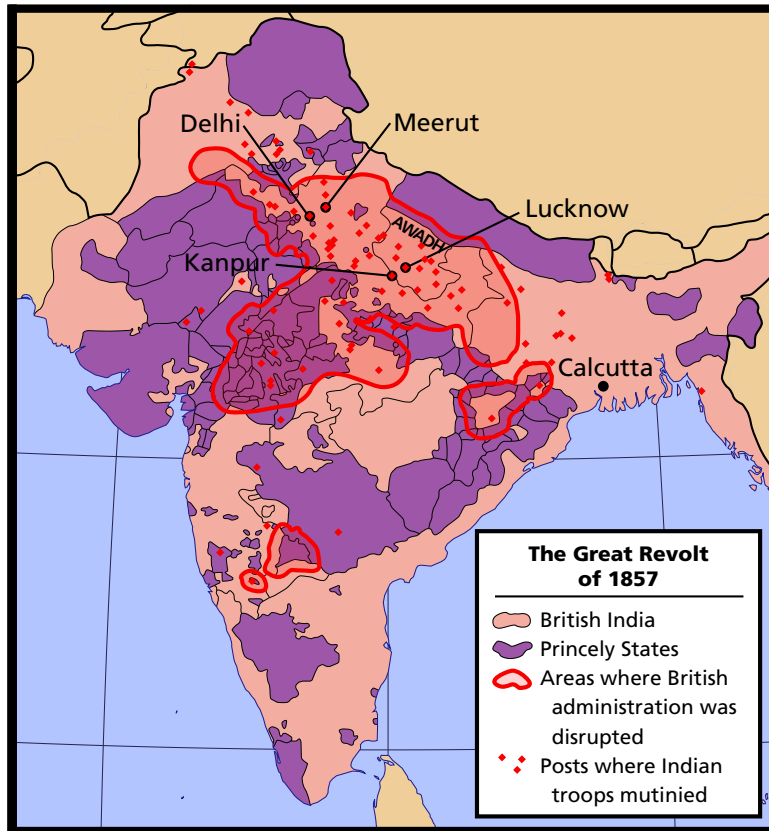
The Great Revolt of 1857

By 1850, the Company had brought the entire Indian subcontinent under its influence.

British rule fueled resentment among various sectors of Indian society. Beginning in the spring of 1857, *sepoys* of the British East India Company's Bengal Army rose up against their British officers. The *sepoys* took up arms and killed British officers over the injustices they had faced for years. Encouraged by the armed protests of the *sepoys*, Indian civilians joined the revolt to voice their own concerns. Protests against the British were not uncommon, but the Great Revolt affected a larger area than ever before.

What was the immediate cause of the Great Revolt?

The Great Revolt began in the Bengal Army, one of the British East India Company's three armies. Most historians agree that the event that sparked the Great Revolt was the *sepoys'* refusal to use Lee Enfield rifles. The cartridges used in the Lee Enfield rifles had to be bitten open before loading them. News



Army (totaling over 130,000 men) had risen up against their British officers. Civilians, including landlords, peasants, princes, artisans, laborers, merchants, and policemen, also joined the growing revolt.

“As regards the Rebellion of 1857, the fact is that for a long period, many grievances had been [brewing] in the hearts of the people.”

—From Syed Ahmed Khan’s pamphlet “The Causes of the Indian Revolt” that was read by many British officials, 1873

Indian rebels, whether they were *sepoys* or civilians, shared similar concerns, but they did not always have the same goals. Some rebels opposed British policies that had caused them social and economic hardships. Other rebels

felt deprived of the political status they had held before British rule. Some groups felt that British policies disrespected local traditions and customs. There were also rebels who used the Great Revolt as an opportunity to fight for power within and among local communities. Lastly, some Indians joined for fear of being killed if they did not participate.

Although many rebelled, not all *sepoys* participated in the revolt. Two regions—Bengal and the Punjab in the northern part of the subcontinent—remained relatively quiet due to the presence of large British forces. Many *sepoys* from the Punjab and Nepal fought alongside the British to put down the revolt.

How violent was the Great Revolt?

Both sides—the rebels and the British (and the *sepoys* who supported them)—used tremendous violence. One extreme example is an event known as the Kanpur massacre. In June 1857, a group of Indian rebels seized the British fort in Kanpur, killed the British troops,

spread like wildfire among the *sepoys* that the grease used on the cartridges was made from the fat of cows (sacred to Hindus) or of pigs (not eaten by Muslims). Hindu and Muslim *sepoys* found the grease religiously offensive and suspected that it was part of a British conspiracy to convert them to Christianity.

On May 10, 1857, when a group of *sepoys* posted at the British base in Meerut (see map) refused to use the greased cartridges, they were publicly humiliated, expelled from service, and imprisoned. The next day, *sepoys* at the base rescued their imprisoned comrades and proceeded to kill British officers and English residents in the town. The *sepoys* then marched to Delhi, where they seized the city from the British and declared the current Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, the symbolic leader of their revolt.

Who joined the revolt?

From Delhi, the military rebellions spread across northern and central India. Within a couple of weeks, almost the entire Bengal

and then killed about two hundred women and children whom they had promised not to harm. The Kanpur massacre led to demands among the British in India and Great Britain for revenge and justice.

“Our house in India is on fire. We are not insured. To lose that house would be to lose power, prestige, and character—to descend in the rank of nations....”

—*Illustrated London News*, July 4, 1857

The rebel forces controlled much of northern India by the end of June, but faced the ruthless violence used by the British to take back control. British attempts to put down the revolt included public executions, the burning of entire villages close to rebel centers, and blowing up *sepoys* with cannons. Tens of thousands of *sepoys* and civilians were killed. Delhi, the symbolic center of the revolt, was recaptured by the British on September 20, 1857.

“It’s said that people live on hope—I have no hope even of living.”

—Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, an Urdu poet who lived through the Great Revolt

The British gradually took back control of all lost territories by the spring of 1859. Suppressing the revolt cost an immense sum of money, which would eventually fall on the shoulders of Indian taxpayers.

How did the British Crown become the ruler of India?

Despite the widespread Indian participation in the Great Revolt, the British never doubted their right to rule India. Britain’s most pressing concern was not to improve conditions for Indians, but to prevent another revolt from happening and preserve British authority.

Several months before the Great Revolt ended, the British Parliament decided to end the British East India Company’s rule in India. The Company was abolished and its 250 years



“The Angel of Resurrection” pictured above was sculpted by Carlo Marochetti to honor the British lives lost during the Kanpur massacre.

Samuel Bourne, 1860. Wikimedia Commons.

of activity in the subcontinent came to an end. On August 2, 1858, the British Parliament passed the Act for the Better Government of India, which made Queen Victoria the ruler of British territories in India. All of the Company’s territories, administrative offices, revenue, and military and naval forces were transferred to the Crown. The act also created a new position—the secretary of state for India—who reported directly to the British Parliament in London. The secretary of state for India would communicate closely with the viceroy (formerly known as the governor-general) living in India.

The Act for the Better Government of India went into effect on November 1, 1858. On that same day, Queen Victoria issued a proclamation that promised that her subjects in India, regardless of their race, religion, or caste (a so-

cial ranking), would be treated equally under the law. The queen's statement was an empty promise. In the minds of most British officials, the Great Revolt was further evidence that Indians were racially inferior, if not barbaric. As colonial subjects, Indians would never enjoy the rights of "freeborn Englishmen" and would not be treated equally before the law.

“We declare it to be Our Royal Will... that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the Law....”

—Excerpt from Queen Victoria's proclamation, November 1, 1858

British officials set out to answer several questions. Now that the Indian colony belonged to the British Crown, how should it be governed on a day-to-day basis? What steps needed to be taken to prevent a rebellion similar to the Great Revolt from occurring again? How should groups of Indians seeking political representation be treated? How could Britain make more profits from its Indian colony? The answers British officials found to these questions had dire consequences for Indians. A new era of repression, censorship, and widespread hardship was about to begin.

Part II: Indians Challenge the British Raj

Queen Victoria's proclamation marked the start of a century of massive social and political change in India. The British pursued reforms, industrialization, and war with their own interests in mind. Focused on the economic and military value of the colony, the British were rarely concerned with how change affected Indian communities and people. Indians responded with demands for rights and, eventually, freedom.

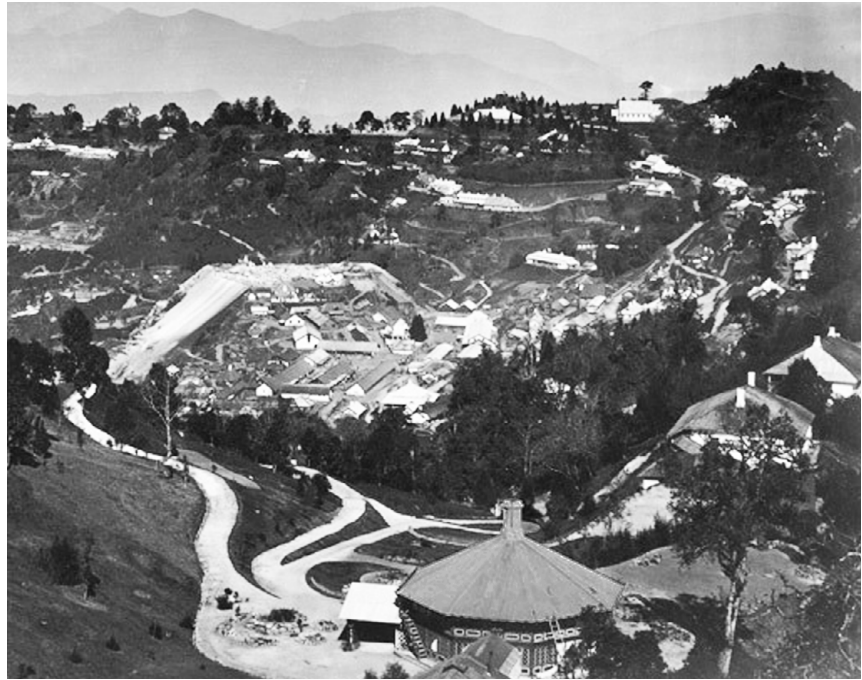
In Part II, you will read about life in the British Raj (the Hindi word for "reign") and Indian calls for change. You will examine how class, religion, and region affected the ability of various Indian groups to protest British rule on the subcontinent. You will also consider how global events transformed the debate in India on governance and representation.

Crown Rule

Following the Great Revolt of 1857, the British enacted a series of laws to protect their authority in India and prevent future rebellions. These attempts to strengthen Crown rule often came at the expense of Indians, who faced a rapidly changing economy and had limited political say in their own future.

How did British rule change after the Great Revolt?

After 1857, the British began to heavily recruit soldiers from areas that had remained loyal during the Great Revolt, like the Punjab. To prevent *sepoys* from challenging their authority, the British banned them from top military positions and kept them isolated from



© The British Library Board (Photo 27/91).

Summer headquarters for the British in Darjeeling, Bengal.

society. *Sepoys* were used to put down protests such as workers' strikes, peasant revolts, riots, and later, nationalist movements seeking freedom from colonial rule.

In addition to reorganizing the military, British officials restricted Indians through legislation. For example, laws passed in the 1860s and 1870s made natural resources (minerals, forests, etc.) and public spaces "state property" of the colonial government. In 1878, the government passed the Vernacular Press Act to halt the publication of articles that criticized British authority.

The British also used segregation to enhance their power. In urban areas, houses and buildings were constructed exclusively for the British within boundaries known as "civil lines." Indian villages were often replaced with paved roads, government offices, homes, and parks. British officials also retreated to isolated towns located in the mountains, called "hill-stations," to govern Indian society from afar.

Part II Definitions

Peasants—Peasants lived in rural areas and made a living in the agricultural industry. The majority of the people on the subcontinent during British rule were peasants.

Elites—Indians who were members of the upper class. They were landholders, lawyers, business owners, or politicians. Many also were English-educated and worked in or with the British administration.

All-India Politics—A level of politics dealing with issues across all provinces.

Why did the British conduct a census in India?

In 1871, British officials began conducting the first All-India Census. British census officials recorded information on where Indians lived and worked, what language(s) they spoke, and other elements of their identity. With this new information, the British planned to tailor policies to communities

across the subcontinent so that they could better control the population.

The All-India Census paid particular attention to religion. The census noted which religious communities made up a majority and a minority of the population in all areas. Final reports emphasized regions or populations where a particular religion was in decline.

The religious focus of the census affected communities of faith throughout India. With the ability to calculate whether their following was growing or diminishing, some religious leaders began to publicize or redefine their beliefs to attract new followers.

How did the use of caste in the census change Indian society?

The census also documented Indians' caste identity—a category used to rank society. *Brahmans*—Hindu scholars and leaders—had convinced the British that caste was critical to understanding the structure of Indian society. (*Brahmans* were ranked the highest in this arrangement.) With its basis in religion and local politics, the British saw the caste system as a way to organize and rule Indians. In some

The Caste System

In India, a method for ranking society is called the caste system. The caste system has multiple origins, including the ones below. Although some Indians recognize the caste system today, or are born into strict caste communities, other Indians refuse to follow the caste system because they believe it is discriminatory.

Religion: The Hindu *Vedas* (scriptures) describe a strict ordering of people. According to *Vedic* law, people are born into four *varnas* (or castes): *Brahmans*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishas*, and *shudras*. *Varnas* indicate an individual's responsibilities or occupational status. The first three *varnas* are considered upper castes, while the *shudras* are considered members of a lower class. An outcast group, referred to as the untouchables, fall below the *shudras*.

Local Politics: In the centuries before and during Mughal rule, Indians struggled to defend their rights to land or claim new territories. Warrior kings turned to myths and religious texts to find evidence of their divine right to rule regions. These warriors took on specific titles and classes below them were also given names and rankings based on their occupation and worth to the community. Eventually, group names were also considered caste identities.

Other: Other caste identities originate simply from names passed down through generations. Some castes refer to membership in a family, tribe, geographic location, occupation, or other religion. European colonial powers also grouped people into caste identities based on class, language, military abilities, loyalty, or perceived race.

regions, over three hundred caste groups were recorded in the census.

In the decades following the first All-India Census, the British implemented laws that linked caste identity to property rights, military recruitment, and policing. Caste groups that were historically landholders or farmers were given more freedom to own and develop land than castes involved in trade or commerce. The British recruited more military personnel from “warrior castes.” Castes identified as the lowest groups in local societies were deemed “criminals” and required to contact the police on a weekly basis.

How did the railway system strengthen the British Raj?

The British invested heavily in expanding transportation (roads, railways, and canals) and communication (telegraph) networks on the subcontinent. These networks helped the British achieve two major goals: the quick transport of military troops and the rapid delivery of raw materials to coastal ports. The construction of these projects alone were large moneymakers for the government and British private investors. For example, instead of



In 1857, there were 570 miles of railway. By 1880, railways covered 4,300 miles. At the turn of the century, British India had one of the largest railway systems in the world.

using the abundance of iron and coal in India, manufactured parts were purchased from Britain.

How did the railways affect Indian society?

The railways brought many changes to Indians' everyday lives: forests disappeared, individuals and families were able to travel by train to religious festivals and on pilgrimages, and new towns popped up around railroad terminals. Urban centers and port cities doubled or tripled in size, while communities excluded

Indentured Servitude

Facing economic hardships, many Indians were forced to become indentured servants. Indentured servants signed contracts that committed them to work a set number of years for the British. Between 1834 and 1920, roughly 1.2 million Indians worked as indentured servants in other British colonies, such as the territories of present-day Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Uganda, for up to ten years. In the 1830s, after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, indentured servants from India replaced slaves in the sugarcane fields of tropical colonies. Others built railways in British colonies in East Africa or worked on the rubber plantations of Malaysia. Indentured servitude was gradually abolished in British colonies between 1911 and 1920.

Courtesy: L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. MSS. 1608. William Henry Jackson.



A train station in Baluchistan, a northwestern region of the subcontinent. 1895.

from transportation routes were vulnerable to unemployment.

“Railway lines have been constructed in all directions for the benefit of Europeans and of their trade. The interests of natives of India have been sacrificed to the interests of Europeans.”

—Bengali newspaper, *Bangabasi*,
June 11, 1887

The expanded railway system (see map on page 17) drastically changed the flow of goods to and from India. Trains quickly transported raw materials—for example, cotton, indigo, rice, and tea—from rural regions to ports for international export. At the same time, Indian demand for cheap manufactured goods from European markets rose as access to foreign goods increased.

These economic changes affected many Indians, especially artisans and peasants. Many lost their jobs because they could not compete with the low cost of foreign products. The global demand for raw materials led to an increase in the percentage of the Indian population working in agriculture. Peasants began

to harvest more of the resources demanded by the market—called cash crops—instead of traditional food crops. Peasants were not always able to afford the cost of food with the money they earned from cash crops. Debt, malnutrition, and famine were common in peasant communities.

Indian Politics and Protest

By the end of the nineteenth century, Indians challenged the policies and economic reforms of the British Raj in greater numbers. While Indians faced severe hardships, including famine, the colonial government had no problem spending massive amounts of money on *darbars* (festivals) and royal visits.

“[I]t cannot be denied that if even half of the vast sum spent in connection with the Delhi [Durbar] had been made over for the purposes of famine relief, it might have been the means of saving millions of men, women and children from death by starvation.”

—Lal Mohan Ghose, president of the Indian National Congress, 1903

In the decades to come, growing resistance to colonial rule would lead to more protests and new political organizations.

Why did the British want to partition Bengal?

At the turn of the century, the colonial capital of Calcutta became the main site of anti-colonial debates among the educated classes and protests among students and workers. Calcutta was located in one of the British Raj's most profitable provinces: Bengal. The British believed it was critical to maintain control over this province and quell anti-British attitudes that might spread to other regions.

The solution of British Viceroy Curzon was to partition (split) the province of Bengal in two along religious lines. The Muslim peasant population in eastern Bengal would be separated from the professional and educated Hindu classes in western Bengal, which included Calcutta. By separating these two groups, Curzon felt that he could prevent the lower classes from joining in the activities of a growing political group, the Indian National Congress (see box) and other debating societies.

“Bengal united is a power; Bengal divided will pull in different ways. That is perfectly true and is one of

the merits of the scheme....

[O]ne of our main objects is to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule.”

—Herbert Risley, British home secretary to the government of India, 1904

Members of the Indian National Congress in Bengal believed that the purpose of Curzon's partition plan was to suppress their activities and divide a unified political front. Meanwhile, some Muslims in Bengal supported Curzon's plan. Bengal's administration had long been dominated by a class of wealthy, educated Hindus. Some Muslim elites viewed partition as an opportunity to gain positions of authority in the Muslim-majority regions in the east.

What was the swadeshi movement?

The British partitioned Bengal on October 16, 1905. Bengal was now administratively divided into two regions, east and west. Outraged members of the Indian National Congress asked those who opposed the decision to join in a boycott of British goods and encouraged people to buy Indian-made goods (called *swadeshi*). The *swadeshi* movement gained a large following among educated professionals, students, and a small section of the working class in Bengal.

The Indian National Congress

In 1885, seventy educated Indian men and one former British official gathered in Bombay to discuss their concerns about British rule. Although most had received an education in London and worked in law, teaching, or business, they were frustrated with the British for excluding Indians from the government. Indians lacked a voice in the top levels of administration and in the local assemblies. The group met every year and became known as the Indian National Congress. In Congress's first two decades, it was more of a debating society than a political party. But by the turn of the century, the Congress took on a new role in mass political organizing. While people of different religions joined the Congress, the majority of its members were Hindu.

“We live, not under a National Government, but under a foreign bureaucracy; our foreign rulers are foreigners by birth, religion, language, habits, by everything that divides humanity into different sections. They cannot possibly dive into our hearts; they cannot [understand] our wants, our feelings, our aspirations.”

—Dr. Rajendralal Mitra's welcome speech to delegates of the Congress, December 28, 1886

From Calcutta, the *swadeshi* movement spread to other areas, in particular to the Punjab, Bombay, and Poona. Although the movement began as a protest against the partition of Bengal, the *swadeshi* movement soon took on the larger goal of gaining greater political representation for Indians everywhere.

“Our object is not retaliation but vindication of our rights, our motto is ‘Defense, not Defiance.’”

—Narendranath Sen, Bengali leader of the *swadeshi* movement, August 7, 1905

Swadeshi activities included bonfires of foreign goods, public rallies, and labor strikes at European companies. Many chose to only wear clothing made out of local *khadi*, hand-spun cloth. Indian groups patrolled the streets and attempted to close down any shops that sold imported goods. In schools, *swadeshi* supporters refused to write notes on foreign paper. Under the banner of the *swadeshi* movement, some extremist groups resorted to violence and terrorism against Europeans and their Indian allies.

Following orders from British officials, the police and army units responded to the *swadeshi* activities by banning demonstrations, shutting down printing presses, imprisoning participants, and prohibiting the movement’s anthem “Bande Mataram” (Hail to the Motherland).

Not all Indians supported the *swadeshi* movement. Some peasants could not afford to buy Indian-made goods. Others disapproved of the *swadeshi* movement’s ties to violence and terrorist activities. Many Muslim elites opposed the movement because they did not want to see partition reversed and lose their newly gained political power.

Why did the British reverse the partition of Bengal?

The *swadeshi* movement lost traction when most of its leaders were either imprisoned or deported. But the spread of calls for political change, especially in Bengal and the Punjab, continued to threaten British rule.

Seeking to end the tense political situation in Bengal, the British announced in December 1911 that partition would be reversed. Bengal would once again be a unified province.

Although the *swadeshi* movement accomplished its main goal, many political grievances remained. *Swadeshi* and other forms of political protest had laid the foundation for new organizations and resistance movements across the subcontinent.

Why was the Muslim League created?

While the *swadeshi* movement was still underway, British Secretary of State for Indian Affairs John Morley announced that the British planned to give Indians some form of representation in the government. Before details of the plan were released, many members of the Indian National Congress hailed the news as a sign of progress.

“Resolved—That this Congress desires to give expression to the deep and general satisfaction with which the Reform proposals formulated in Lord Morley’s despatch have been received throughout the country... it tenders to Lord Morley and Lord Minto its most sincere and grateful thanks for their proposals.”

—Resolution of the twenty-third Indian National Congress, December 1908

A group of wealthy Muslim landholders did not share Congress’s enthusiasm and gathered to discuss their concerns. They feared that Congress, as the largest political party at the time, would win all legislative seats open to Indians. From their view, Congress was an organization with a larger number of Hindu members and, therefore, would not be concerned with the interests of the Muslim upper class. A delegation from this group petitioned Viceroy Minto to reserve a number of seats on legislative councils for Muslims. They argued that reserved seats would ensure Muslim interests were heard. The delegation that met with Minto founded a political party known as the Muslim League.

What were the Morley-Minto Reforms?

In 1909, the British passed the Indian Councils Act. The law, commonly called the Morley-Minto Reforms, added seats for Indians to the provincial legislatures, Executive Council of Calcutta, and London-based Indian Council. The British hoped that these small gains in representation would appease moderate Congress politicians and weaken anti-colonial protests.

The reforms also called for reserved seats and separate electorates for Muslim Indians. The British thought that granting reserved seats would secure Muslim elites as loyal British allies and fuel division among Hindus and Muslims in local elections, thereby weakening Congress. The reforms ushered in a new era of political negotiations, as other minority groups began to petition the government for special rights and representation.

“Division by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organised against each other, and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens....”

—Montagu-Chelmsford Report based on British observations of the past decade, 1918

World War I: Hopes for Change

On August 4, 1914, Britain entered World War I to fight against Germany and its allies. British officials feared that growing protests to colonial rule would interfere with the fight against Germany.

Britain forced its colonies to contribute vast sums of money, raw materials, soldiers, and other resources to support the war effort. Tens of thousands of Indian troops fighting for Britain in Europe and the Middle East lost their lives. The price of imported goods and grains rose to unaffordable levels. Some areas of the subcontinent were hit by famine.

The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League supported the British government’s decision to enter the war. In return for their support, both parties hoped that the

Part II Definitions

Reserved Seats—A number of positions (or seats) in government that can only be held by a specific group (e.g. Muslims or women).

Separate Electorates—In India, this electoral law created separate voter rolls for people belonging to different religions.

Self-governance—The right to vote and have representation in government.

Self-determination—The right to determine the structure of the government without outside interference.

British would offer political change in India, specifically, reforms that expanded Indian participation in politics. Over the course of the war, Congress and the Muslim League became less hopeful.

In December 1916, Congress and the Muslim League met in Lucknow to discuss a united front against British rule. The parties signed the Lucknow Pact, an agreement to present shared political goals to the British. These included the demand for self-governance and expanding the number of Indians with the right to vote. Congress also agreed to the Muslim League’s demand for reserved seats and separate electorates for Muslims in the provinces, but not at the central level.

What was the purpose of Home Rule Leagues?

In 1916, some Indians formed organizations known as Home Rule Leagues across the subcontinent. The leagues petitioned the British to transfer political power at the provincial and central level to Indian hands immediately. The Home Rule Leagues took a more radical stance compared to other political parties.

By 1918, Home Rule Leagues had sixty thousand participants and hundreds of branches. Many published political pamphlets to inform the public about politics. The leagues drew members from regions previously unaffected by the anti-colonial movement

Wartime Recruitment

In desperate need of soldiers, the British Indian Army adopted a high-recruitment strategy during World War I. The army grew to 1.2 million Indian men, of which eight hundred thousand filled combat positions. The British often used bribery and coercion to force Indian officials to recruit a set number of soldiers from specific regions. Large numbers of Indian civilians were also recruited to serve as medics, clerks, and cooks in hospitals on the war fronts. Some Indians volunteered to serve for income or family honor, but not all willingly joined the war effort. Over sixty thousand Indians lost their lives. Many Indian soldiers returned to India with a critical view of British colonialism. They saw the contradiction in fighting on behalf of freedom for others while lacking rights in their own country.

“[W]e Indians are treated like prisoners.... If you ask me the truth, I can say that I have never experienced such hardship in all my life. True, we are well fed, and are given plenty of clothing but the essential thing—freedom—is denied.”

—A wounded Indian soldier describing his experience at a hospital in Britain, December 2, 1915

and involved the middle class in politics for the first time on a large scale. Collaboration between the Home Rule Leagues, Congress, and the Muslim League placed mounting pressure on the British to implement change.

How did the British respond to Indians’ demands for self-governance?

In August 1917, the secretary of state for India, Edwin Montagu, announced that Britain would gradually grant self-governance to Indians.

“The policy of His Majesty’s Government...is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions....”

—Edwin Montagu, August 20, 1917

In July 1918, the British published the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, which listed the ways that Indian participation in government would increase. While Indians would not gain control over the functions of the central government, the British planned to transfer control over education, health, and agriculture in the provinces.

Most politically active Indians felt that the promised reforms were inadequate. Despite this disappointment, Indians sought to gain more political power in the provinces as it was the only level of government open to them.

How did the idea of self-determination influence Indians’ political goals?

Towards the end of World War I, the revolutionary idea of self-determination began to circulate in the Indian press and political pamphlets. While the goal of self-government meant getting Indians on the ballots, self-determination was an even larger goal. It involved obtaining the freedom to structure the entire government, determine India’s international alliances, and make decisions involving war. It was a call for Indians to be fully in charge.

The speeches of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, an international spokesperson for all people’s right to self-determination, were reprinted in Indian newspapers and pamphlets.

“[W]e shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts, for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments....”

—U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, April 2, 1917



Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ggbain-17578.

Indian soldiers in France during World War I.

Indians noted that the British were fighting for democracy and self-determination in Europe, while Indians lacked these same political freedoms. Following a global trend, Congress and the Muslim League pressed for self-determination and sought complete Indian control of the government.

Why did the British refuse to grant self-determination to Indians?

World War I ended in November 1918. Britain kept India under colonial rule on the basis that Indians were “unfit” or not adequately “civilized” to independently manage their own government.

“On what lines can Indians, who have scarcely yet acquired the most elementary notions of self-government, be...effectively educated up to democratic institutions unknown to their past history and regarded by many as unfitted to their temperament?”

—*Times*, a London newspaper,
June 6, 1918

In 1919, the Government of India Act implemented the policies laid out in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report and denied Indians the right to draft their own constitution. Indians were outraged that Britain had rejected the global demand for democracy and self-determination.

A New Era: Mass Movements

Profound disappointment and memories of the hardships endured during World War I cast a gloom across the subcontinent. Rallying cries for self-determination set the stage for a different form of political organizing: mass movements. Hundreds of thousands of Indians joined in anti-colonial protests. If the British would not listen to Indians in the legislature, they would hear them on the streets. Although there were numerous movements and political leaders at the time, in the following section you will read about three particular mass protests that gained attention both at home and abroad.

■ Rowlatt Satyagraha

In March 1919, the British enacted the Rowlatt Bills, which allowed Indians to be detained and tried without jury. Mohandas Gandhi, a well-known activist, seized the moment to launch a public campaign against the Rowlatt Bills and the British government. Gandhi urged the public to adopt *satyagraha*, a strategy of nonviolent resistance.

“It is a fundamental principle of Satyagraha that the tyrant, whom the Satyagrahi seeks to resist, has power over his body and material

possessions, but he can have no power over the soul. The soul can remain unconquered and unconquerable even when the body is imprisoned.

—Mohandas Gandhi, *Young India*,
May 21, 1931

Gandhi hoped that the Rowlatt *Satyagraha* would bring about *swaraj*, self-rule for Indians. He encouraged supporters to participate in a nationwide general strike. Indians held street demonstrations, boycotted imported goods, and risked arrest by provoking officials. The participation of the general public in the Rowlatt *Satyagraha* set in motion the transformation of politics from an elite activity dominated by the upper class to a strategy involving the masses.

What was the Jallianwala Bagh massacre?

Despite Gandhi's emphasis on nonviolent strikes and boycotts, violent riots broke out at the end of March 1919. In the Punjab city of Amritsar, people attacked and killed British officials and civilians, burned down government buildings, derailed trains, and looted shops.

On April 13, 1919, a crowd of villagers from surrounding towns met in the square of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar without realizing that a ban on public gatherings had gone into the effect the previous day. They had no intention to riot or use violence, but the British perceived them as a threat. British General Reginald Dyer ordered his troops to fire upon the crowd. At least 370 Indians were killed and approximately one thousand wounded.

As news of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre spread, Indians launched strikes and riots. In one Punjabi town, British officials ordered bombs to be dropped from airplanes to quell the riots. On April 18, Gandhi called off the *satyagraha* campaign, fearing that he could not control the swell of violence.

■ Non-Cooperation Movement

After the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, protests against colonial authority intensified. In

June 1920, Gandhi launched a new campaign known as the Non-Cooperation Movement. The campaign rallied against three main issues: the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the harsh peace treaty Britain and its allies had imposed on the Ottoman Empire, and the injustices of colonial rule. Gandhi identified these three “wrongs” to unite diverse groups under one movement.

The movement's tactics were similar to those of the *swadeshi* movement of 1905 and included the boycott of foreign goods and the promotion of *khadi* (home-spun cloth). The decision to boycott foreign goods was opposed by Indian traders and merchants who profited from global trade.

Who supported the Non-Cooperation Movement?

The Non-Cooperation Movement attracted a large following from rural regions where peasants had already organized themselves around specific issues, such as oppressive landholders who mistreated peasants with high rents. In urban regions, middle-class participants—students, professionals, etc.—joined the movement by leaving their schools or resigning from their jobs.

Muslim Indians provided some of the most important support to the Non-Cooperation Movement. Specifically, a group of Muslim Indians known as the Khilafat Movement opposed the decision made by Britain and its wartime allies to break apart the Ottoman Empire (defeated in World War I) and create European colonial territories. The sultan (Muslim ruler) of the Ottoman Empire was viewed by many Muslim Indians as the *Khalifa*, or symbolic leader of the global Muslim community.

“We must, therefore, co-operate with our [Muslim] brethren in their attempt to save the Turkish empire in Europe from extinction.”

—Mohandas Gandhi, *Young India*,
June 29, 1921

In September 1920, Gandhi also convinced Congress to join the Non-Cooperation Movement. During this time, Congress's membership grew by tens of thousands.

Why did public opinion turn against the Non-Cooperation Movement?

In February 1922, Indian peasants gathered in the town of Chauri Chaura to protest Britain's unfair economic policies. Police officers fired upon the crowd and arrested some of the protesters. A crowd of peasants then lit the local police station on fire, killing the twenty-two police officers inside.

Indian public opinion turned against the Non-Cooperation Movement due to the violence that broke out. To the outrage of different groups that participated in the campaign, Gandhi called off the movement. The British arrested Gandhi in March and sentenced him to six years in prison for inciting rebellion.

■ Civil Disobedience

When the Great Depression hit the United States in 1928, its effects did not take long to reach India. The prices of India's main cash crops plummeted, in some cases by more than 50 percent. Despite the downturn, the British continued to demand taxes from Indians. In cities, many factory owners imposed longer workweeks and lower wages on employees to make up for their losses in sales.

Indians in every province responded to the dire situation with workers' strikes and "no rent" campaigns in which tenants refused to pay their landlords. Many middle- and upper-class Indians boycotted British goods and foreign businesses. Even wealthy textile business owners, who had often been loyal to the British, began demanding economic protection for Indian industries.

The British feared what they saw as a trend toward more radical forms of protest, including terrorism.

“I have been considerably disturbed by the fact that the millowners opened

a section of their mills on several occasions, and although adequate police protection was given, not a single man returned to work.”

—Bombay governor writing to the secretary of state for India, August 16, 1928

Recently released from jail, Gandhi approached the viceroy at the time, Lord Irwin, with a list of eleven demands ranging from releasing political prisoners to reducing land taxes, which he hoped would rally the support of all Indians. When Viceroy Irwin refused to compromise, Gandhi declared the start of a new mass campaign: Civil Disobedience. Like the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience called on Indians to engage in nonviolent demonstrations and peacefully break laws. Indians were encouraged to boycott British stores and refuse payment of certain taxes.

Why did Gandhi focus on the salt tax?

Gandhi organized a mass demonstration protesting the salt tax—a British-imposed law that made it illegal for Indians to gather and sell salt. The salt tax banned Indians from this source of income and made salt more expensive. Gandhi believed that a protest of the salt tax would unite Indians of all backgrounds. Different movements, such as “no rent” campaigns, pitted the poor and wealthy against each other, but all Indians resented the salt tax.

On March 12, 1930, Gandhi began the Salt March to the coast of Dandi. Gandhi began the march with a few dozen people, but by the time he reached the shore, tens of thousands of Indians had joined in the 240-mile trek. On April 6, Gandhi was arrested and placed in jail. Arrests were one of the many ways the British suppressed the movement.

Who participated in Civil Disobedience?

Tens of thousands of Indians joined in the Salt March and protests during Civil Disobedience. Participation was particularly strong among women and business owners, two groups that were less active in the earlier



Mohandas Gandhi with Sarojini Naidu (far right) during the Salt March. Naidu was an Indian activist, poet, and politician. She was the first woman to serve as president of the Indian National Congress (1925).

“There was no fight, no struggle; the marchers simply walked forward until struck down.... At times the spectacle of unresisting men being methodically bashed into a bloody pulp sickened me so much that I had to turn away. The Western mind finds it difficult to grasp the idea of nonresistance.”

—Webb Miller, U.S. press correspondent, May 21, 1930

Non-Cooperation Movement. The movement also gave momentum to the activities of more radical groups.

At the same time, Muslim participation in Civil Disobedience was low. This was the result of a rise in Hindu nationalist organizations. The Hindu Mahasabha was one such group growing in size and working with the Congress in some regions. As a result of Congress’s focus on Hindu Indians’ concerns, many Muslims joined the Muslim League or parties that focused on local issues.

How did the British government respond to Civil Disobedience?

The British responded to Civil Disobedience as they had in the past—with mass arrests and force. Thousands were arrested, including over two thousand Indian children below the age of seventeen. British police brutally beat peaceful participants in the Salt March. Detention camps were set up in some provinces.

Yet again, Gandhi feared the growing use of violence by activists and the British. He also came

under pressure from the Indian business community, which felt that an extended campaign would prolong the economic depression.

In March 1931, Gandhi reached an agreement with the British. Gandhi would call off Civil Disobedience and the British would release the majority of political prisoners and remove the salt tax.

Many in Congress were upset with the agreement. They questioned how Gandhi could compromise when issues of police brutality were unsettled. The growing number of radicals in Congress felt that Gandhi’s approach was far too moderate.

Negotiating Independence

In the late 1930s, Indians were unified in their demand for an end to British rule, but divided on what the future of India should be. The visions held by the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League clashed in talks over the next decade. The Congress insisted it

should represent all Indians and take over the government. Meanwhile, the Muslim League disapproved of Congress's claim to represent the entire public and fought to be the sole representative of the Muslim minority.

Did the Government of India Act give Indians more political power?

Hoping to preserve a hold on India, a British parliamentary committee crafted a strategic law in 1935—the Government of India Act. The law was intended to appease some groups, while maintaining tight control over the colony.

“After all we framed the constitution as it stands in the Act of 1935 because we thought that way the best way—given the political position in both countries—of maintaining British influence in India.”

—Viceroy Linlithgow reflecting on the 1935 Government of India Act

The act maintained Britain's control over the central government in matters of defense, the railway system, and finances. In the provinces, the act turned over governance to Indian representatives. (British governors could

override legislation and, at any point, abolish Indian-led governments in the provinces.) The act also expanded the electorate from 1 percent to 10 percent of the population. Thirty million Indians were now eligible to vote.

What were the results of the 1937 elections?

Having gained popularity during Civil Disobedience, Congress won the majority of provincial seats and ministries in the 1937 elections. Despite their overall success, the polls showed weak ties between Congress and rural, Muslim communities. None of the reserved Muslim seats were won by Congress representatives.

The Muslim League received less than 5 percent of the Muslim vote. Many eligible Muslim voters—living in the provinces of Bengal and Punjab—instead cast their ballots for regional parties that focused on agricultural reforms and the rights of peasants.

After their poor showing in the 1937 elections, the Muslim League knew it needed to work hard to catch up to Congress. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who had previously been a member of Congress, took on a leading role in directing the future of the party. The League's support of a law that would allow Muslims



Mohammad Ali Jinnah (sitting in the center of the front row) with other members of the Muslim League, Lahore, 1940.

© The British Library Board. (Photo 429/(6)). Used with permission.

to live under Islamic codes, as opposed to colonial law, gained it new and widespread support. By 1939, over three million Indians had joined the Muslim League.

How did World War II affect Congress and the Muslim League?

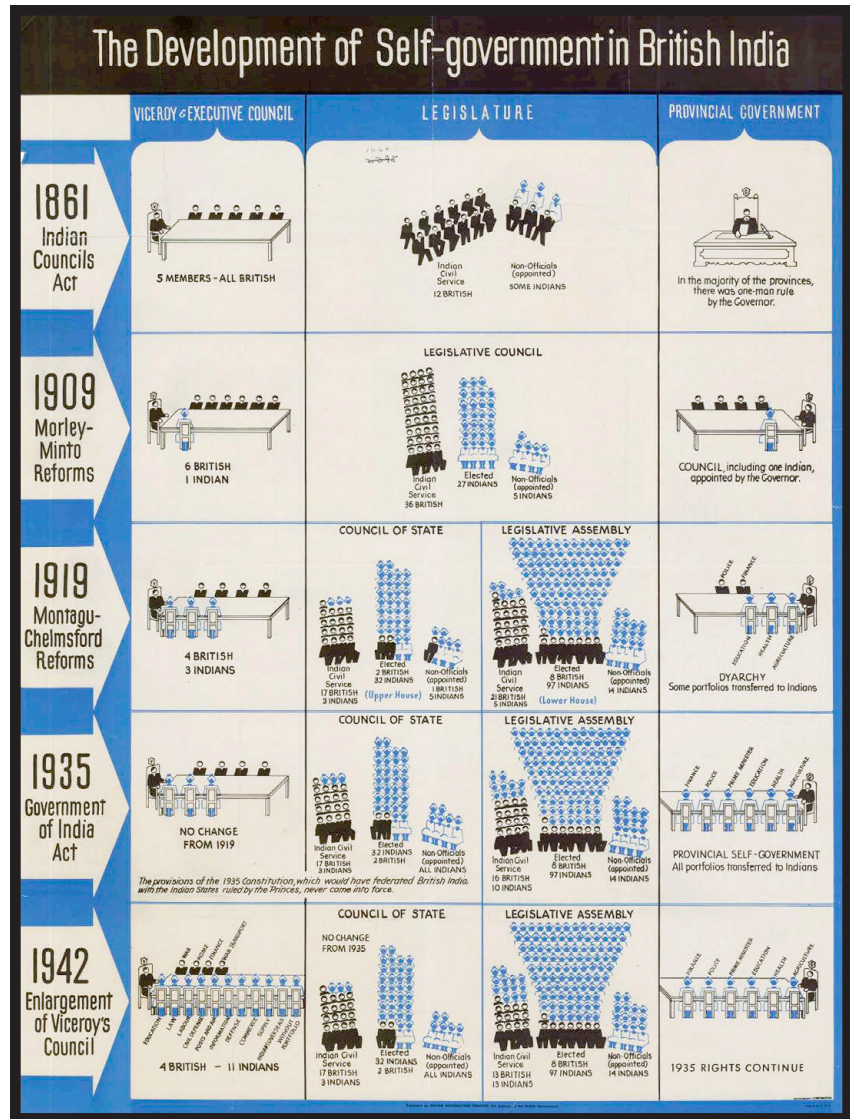
In September 1939, British Viceroy Linlithgow declared that India was at war with Hitler’s Germany. The Muslim League and the Communist Party, another growing political party, supported the decision even though the British did not consult them or other Indian groups. These parties believed challenging the growing threat from Germany, Japan, and Italy outweighed resisting the British Raj.

Meanwhile, the Indian National Congress stated that it would only support the British war effort on two conditions: 1) Indians must be immediately included in the central government and 2) India must unconditionally receive independence after the war.

The British refused to meet these demands. In protest, Congress members in every provincial ministry across the subcontinent resigned. The British quickly passed a new law, the Defense of India Ordinance, to limit the power of the other parties.

What was the Lahore Resolution?

Jinnah viewed Congress’s boycott of the legislatures as an opportunity for the Muslim League to have more influence with the Brit-



A World War II poster published by the British government to show the expansion of Indians’ role in the government of India since 1861. The figures shaded in black depict British members of government and the other figures represent Indians.

ish. This required asserting more strongly than ever before what the Muslim League stood for.

At the Muslim League’s 1940 annual convention in Lahore, a city in Punjab, Jinnah demanded that Muslims be recognized as a nation deserving of its own “homelands.” Jinnah’s declaration became known as the Lahore Resolution. The resolution, although important, was somewhat vague. While Jinnah called for Muslim-majority provinces to become independent states (autonomous territories with their own governments), he

The Pakistan Movement

“We who were a crowd without organization without a platform without a flag and without an ideal have now been brought up by you under one flag, on one platform and [the] wonderful ideal of Pakistan before us.”

—Address presented to Mohammad Ali Jinnah by the Baluchistan Muslim Students Federation

While Gandhi was leading civil disobedience campaigns from the 1920s through the 1940s, some people across the subcontinent were rallying behind another idea—Pakistan. “Pakistan” was first introduced in 1933 as a title for the Muslim community in the northwest provinces of Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (the Afghan border), Kashmir, Sind, and Baluchistan. The Muslim League later promoted Pakistan as a political identity that connected Muslims across all provinces.

People joined the Pakistan movement for different reasons. Some felt discriminated against as religious minorities and did not believe the Congress would protect them after a British withdrawal. Others, who were members of the Congress as politicians and students, were upset with the ways Hinduism had been incorporated into the nationalist struggle against British rule. Lastly, Islamic leaders believed a separate territory was necessary for Islam to survive changes in the subcontinent. With different visions of what Pakistan would look like, men and women organized study groups, public meetings, and published books on the subject of Pakistan. Following the Lahore Resolution, many turned to the Muslim League and Jinnah to argue their stance to the British. In each province (especially in Punjab and Bengal), Muslims canvassed homes encouraging people to support the Muslim League in the pivotal 1945 elections.

In April 1946, the League announced a new vision for Pakistan: the establishment of *one* independent country made up of all the Muslim-majority provinces in the northwest and northeast, including Bengal. This decision was a change from the original Lahore Resolution, which proposed that there might be multiple Muslim states.

was not clear on how this would be achieved. Would each province become a separate state, or would they be grouped together into a single Muslim country? Would some form a union with non-Muslim provinces?

Despite its vagueness, the Lahore Resolution had a powerful effect. Jinnah’s claim that Muslims represented a separate nation, not just a religious minority, showed to Congress and the British that the League expected an equal seat at the table when it came to discussing India’s future.

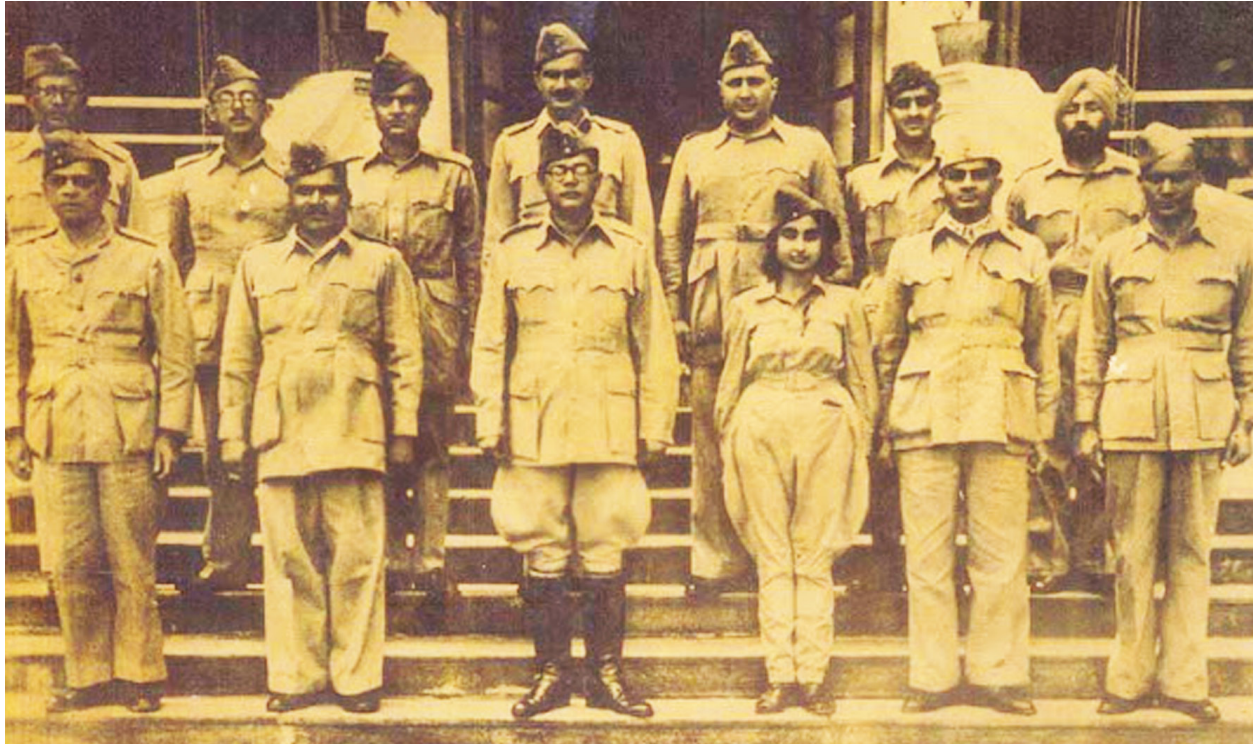
“[N]o constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless... the areas in which Muslims are numerically in the majority...

should be grouped to constitute, ‘Independent states’....”

—Fazlul Huq, premier of Bengal,
March 23, 1940

Why did Churchill send the Cripps Mission to India?

In December 1941, news of the rapid victories of Japan in the nearby British colonies of Malaya, Singapore, and Burma spread across the subcontinent. Refugees from the east brought stories of Japanese brutality and of how British officials fled instead of protecting their war-torn communities. In the province of Bengal, the British destroyed all forms of communication, including boats and bicycles, to prevent these stories from reaching other areas of India.



During World War II, a group of revolutionary Indians formed the Indian National Army (INA). Led by Subhas Chandra Bose from Bengal, the INA fought against British forces. The INA's forty-five thousand members included former soldiers of the British Indian Army and Indian plantation laborers and shopkeepers from Malaya, Burma, and Thailand. Unlike the Quit India Movement, the INA involved a large number of women and Muslims. The INA surrendered to the British in March 1944, but was hailed by the Indian public as a defender of freedom.

By mid-1942, large numbers of Indians believed that British rule would collapse if Japan invaded. If power were to fall into Japanese hands, Indian politicians wanted to be the ones at the negotiating table.

Facing the threat of Japanese invasion in India, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent Stafford Cripps and a delegation of British politicians to seek the cooperation of Indian leaders.

The Cripps Mission promised self-determination to Indians at the end of the war through the establishment of an “Indian union,” a collection of provinces, each with the right to leave the union if it disagreed with the new constitution. In return for this offer, Congress and the Muslim League had to sign an agreement pledging to protect Britain’s wartime interests. Both parties rejected the offer. Congress did not want to wait for the end of

the war to gain power. Jinnah and the Muslim League believed an “Indian union” ignored their demand for Pakistan.

Why did the Quit India Movement gain a large following?

After the failure of the Cripps Mission, Congress organized a massive campaign to liberate India from nearly two hundred years of colonial rule. Jawaharlal Nehru and other members of the Congress leadership launched the Quit India Movement on August 8, 1942. Their strategy included strikes, destroying communication networks, manufacturing salt, and establishing a government separate from the British. After only a few days, the British arrested all national and provincial Congress leaders. As a result, the movement fell into the hands of lower-level members and the general public.

“Here is a mantra, a short one that I give you. You may print it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is ‘Do or Die.’ We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of slavery.”

—Mohandas Gandhi’s speech to the All-India Congress Committee, April 8, 1942

The Quit India Movement developed into the largest threat against British rule since the Great Revolt of 1857. It began in urban areas, where factory workers and students launched strikes, boycotts, and attacks on the police. Rallying cries calling for the British to “Quit India” spread to farmers and laborers in the countryside. Large-scale rebellions broke out in Bengal and other areas, leading to the widespread destruction of government buildings, police stations, telegraph lines, and railways.

In the spring of 1943, the British decided to use the army to suppress the Quit India Movement. By the end of the year, around one hundred thousand people had been arrested and at least one thousand killed.

How did the imprisonment of Congress leaders offer the Muslim League an opportunity?

While the British kept the Congress leadership imprisoned, the Muslim League grew rapidly. The Muslim League gained the favor of the British by opposing the Quit India Movement and preventing its spread to Muslim-majority provinces in the northwest.

At the same time, the Pakistan Movement gained increasing attention and interest from Muslims across India. Muslims defined “Pakistan” in different ways, but most agreed that they wanted the same political and economic rights as Hindus. They also did not want a strong central government run by Congress. Regional parties that had previously distanced themselves from the Muslim League began looking to Jinnah, its leader, for direction.

Why did the British organize the Simla conference?

Even though the British suppressed the Quit India Movement, global changes made Indians’ demands for independence impossible to overlook. When World War II ended, Britain did not have the money to maintain its global empire. It also faced international criticism, especially from the newly formed United Nations, over its colonial empire. The British government knew it needed to leave India.

In the summer of 1945, the British organized a conference in Simla between the viceroy, the Congress leadership (recently released from prison), and the Muslim League. The British offered to establish an interim government run by an almost all Indian executive council. Congress agreed, but the Muslim League rejected the offer because Congress would be allowed to nominate Muslim members to the council. The League wanted to be the sole nominator of Muslim seats.

What was the Cabinet Mission?

In February 1946, revolts broke out in the Indian British Navy. Indian sailors launched a hunger strike against their officers, which quickly spread far and wide. In response to the escalating protests, the British sent another delegation, the Cabinet Mission, to negotiate the terms of a British withdrawal.

The Cabinet Mission held meetings with the leaders of Congress and the Muslim League between March and May 1946. By this point, the parties were set on entirely different goals. The Muslim League wanted Pakistan: a self-governing, independent state made up of the Muslim-majority provinces in the northwest and northeast. Congress rejected the idea of a separate Pakistan and demanded that independence should be given to a united India.

The Cabinet Mission offered a compromise of sorts. Its proposal grouped provinces into three clusters, each with its own government. The plan would keep India united, but give the Muslim League control over policies in the Muslim-majority groupings.

At first, Congress and the League gave their support to the plan. However, divisions surfaced over the grouping of provinces. Congress wanted these groupings to be optional, while the Muslim League saw them as a necessary step for the creation of Pakistan. Congress also desired a stronger central government than the plan provided, while the Muslim League favored more power being given to the group-level and provincial governments. Ultimately, both parties rejected the Cabinet Mission plan.

Why did Jinnah announce the strategy of “direct action”?

In response to the collapse of the Cabinet Mission negotiations, Jinnah called on Muslims to take to the streets. Fearing that negotiations alone would not result in the creation of Pakistan, Jinnah encouraged Muslims to participate in a mass rally on August 16, 1947 known as “Direct Action Day.”

“Today Muslims of India dedicate their lives and all they possess to the cause of freedom. Direct Action is now their only course. Because they offered peace but peace was spurned. They honoured their word but they were betrayed. Now Might alone can secure their Right.”

—Newspaper advertisement in *Dawn* and *Eastern Times*, August 16, 1947

The Bengal branch of the Muslim League declared Direct Action Day a provincial holiday. Both the police and military were given the day off, which created a dangerous situation. Violence broke out that could not be stopped. Some participants in a mass rally looted Hindu-owned shops, attacked and killed Hindus and Sikhs, and shouted the slogan “Larke Lenge Pakistan” (We shall win Pakistan by force). Some four thousand Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs died in just four days. Thousands more were wounded and left homeless. These events became known as the Great Calcutta Killings.

Seven weeks later, violence spread to other areas of Bengal, the southeastern districts of

Noakhali and Tippera. Some five thousand people were slaughtered, primarily Hindus, but also Muslims in large numbers. In late October and November, communal violence (violent conflict between religious communities) spread westward. Entire Muslim villages were destroyed leaving no or few survivors.

Intense fear and paranoia swept over the north, and not just in areas directly hit by violence. News traveled over the radio and refugees poured into cities and towns bringing with them stories of the brutal massacres.

The Transfer of Power

The British knew they could no longer stall. British Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced on February 20, 1947 that Britain would leave the subcontinent by June 1948 and transfer power to the people of India. Much was left to be determined, including how the Indian government would be structured, who would become national leaders, and if all territories in British India would form a unified nation.

Why did Britain want to transfer power to a unified India?

Prime Minister Attlee wanted to transfer power to a unified, central Indian government due to the international politics of the time. Britain was caught in the beginning of the Cold War, a global struggle for political and military domination between communist bloc countries led by the Soviet Union and capitalist, democratic countries led by the United States.

If Britain transferred power to a unified Indian state, then India could become an important ally in the Cold War. But if multiple provinces became independent, the Soviet Union could more easily exert influence over parts of the subcontinent.

Attlee instructed the new viceroy of India, Louis Mountbatten, to ensure that the upcoming transfer of power led to a unified India, or, if necessary, the smallest number of states possible. From Attlee’s perspective, the fight

against communism and Britain's reputation worldwide were at stake.

“[H]is Majesty’s Government will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over on the due date, whether as a whole to some form of central Government...or in some areas to the existing Provincial Governments, or in such other way as may seem reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people.”

—British Prime Minister Clement Attlee,
February 20, 1947

How did Indians react to Attlee’s announcement?

Indian political leaders were stunned by Prime Minister Attlee’s announcement. From the failure of the Cripps Mission to the breakdown of negotiations with the Cabinet Mission, it seemed as if Britain would never announce its withdrawal. But many unanswered questions weighed on their minds. Would there be a single central government? Would some provinces become independent? How would power be shared by political par-

ties? Would the Muslim League be successful in its efforts to create Pakistan, a homeland for Muslims?

Although Attlee’s announcement did not state it explicitly, both Congress and the Muslim League understood that if their parties could not agree on a constitution for a united India, then the British would allow some of the Muslim-majority provinces to separate and form Pakistan.

The All-India Muslim League and Congress turned their attention to the Muslim-majority provinces. The Muslim League hoped that the British would allow all provinces with Muslim-majority populations to separate from India to form Pakistan. Meanwhile, Congress feared that if the British allowed too many provinces to gain autonomy, it would place the unity of the entire subcontinent in jeopardy.

The All-India Congress and Muslim League only had a couple of months to convince the British that their visions for the subcontinent were in the best interests of the people. The already intense struggle between Congress and the Muslim League to win over the favor of British opinion grew even more heated.

1947: Weighing Partition in Bengal

By March 1947, a united, independent India seemed out of reach. British officials and Indian politicians turned their attention to the future of each province. The British not only faced the question of whether provinces on the whole would belong to India or the proposed Pakistan, but they faced the question of whether to split some provinces in two—each side joining a different country. Still another option on the table was the creation of independent countries from individual provinces.

Facing this uncertainty, the All-India Congress and the Muslim League worked at the provincial level to preserve what they could of their original goals for the subcontinent. Congress still hoped to establish an expansive Indian nation out of as many provinces as possible; the Muslim League demanded the creation of Pakistan out of the Muslim-majority provinces.

The Muslim-majority provinces became the focus of negotiations because their future remained the most uncertain. In particular, Bengal, the province that had played a unique role in expanding Britain's economic and political control over the subcontinent, was a concern to British and Indian politicians. Bengal was home to one-third of the subcontinent's Muslim population, many of whom demanded the creation of Pakistan. Other Bengalis opposed the idea of joining a Muslim nation and petitioned for the partition of the province. A third group called for Bengal to become an independent country.

The British feared that their final decision for Bengal could leave behind a legacy of violence and government failure. In the back of their minds were memories of the conflicts that had erupted a year prior. In 1946, the Great Calcutta Killings on Direct Action Day stunned the viceroy at the time, Archibald Wavell, and the British governor of Bengal, Frederick John Burrows. Thousands of people had clashed in Bengal's capital, Hindus against Muslims, as tense debates about the idea of Pakistan spilled from meeting halls out into

the streets. Governor Burrows worried a decision on the fate of the province risked this happening again.

In the summer of 1947, these fears only intensified as Burrows relayed news of the instability in Bengal to top British officials. These officials had already begun to negotiate the future of the province with the All-India Congress and Muslim League. Local Bengali leaders struggled to make their demands clear to negotiators in Delhi.

Who demanded the partition of Bengal?

An upper-class group of Hindus in Bengal, the *bhadralok*, were the most vocal supporters of partitioning the province between India and Pakistan. Ever since the British implemented the 1935 Government of India Act, which gave reserved seats to Muslims and granted peasants the right to vote, the *bhadralok* had seen their power and influence decrease in the province. The Muslim League's sweeping victory in the recent 1946 elections demonstrated to the *bhadralok* that it would be nearly impossible for Hindus to gain back control of Bengal's government.

Many in the *bhadralok* were members of a political party called the Hindu Mahasabha. The Hindu Mahasabha viewed partition as its only chance of regaining influence in the region and called for Hindu-majority regions of Bengal to separate and join India.

“Let us declare today that as the Muslim League persists in its fantastic idea of establishing Pakistan in Bengal, the Hindus of Bengal must constitute a separate province under a strong national government. This is not a question of partition. This is a question of life and death for us, the Bengalee Hindus.”

—N. C. Chatterjee, president of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha, April 1947

What was the Bengal Partition League?

In December 1946, the Hindu Mahasabha formed the Bengal Partition League. The Partition League called for the division of Bengal into two states: a Muslim-dominated East Bengal that would join Pakistan and a Hindu-dominated West Bengal that would join India. The local Congress organization—the Bengal Congress—cooperated with the Hindu Mahasabha in its efforts.

The Bengal Partition League collected evidence of public support for partition to share with the All-India Congress. While the *bhadralok* dominated the movement for partition, support for partition also came from a range of Hindu Bengalis: professionals, religious leaders, students, and wealthier peasants. Over four hundred pro-partition petitions with signatures from the Hindu-majority districts of western Bengal were sent to the office of the All-India Congress. By the spring of 1947, All-India Congress leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel were convinced by the arguments of the Bengal Partition League: the partition of Bengal was the best for maintaining a strong (and mostly) unified India. Congress's opinion was important to Viceroy Mountbatten, who viewed the party's support as key to a smooth withdrawal for Britain.

Why did the Bengal Muslim League want to keep the province unified?

In the 1945-46 elections, the provincial chapter of the Muslim League in Bengal campaigned on two specific goals: the creation of Pakistan and equal rights for peasants in the province. By 1947, these goals remained central to their mission. The Bengal Muslim League rallied even more strongly around the objective of Bengal joining a future Pakistan.

“[T]he Muslims of India would not rest contented with anything less than the immediate establishment of [an] Independent and fully Sovereign State of Pakistan....”

—All-India Muslim League
Resolution no. 2, July 29, 1946

From the Bengal Muslim League's perspective, a separate homeland for Muslims was the only way to ensure that their political and economic rights would never be threatened again by the *bhadralok*. In the decades before the 1935 Government of India Act, the *bhadralok* had dominated politics. In addition, negotiations over the past decade in Delhi had reinforced their opinion that the British favored Congress. Congress control over an independent India appeared likely and could jeopardize the Muslim League's authority in Bengal.

“[W]e cannot any more rely either on the professions of British friendliness or on the hope that the Congress will one day do justice to us.”

—Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Muslim League member and the premier of Bengal,
July 29, 1946

The Bengal Muslim League adamantly opposed the division that the Bengal Partition League was calling for since it would severely weaken the economies of both sides. If the thriving capital of Calcutta was lost to a Hindu-dominated West Bengal during partition, East Bengal would suffer without a strong center for commerce.

Meanwhile, the All-India Muslim League could not afford to inherit smaller, weaker provinces if the founding of Pakistan were to succeed. With the support of its national leader, Jinnah, the Bengal Muslim League appealed to Mountbatten to keep the province unified.

What was the United Sovereign Bengal plan?

Not everyone in Bengal believed that the province's options were either partition or joining a future Pakistan. Instead, some supported an alternative that would give Bengal both unity and sovereignty (the authority to govern itself). Some Bengali members of Congress and the Muslim League crafted the United Sovereign Bengal plan in April 1947, calling for Bengal to become an independent country, separate from both India and Pakistan.

“[L]et us pause for a moment to consider what Bengal can be if it remains united. It will be a great country, indeed the richest and most prosperous in India capable of giving to its people a high standard of living.... It will be rich in agriculture, rich in industry and commerce and in course of time it will be one of the most powerful and progressive states of the world.”

—Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy,
April 27, 1947

Advocates of the United Sovereign Bengal plan held the core conviction that the regional identity of Bengalis outweighed that of religion. They opposed the widespread belief that Hindu-Muslim tensions could be resolved through partition. If anything, a division would lead to more hardship and communal strife. The United Sovereign Bengal plan called for the immediate establishment of a coalition government with an equal number of positions for Hindus and Muslims.

Having proposed the United Sovereign Bengal plan so late in the game, the pressure was on its leaders to gain public support. To oppose the All-India Congress’s hopes for an expansive, united India and reject the All-India Muslim League’s vision for Pakistan was not an easy position to sell to the public in Bengal.

Burrows, the British governor of Bengal, supported the plan and made personal appeals to Viceroy Mountbatten in the hopes of gaining his approval.

Supporters of the United Sovereign Bengal plan approached all-India leaders Jinnah and Nehru to gain their backing. At first, Jinnah accepted the plan for a united and sovereign Bengal. He favored the unity of this Muslim-majority province over partition, even if it did not ultimately belong to Pakistan. Jinnah felt that a sovereign Bengal would have a partnership with Pakistan, as a fellow Muslim-majority nation. But for most Muslim Leaguers, especially outside of Bengal, the idea of an independent Bengal violated their understanding of Pakistan as a single country

All-India Perspectives

The all-India leaders of Congress and the Muslim League had a stake in what happened to the province of Bengal. In 1947, both parties pressured the British and local politicians in Bengal to accept their vision for the province.

	Congress	Muslim League
Overall Objective	To govern a large, Hindu-majority state that covered most of the Indian subcontinent.	To achieve the establishment of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims in the Indian subcontinent.
Reaction to Attlee’s Announcement	Feared that the British might support the creation of Pakistan, which would include the provinces of Bengal and the Punjab.	Intensified efforts to keep Bengal and the Punjab united, as these provinces with their Muslim-majority populations were important to the creation of Pakistan.
Stance on Bengal	Wanted to see Bengal divided into two regions, West Bengal with a Hindu-majority population and East Bengal with a Muslim-majority population.	Opposed the partition of Bengal on all grounds.

with territory in both the northwest and northeast. Ultimately, mounting opposition to the United Sovereign Bengal plan within the ranks of the Muslim League caused Jinnah to waver in his support.

Congress's leader, Nehru, on the other hand, rejected the plan right from the start. He believed a united, sovereign Bengal was just

another form of Pakistan. More than anything, Nehru worried that the creation of a sovereign Bengal would jeopardize his hopes for a mostly unified India that incorporated as many provinces as possible. Along with the All-India Congress, he feared that an independent Bengal would set a dangerous trend for other provinces to follow.

Facing great uncertainty on the question of partition in Bengal, Viceroy Mountbatten and his advisors drafted two different announcements for the transfer of power. One would be used if Bengal were to be partitioned. The other draft would be used if Bengal was likely to remain united. But could the United Sovereign Bengal supporters convince Mountbatten in time for a third statement to be drawn?

On June 3, 1947, Mountbatten planned to announce the terms of British withdrawal, including the fate of Bengal, on the All-India Radio to the Indian public. Throughout May, Indian politicians at the all-India and provincial levels sent their appeals to Mountbatten hoping to influence him. A consensus seemed out of reach, but Mountbatten had to make a decision. Would he give all proposals serious consideration? Could Congress and the Muslim League come to an agreement despite open hostility towards one another? Would Mountbatten divide Bengal for the sake of other important British objectives?

As you examine the different perspectives in Bengal, consider what was at stake for each group. Keep in mind the pressures that local political groups in one province faced from all-India politicians and the public.

Options in Brief

Option 1: Bengal Partition League

Our only hope lies in the partition of our province into two states, East and West Bengal, so that we may join an independent India. A Hindu majority lives in the districts of western Bengal. Why should we be forced to join the Muslim nation of Pakistan? The attacks we have endured over the last decade prove that we cannot trust a Muslim-majority government to protect the interests of Hindus. We must continue to appeal to Congress leaders in Delhi to ensure that the British include the partition of Bengal in their official plan for withdrawal. The United Sovereign Bengal plan is unacceptable to us. Whether Bengal is a part of Pakistan or becomes a separate country does not change anything. As long as Bengal remains unified, we will be forced to live under a Muslim-led government.

Option 2: Bengal Muslim League

Bengal must remain unified if it is to become a part of Pakistan. Partitioning Bengal will only cause violent protests and hardship for Hindus and Muslims. The economies of the proposed East and West Bengal will be ruined once broken off from each other. How can we hope to build a strong government, military, and economy to contribute to Pakistan if our province is severed in two? We are infuriated by the partition demands of the Bengal Partition League. Until Viceroy Mountbatten makes his final announcement, we must campaign with the message that Bengal is not as divided along religious lines as it may appear. The shared history and culture of our region are evidence that partition is the wrong path to take.

Option 3: United Sovereign Bengal

We, as former and current members of Congress and the Muslim League, must resist any and all attempts to destroy our beloved homeland of Bengal. A partition of Bengal will bring us more hardship, loss, and misfortune. We offer a better alternative: a coalition government with an equal number of Hindus and Muslims representing a united, sovereign Bengal. This is the only way to protect the rights of Bengalis, Hindus, Muslims, and other religious minorities alike. We must convince the all-India leaders of Congress and the Muslim League to accept our plan. The governor of Bengal, Frederick Burrows, is trying to persuade Viceroy Mountbatten to align with us. Until a decision is handed down, we must not stop our efforts to grant Bengal unity and sovereignty.

Option 4: Governor Burrows

As the British Governor of Bengal, I have seen with my very own eyes the tensions between Hindus and Muslims. If the partition of Bengal happens, it will create an atmosphere of incredible uncertainty and hostility. We will witness another wave of slaughter similar to the Great Calcutta Killings. Human lives cannot be sacrificed during Britain's withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent. I support the United Sovereign Bengal plan, as it alone can prevent the destruction of Bengal. Mountbatten may think partitioning Bengal will lead to an easy withdrawal, but easy for whom? Not for the people of Bengal. I must find a way to convince Mountbatten to accept the proposal.

Option 1: Bengal Partition League

Our only hope lies in the partition of our province into two states, East and West Bengal, so that we may join an independent India and receive protection from the central government. A Hindu majority lives in the districts of western Bengal. Why should we be forced to join the Muslim nation of Pakistan? Let the Muslim League have their homeland, and let us have ours.

For centuries, the Hindu *bhadralok* governed Bengal. Now, the *bhadralok* have no political voice, while Muslims have guaranteed representation. If we do not join an independent India, our culture, religion, and identity will be slowly erased by the Muslim League. The attacks we have endured over the last decade prove that we cannot trust a Muslim-majority government to protect our interests. Hindu leaders have lost their fair say in politics, as seats formerly designated for Hindus in the ministry and on important government committees have been removed. Calcutta University, a center of Hindu culture and learning, has already been stripped of its role in directing higher education in the province. More losses will come. Even our very lives are at risk! Memories of the violence against Hindu communities in Calcutta and Noakhali weigh heavy in our hearts. Our demand for partition is a demand for justice.

We have shown petitions calling for partition signed by our fellow Hindus to the All-India Congress. We must continue to appeal to Congress leaders in Delhi to ensure that the British include the partition of Bengal in their official plan for withdrawal. The United Sovereign Bengal plan is unacceptable to us. Whether Bengal is a part of Pakistan or becomes a separate country does not change anything. As long as Bengal remains unified, we will be forced to live under a Muslim-led government. Our situation is urgent. We love our homeland of Bengal, but we are willing to sacrifice the unity of Bengal to protect our future.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 1

1. The Muslim League's control of the ministry in Bengal threatens our Hindu culture and identity.

2. We believe India is going to be partitioned to create Jinnah's Pakistan. If this happens, Bengal must be partitioned.

3. The United Sovereign Bengal proposal is a trap to lure Hindus into another Muslim-dominated country.

4. The future of thirty-five million Hindu Bengalis rests in our hands. We are willing to sacrifice our lives to ensure that Hindus are protected.

5. Hindus will not be protected in a Muslim-majority state. Partitioning Bengal is the only way to ensure that our religion, livelihoods, and political rights are protected.

Arguments for Option 1

1. An overwhelming majority of Hindu Bengalis demand partition and are unwilling to live at the mercy of Muslim domination.

2. In Delhi, the Muslim League has been pleading for the protection of the Muslim minority. What about the Hindu minority in Bengal? Our only hope lies in linking West

Bengal with the strong, central government proposed by the All-India Congress.

3. Congress leaders, including Nehru, oppose the idea of a unified, independent Bengal and support partition. We stand behind the All-India Congress.

From the Historical Record

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Bengali leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, date unknown

“I conceive of no other solution of the communal problem in Bengal than to divide the province and to let the two major communities residing here live in peace and freedom.”

N. C. Chatterjee’s presidential address at a conference of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha, April 4, 1947

“Let us declare today that as the Muslim League persists in its fantastic idea of establishing Pakistan in Bengal, the Hindus of Bengal must constitute a separate province under a strong national government. This is not a question of partition. This is a question of life and death for us, the Bengalee Hindus.”

Sardar Patel, all-India leader of Congress, The Hindu, May 11, 1947

“If Bengal and the Punjab provinces as they stand today were put into Pakistan, coercion could come in. Non-Muslims would be forced into Pakistan and there would be a civil war.”

“The Hindus’ Difficult Position: The Leaders’ Call,” a Hindu Mahasabha publication, 1939

“The Hindu people need no reminding that our situation as a community is deteriorating day by day.... In the sphere of politics the mischievous Communal Award [reserved seats] has crippled us, leaving us in a state of helplessness in the Legislative Assembly, and reducing us to slaves in the matter of provincial administration and legislation.... In the social and religious spheres, our position is equally difficult. Hindu women are oppressed, Hindu boys and girls are kidnapped.... [T]he Hindu race is being strangled to death—economically, politically, and culturally!”

Memorandum of the Hindu Mahasabha in Barisal, Bengal, May 17, 1947

“It has become a well-recognised fact that in the interests of the preservation of communal harmony, peace and tranquility, the

creation of a Hindu majority Province in Bengal has become an absolute necessity of Hindu culture and religious, economic and political rights...which have been seriously jeopardized by the Muslim League administration of Bengal during the last ten years....”

Letter from Shyama Prasad Mukherjee to Viceroy Mountbatten, May 2, 1947

“Whether division of India takes place or not, it is essential that the Punjab and Bengal should be partitioned....

“The reasons why Bengal should be partitioned in any case are as follows:—

“1. Bengal’s area is about 78,000 square miles and her population is more than 60 millions. Purely from [an] administrative standpoint, [the] creation of two provinces out of the existing boundaries of Bengal is not only possible but eminently desirable. Bengal today is admittedly one of the worst administered provinces in British India.

“2. Bengal Hindus have suffered terribly during the last ten years on account of communal misrule and mal-administration. In spite of their immense contribution towards the development of the province, they have no voice in its administration. Protection of Muslim interests is not the only minority problem in India.... Hindus have suffered not only on account of communal riots and disturbances but in every sphere of national activities, educational, economic, political and even religious.

“3. Fortunately for Bengal the two major communities live in two compact zones and a separation is rendered easier on this account....

“4. ...This will give an opportunity to both major communities to develop themselves according to their best ability and traditions and the constant rancour and strife between one community and another will gradually disappear....

“[Bengal] should remain within the Union of India. If however India is to be divided on

communal consideration, partition of Bengal becomes an immediate necessity....

“5. There is some loose talk of a sovereign undivided Bengal. We do not understand its significance at all nor do we support it in any way. This will give us, Hindus, no relief whatsoever. Sovereign undivided Bengal will be a virtual [Pakistan]. Who will frame the constitution of Sovereign Bengal? Obviously, this will be left in the hands of the majority of the [Muslim] Leaguers who will be guided by fanatical notions of a separate nationhood and we are not prepared to trust our fate to them. Further we do not in any case want to be cut off from the rest of India and we are not prepared to make any compromises on this issue on any consideration whatsoever.”

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, February 22, 1947

“Hindus will resist with their life and blood any scheme of the perpetuation of slavery which will inevitable if Bengal...is allowed to become a separate independent unit cut off from the rest of India. Nothing can justify the transfer of nearly 35 millions of persons belonging to one community to the perpetual domination of an artificial majority [Muslims] which refuses to identify with the rising aspirations of the entire people.”

Option 2: Bengal Muslim League

In the 1945-6 elections in Bengal, we campaigned for the creation of a Muslim Nation. A vote for the League was a vote for Pakistan. Our sweeping victory gave us control over the ministry and the legislature. It showed us that the people of Bengal look to our party to determine the fate of the province.

Bengal must remain unified if it is to become a part of Pakistan. Partitioning Bengal will not only cause violent protests and hardship for Hindus and Muslims, but the economies of the proposed East and West Bengal will be ruined once broken off from each other. A Muslim-dominated East Bengal without the eastern capital of Calcutta will suffer the most. How can we hope to build a strong government, military, and economy to contribute to Pakistan if our province is severed in two?

We are infuriated by the partition demands of the Bengal Partition League. This hostile group will do anything to have part of Bengal join a unified Indian state, even if that means breaking the province in two. We must also oppose the United Sovereign Bengal plan put forward by some of our very own members. Bengal must join Pakistan with the other Muslim-majority provinces; this has been the goal for years! We support the unity of our province, but cannot accept the demands for a sovereign Bengal.

Until Viceroy Mountbatten makes his final announcement, we must campaign with the message that Bengal is not as divided along religious lines as it may appear. The shared history and culture of our region are evidence that partition is the wrong path to take. As with the other Muslim-majority provinces, Bengal should rightfully join Pakistan. We will stop at nothing to ensure the unity of Bengal and the creation of Pakistan.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 2

1. Muslims are entitled to a separate, independent homeland.
2. The partition of Bengal will jeopardize our most important goal, the creation of Pakistan.
3. The entire Bengal province should become part of Pakistan. Pakistan is the only way to ensure political and economic rights for Muslims in Bengal.

4. The cultural and economic ties of eastern and western Bengal are too valuable; Bengal must remain united.

5. The British continue to favor Congress leaders. We cannot trust any of these politicians to protect Muslims or involve the League in the framing of a united India constitution.

Arguments for Option 2

1. As a Muslim-majority province, the Muslim League should decide the future of Bengal and the question of partition.

2. Partition would be disastrous. The Muslim-majority East Bengal would suffer with the loss of industries and Calcutta to West Bengal.

3. Jinnah opposes the partition of Bengal and has made appeals to the British viceroy. We must follow his lead.

4. We must oppose the partition of Bengal to protect our families and communities.

From the Historical Record

Bengal Muslim League Resolution, May 28, 1947

“[The Bengal Muslim League] stands firmly by the [All-India] Muslim League demand for Pakistan. The committee reiterates its confidence in the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam [Great Leader] M.A. Jinnah and declares that he alone has the authority to negotiate and settle the future constitution on behalf of the Muslims of India as a whole and the Muslims of Bengal shall stand by his decision.”

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, statement published in Dawn, May 1, 1947

“The question of the division of India, as proposed by the Muslim League, is based on the fundamental fact that there are two nations—Hindus and Muslims and the underlying principle is that we want a National Home and a National State in our homelands which are predominantly Muslim and comprise the 6 units of the Punjab, N.W.F.P., Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam. This will give the Hindus their national home and national state of Hindustan which means three-fourths of British India.

“Now the question of partitioning Bengal and the Punjab is raised...as a sinister move...to unnerve the Muslims by opening and repeatedly emphasising that the Muslims will get a truncated or mutilated, moth-eaten Pakistan....

“It is a mistake to compare the basic principle of the demand of Pakistan and the demand of cutting up the provinces throughout India into fragmentation. I do hope that neither the Viceroy nor His Majesty’s Government will fall into this trap and commit a grave error.”

Akram Khan, president of the Bengal Muslim League, May 5, 1947

“I strongly deprecate the suggestion that in order to counter the partition move, Bengal should dissociate herself from other Pakistan areas. Those who talk of a Bengali nation consisting of Muslims and Hindus and a separate

sovereign Bengal upon that basis are clearly playing into the hands of our enemies.”

Akram Khan, May 18, 1947

“I assure every one concerned with the question of partition that Muslims of Bengal will fight against it united like a solid rock....”

Mohammad Ali Jinnah to Viceroy Louis Mountbatten on the draft announcement, May 17, 1947

“The Muslim League cannot agree to the partition of Bengal and the Punjab. It cannot be justified historically, economically, geographically, politically or morally. These provinces have built up their respective lives for nearly a century....

“The Muslim League therefore cannot agree to the partition of Bengal and the Punjab and I do hope that His Majesty’s Government, when they examine this demand will not accept it and that you and His Majesty’s Government will both, in the name of justice and fair play, not submit yourselves to this clamour. For it will be sowing the seeds of future serious trouble and the results will be disastrous for the life of these two provinces and all the communities concerned....

“Calcutta should not be torn away from Eastern Bengal. It has been the heart of Bengal and the Province has developed and grown round this capital of Bengal which was for decades the capital of India before Delhi was established as capital.”

Eric Charles Mievile, the viceroy’s private secretary, to Viceroy Louis Mountbatten, May 20, 1947

“At the end of our talk he [Jinnah] took my arm and said ‘...I beg you to tell Lord Mountbatten once again that he will be making a grave mistake if he agrees to the partition of Bengal and the Punjab.’”

Mohammad Ali Jinnah in an interview with Reuters, May 21, 1947

“The new clamour for a partition that has been started by a vocal section of Hindus in Bengal...will have disastrous results....”

Option 3: United Sovereign Bengal

We, as former and current members of the Congress and the Muslim League, must resist any and all attempts to destroy our beloved homeland of Bengal. The movement calling for the partition of Bengal is gaining ground. We must stop this immediately! If partition happens, will the Bengal Partition League tear our history books in two? Do they not realize that it is impossible for Bengal to be divided in our hearts and minds?

A partition of Bengal will bring us more hardship, loss, and misfortune. Partition will cripple the economies of our districts and weaken the foundations of a post-British government. The British announced that they are willing to offer some provinces autonomy in their official plan for withdrawal. We must be one of those provinces! To be independent will allow us to focus on the concerns of the people in Bengal. Our province is in a fragile position, and to align with either India or Pakistan would cause new waves of violence and protest.

We fear that our demands are not being heard by the all-India leaders of Congress and the Muslim League. We offer a better alternative: a coalition government with an equal number of Hindus and Muslims representing a united, sovereign Bengal. This is the only way to protect the rights of Bengalis, Hindus, Muslims, and other religious minorities alike. Although Viceroy Mountbatten pays little attention to our demands, the governor of Bengal, Frederick Burrows, is trying to persuade him to align with us. Until a decision is handed down, we must not stop our efforts to grant Bengal unity and sovereignty.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 3

1. Hindu and Muslim Bengalis share a common place, a common language, and a common experience under British rule. Religion is not the only thing that defines us.

2. Partition will not magically solve the communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Instead, a coalition government in a sovereign Bengal is the best solution.

3. Hindus and Muslims should have equal access to political and economic rights.

4. Bengal has struggled to balance all-India and provincial politics. Sovereignty will give us the opportunity to govern over issues in Bengal without seeking permission from or compromising with all-India leaders.

5. The Bengal Partition League is only fanning the flames of communal violence with its demand for partition. We cannot support their efforts to destroy Bengal.

Arguments for Option 3

1. A handful of members of both Congress and the Muslim League support this plan. Both sides are at a point where compromise is possible.

2. Partitioning Bengal will escalate fear and tension in the region and lead to mass violence. It is necessary that Bengal remain united to avoid such dire consequences.

3. Sovereignty will strengthen Bengal's position as a political, economic, and cultural player in the Indian subcontinent and in the world.

4. Bengal has always been an economic hub for foreign and domestic trade. To divide the region will cripple the economies of the proposed East and West Bengal.

From the Historical Record

Abul Hashim, secretary of the Bengal Muslim League who supported the United Sovereign Bengal movement, date unknown

“Let the Hindus and Muslims agree to...50:50 enjoyment of political power and economic privileges. I appeal to the youths of Bengal in the name of her past traditions and glorious future to unite, to make a determined effort to dismiss all reactionary thinking and save Bengal from the impending calamity.”

Sarat Chandra Bose, Amrita Bazar Patrika, March 16, 1947

“By accepting religion as the sole basis of the distribution of provinces, the Congress has sent itself away from its national moorings and has almost undone the work it has been doing for the last 60 years.... To my mind a division of provinces on the religious basis is no solution of the communal problem.”

Governor Frederick John Burrows to Viceroy Louis Mountbatten, May 28, 1947

“[T]he Hindus of Bengal are determined not to surrender their ideal of a link with a Hindu centre (and the protection they think that would afford to a Hindu minority) unless they can be guaranteed that they will not be forced under a Pakistan centre and, lacking that guarantee, they demand partition: the Muslims, on the other hand, while not so adamant about joining a North Western Pakistan, are determined not to come under a Hindu-controlled centre. To be independent, for the time being, of either Hindustan or Pakistan is the only platform on which they can unite.... The alternative of partition is politically and economically a deplorable prospect, especially for Eastern Bengal....”

Sarat Chandra Bose to Sardar Patel, May 27, 1947

“[I]t is not a fact that Bengali Hindus unanimously demand partition. As far as East Bengal is concerned, there is not the slightest doubt that the overwhelming majority of Hin-

mus there are opposed to partition, as regards West Bengal, the agitation for [the partition of] Bengal has gained ground because the Congress came to the aid of the Hindu Mahasabha and also because of the communal passions that have been roused among the Hindus on account of the happenings since August last.”

Letter from the Calcutta Students League to Congress, April 30, 1947

“Bengal must be an independent, sovereign, and united State, wherein there will be no distinction of class, creed and religion.”

Abul Hashim to Mohandas Gandhi, date unknown

“Language, tradition and history have created an unshakable bond of unity between the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. We are after all Bengalees in spite of the difference in religion. It is a matter of shame that Pakistan would rule us from a distance of a thousand miles.”

Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Muslim League leader and premier of Bengal, press statement, April 27, 1947

“[L]et us pause for a moment to consider what Bengal can be if it remains united. It will be a great country, indeed the richest and most prosperous in India capable of giving to its people a high standard of living.... It will be rich in agriculture, rich in industry and commerce and in course of time it will be one of the most powerful and progressive states of the world.”

Sarat Chandra Bose, member of the Bengal Congress, speech published in Prabasi, date unknown

“If there is any move to partition Bengal—this beautiful land—another strong movement will start to resist it and all classes of people will join that agitation. We are all Bengalees. Let people of both West and East Bengal live together in amity. We do not want either Bengal or India to be divided.”

Option 4: Governor Burrows

As the British Governor of Bengal, I have seen with my very own eyes the tensions between Hindus and Muslims in the province. In August 1946, I witnessed the devastating amount of violence, hatred, and despair during the Great Calcutta Killings that left up to ten thousand dead in only a couple of days. Seven weeks later, the killings resumed in Noakhali in eastern Bengal. It is my belief that both Muslims and Hindus have suffered; one side is not at fault. If the partition of Bengal happens, we will witness another wave of slaughter similar to the Great Calcutta Killings and Noakhali riots. Human lives cannot be sacrificed during Britain's withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent.

I continue to communicate my opposition to the partition of Bengal to my superior, Viceroy Mountbatten. Mountbatten may think partitioning Bengal will lead to an easy withdrawal, but easy for whom? Not for the people of Bengal. I support the United Sovereign Bengal plan, as it alone can prevent the destruction of the province. I must find a way to convince Mountbatten to accept the proposal. As a separate nation, Bengal would avoid the violence that would surely ensue if the province joined India or Pakistan on the whole or underwent partition.

While a compromise between Hindus and Muslims seems unlikely at the all-India level, I know of individuals in Bengal willing to overcome these grievances and look for a solution. To ensure that Bengal remains unified after the British departure, I have asked the prime minister of Bengal, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, to form a coalition government as a part of the United Sovereign Bengal plan. A coalition government of Hindus and Muslims is the only solution to the communal problem. There is still a possibility that Bengal will be spared from division and find hope in its own independence. I anxiously await to hear news from Delhi. For now, I must not lose faith.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 4

1. Bengal must remain united. It is up to Mountbatten to persuade the leaders of the All-India Congress and the Muslim League.

2. Communal tensions in Bengal are on the rise. An announcement of partition will result in mass violence and thousands will lose their homes, jobs, and even their lives.

3. The only way forward is the formation of a coalition government in Bengal with

representatives from both Hindu and Muslim communities. Without a coalition government, a bloody partition is likely.

4. Britain must take a cautious approach. The international community is waiting to see how we will handle the transfer of power. How we leave India will define our authority in the global community.

Arguments for Option 4

1. Bengal is in a fragile state. I have witnessed the violence on the streets. The police cannot control the situation. To announce a partition will lead to more bloodshed, more refugees, and more hardship.

2. There are Congress and Muslim League party members in Bengal willing to

compromise. A plan for a united, sovereign Bengal has been put forward.

3. Bengal is large enough to form an independent state; however, an isolated East Bengal will suffer disastrous economic consequences including famine.

From the Historical Record

Governor Frederick John Burrows's telegram to Viceroy Louis Mountbatten, May 21, 1947

“Suhrawardy today confirms that there is agreement between himself and Kiran Sankar Roy to form a coalition [ministry with both Hindus and Muslims] in Bengal...and that Sarat Chandra Bose [member of the Bengal Congress] is not opposed.... Both have told me frankly that they consider this proposition offers the only chance of averting grave disturbances in Bengal and that is also my view. I believe there is a good chance that we shall bring this off but [the] time factor is causing me anxiety.”

Minutes from India and Burma Committee meeting, May 19, 1947

“As regards Bengal, the Governor was anxious that the Province should not be partitioned; Mr. Suhrawardy [Muslim League leader and the premier of Bengal] thought that it might be kept united on the basis of joint electorates and a Coalition Government. Mr. Jinnah considered that, with its Muslim majority, an independent Bengal would be a sort of subsidiary Pakistan and was therefore prepared to agree to Mr. Suhrawardy's plan. Congress might also agree, but only on [the] condition that Bengal did not form part of Pakistan and that special arrangements, which were unlikely to be acceptable to the Muslims, were made with the Central Government of Hindustan [India].... The Viceroy had informed the parties, that, if before 2nd June, they were able to reach some agreement...he would embody such an agreement in the statement.”

Minutes from Governors' Conference, April 16, 1947

“HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY began by reiterating his honest assurance that he maintained complete impartiality towards both the Muslim League and Congress. He felt that as a matter of principle it would be preferable to hand over to an unified India, but that equally it would be wrong to force the Muslims to give up Pakistan if sufficient safeguards

for their minority position in an united India could not be provided....

“The crux of the matter was whether it was in the best interests of India to insist on the partition of Bengal or to allow it to be an independent nation. If Bengal was allowed the choice to remain independent, that would be helping towards the “Balkanisation” [the division of a region into smaller groups] of India and going against everything that Congress stood for, and their sacrifice in agreeing to Pakistan.... Therefore, this proposal was likely to have much opposition....”

Minutes from Viceroy Louis Mountbatten's meeting, May 1, 1947

“The Viceroy had to look at the question from an all-India point of view, whereas [Governor Burrows] looked at it from a provincial point of view. The Viceroy could not jeopardise the safety of all India for the sake of one Province.

“HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY said that...he considered it essential to meet Sir Frederick Burrows' views as far as possible while not compromising his position in India as a whole.”

Viceroy Louis Mountbatten's personal report, May 1947

“The more I look at the problem in India the more I realise that all this partition business is sheer madness and is going to reduce the economic efficiency of the whole country immeasurably. No-one would ever induce me to agree to it were it not for this fantastic communal madness that has seized everyone and leaves no other course open....

“Nothing I have seen or heard in the past few weeks has shaken my firm opinion that a United India is by far the best solution of the problem.... But to my great regret it has been impossible to obtain agreement between the leaders of the two main parties either on the Cabinet Mission plan, or on any other plan that would preserve the unity of India.

“The only alternative is partition. But when the representatives of one community demanded the partition of India, the representatives of another community used the same arguments for demanding the partition of those Provinces which contain large minorities. I am opposed to the partition of those Provinces, just as I am to the partition of India herself, and for the same basic reasons; and I did not feel that I could recommend that His Majesty’s Government should take upon themselves the responsibility of deciding on the partition of either India or any of her provinces. I therefore recommended...that this decision should rest with the people of India....”

Epilogue: The Effects of Partition

On June 3, 1947, Viceroy Mountbatten announced over the radio that power would be transferred to two new countries, India and Pakistan. Bengal would be partitioned between the two.

Nehru, Jinnah, and Baldev Singh (a Sikh political leader) spoke after Mountbatten. They gave their support to the upcoming partition and urged the public to respond calmly and peacefully.

“For generations we have dreamt and struggled for a free and independent united India. The proposals to allow [partition]...is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless, I am convinced that our present decision is the right one even from the larger viewpoint.”

—Jawaharlal Nehru, June 3, 1947

“[W]e must...concentrate all our energies to see that the transfer of power is assisted in a peaceful and orderly manner. I most earnestly appeal to every community and particularly to [Muslims] in India to maintain peace and order.”

—Mohammad Ali Jinnah, June 3, 1947

Little did these politicians know that the decision to partition Bengal and the Punjab, another Muslim-majority province, would rip communities apart and lead to terrible violence. The decisions made by a few politicians would have a severe cost for many.

In Bengal, news of the upcoming partition spread through word of mouth, the radio, newspapers, and government pamphlets. It took weeks for the news to reach certain rural

communities. Unanswered questions left many fearful and panicked. Which parts of Bengal would become part of India? Which parts would go to Pakistan? Would individuals or neighborhoods play a role in the decision making?

How did Bengali politicians respond to the partition announcement?

The Bengal Partition League was pleased with the news, feeling that its worst fear had been avoided—becoming part of

Pakistan. The Bengal Partition League shifted its focus to ensuring that as many Hindu-majority neighborhoods as possible were included on the Indian side of the boundary. For the Bengal Muslim League, the opposite was true; having lost the fight to build Pakistan on the foundation of a unified Bengal, the group now argued to have as many Muslim-majority areas as possible become part of Pakistan.

United Sovereign Bengal supporters were deeply disappointed by the news. The decision to partition Bengal crushed their hopes for harmony and a multi-religious government. Meanwhile, Governor Burrows realized that his final weeks serving in the Bengali government would be dedicated to overseeing partition, an event he had desperately tried to prevent.

What were the Boundary Commissions?

On June 30, the Bengal Boundary Commission was formed to figure out quickly the specifics of partitioning Bengal. (The Punjab Boundary Commission was established on the same day.) Dividing the territories of Bengal and Punjab between India and Pakistan was no simple task; it involved deciding which country would have specific neighborhoods, districts, roads, railways, schools, fields, etc.

“To my great regret it has been impossible to obtain agreement [on]...a plan that could preserve the unity of India.”

—Viceroy Louis Mountbatten,
June 3, 1947

The Broadlands Archives, University of Southampton. Used with permission.



All-India leaders meeting with Viceroy Mountbatten on June 3, 1947 to accept the transfer of power plan. Pictured clockwise at the table: Abdur Rab Nishtar, Baldev Singh, Acharya Kripalani, Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Louis Mountbatten, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and Liaquat Ali Khan.

Cyril Radcliffe, a British judge who had never stepped foot in the subcontinent before, headed both commissions. The other members were judges nominated by Congress and the Muslim League.

What were the flaws of the Boundary Commissions?

The key document used by the Boundary Commissions was the All-India Census from 1941. Even though it was conducted only six years before, the census did not reflect the large-scale migrations that had occurred in the past years. In the wake of the extreme communal violence (conflict between religious groups) starting in August 1946, many Bengali and Punjabi towns and cities had transformed in terms of population size and the ratio of Hindus, Muslims, and other religious groups. Populations had shifted as people predicted partition and attempted to move to the “right” side of the future India-Pakistan boundary. The Boundary Commissions ultimately relied on outdated records of the population to complete their assignment.

The Boundary Commissions also did not include the public in the decision making. At no point were drafts of the partition plan

released. The commissions received massive amounts of telegrams, phone calls, letters, and petitions from individuals, neighborhoods, and political groups seeking to influence the partition plans. Most appeals were not even read, but a few sent by Congress and the Muslim League changed which neighborhoods fell on either the Indian or Pakistani side of the partition line.

What else did the Boundary Commissions divide?

While the Boundary Commissions dealt with the division of territory, other resources also had to be split between India and Pakistan, including typewriters, filing cabinets, library books, military hardware, and desks. Eighty percent of these moveable goods would go to India and 20 percent to Pakistan. At the provincial level, Bengali and Punjabi politicians received the right to determine how to best split their administrations in two. In Bengal, Governor Burrows oversaw this process.

Government employees were given the option to either serve in the Indian or Pakistani administration, and had six months to make up their minds. People in the military service faced a similar choice. Starting in late July,

trains traveled across Bengal and Punjab bringing government officials to their new offices. In Karachi, the future capital of Pakistan, officials worked out of tents and barracks and faced language barriers with colleagues that had come from different parts of the subcontinent.

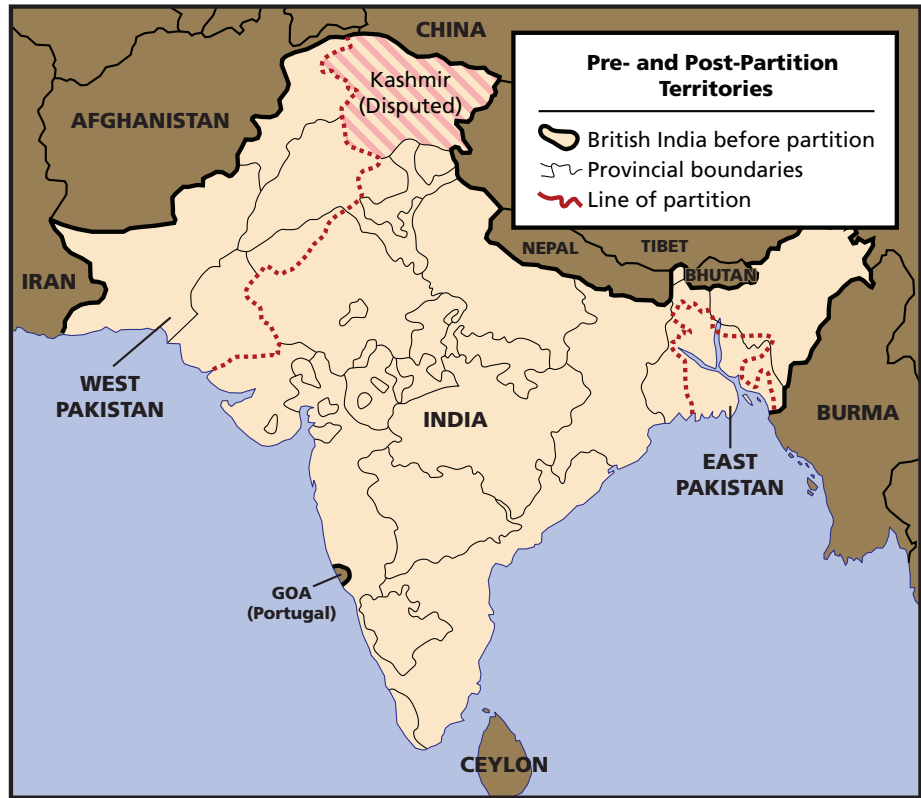
How was the “birth” of India and Pakistan declared?

The partition lines were finalized on August 12, 1947 but Mountbatten did not want these details to interfere with celebrations tied to the “birth” of India and Pakistan. Therefore, the boundaries were kept from the public for several days.

On August 15, one minute after the stroke of midnight, India and Pakistan came into existence. Jawaharlal Nehru declared the birth of India and delivered a speech on the quest for freedom. Nehru would serve as the first prime minister of India.

“At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.... Before the birth of freedom we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now.”

—Jawaharlal Nehru, evening of August 14, 1947



Partition created two new countries: India and Pakistan. Pakistan had two regions, West Pakistan (Baluchistan, part of the Punjab, Sind, and the North West Frontier Province) and East Pakistan (East Bengal and part of Assam).

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan’s first governor-general (the highest political title at the time), gave an emotional speech on achieving a Muslim nation.

“It is with feelings of great happiness and emotion that I send you my greetings. August 15 is the birthday of the independent and sovereign State of Pakistan.... Muslims of [the subcontinent] have shown to the world that they are a united nation, their cause is just and righteous which cannot be denied.”

—Mohammad Ali Jinnah, August 15, 1947

What was the Radcliffe Award?

Within days of the formation of India and Pakistan, the details of the partition plan were revealed on August 17. The plan was called the Radcliffe Award. The award divided

Bengal into a Hindu-dominated West Bengal and a Muslim-dominated East Bengal. West Bengal went to India, and East Bengal now belonged to Pakistan. Punjab was divided similarly; sections of the province were given to both countries. As a result, Pakistan had two regions, East Pakistan and West Pakistan, divided by some 1,100 miles (see map).

“This last week of British rule in India has been the most hectic of any. We have been working longer hours and under more trying conditions, and with crises of differing magnitudes arising every day, and sometimes two or three times a day.... I paid my farewell visit to Karachi, and took part in unbelievable scenes on the day of the transfer of power in Delhi. The issue which has created the greatest and most serious crisis to date has been the awards of the Boundary Commissions....”

—Viceroy Louis Mountbatten,
August 16, 1947

The struggle to end British rule had succeeded, but new concerns had to be confronted. It had been impossible to completely divide Hindu and Muslim communities from one another in Bengal and Punjab. In the decades following the Radcliffe Award, partition would cause hardship and conflict between and within India and Pakistan.

Shifting Boundaries: Migration and Violence

Following August 1947, fear, confusion, and rumors of violence spread like wildfire from Karachi to Delhi and Calcutta. People wondered what the dividing lines would mean for their lives. In the western Muslim-majority province of Punjab, death, loss of property, rape, and abduction occurred at levels unseen before. News of escalating violence in the region spread throughout the subcontinent.

“[W]e knew a family of artists who were very close to us. On 11 or 14 August they sent a message to my father: ‘Uncle. Don’t stay at night. If you stay you will be killed.’ So we left Lahore and Pakistan at that time.”

—Tilak Raj Betab, reflecting on the experience of partition as a sixteen-year-old living in Lahore, 2010

In Bengal, the lines of partition left 5.3 million Muslims in the new Indian region of West Bengal (25 percent of the residents) and eleven million Hindus in the Pakistani region of East Bengal (28 percent of the residents). Their status as religious minorities mattered more than ever before. Some feared the government would not offer them protection. Others felt the burden of expectation to leave and make room for the people who “belonged.”

Why did people leave their homes?

By train or by foot, religious minorities from diverse backgrounds—farmers, school children, wealthy business owners, and university students—crossed the borders for a new life in either Pakistan or India. Fearing for their safety, they felt they had no other choice but to pack what belongings they could bring and abandon their homes. Millions of religious minorities would cross the borders in both directions in the decades to come.

Not all migration was orderly and planned. As stories poured in of Muslims being murdered in Delhi, and Hindu and Sikh businesses being looted in Pakistan’s new capital, Karachi, hundreds of thousands of religious minorities fled and waited in newly formed refugee camps to leave for India or Pakistan. Aboard trains with military guards, migrants still became targets of murder, rape, theft, and abduction. The violence these religious minorities had tried to escape was often unavoidable on their journeys.

In Bengal, religious minorities from the middle and upper class were among the first to

Religious Diversity and Trust

Although communal violence marked the decades following partition, many Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and others still viewed their community members as friends and neighbors, regardless of religion.

“I was brought up in a multi-faith background. When it was Eid [a Muslim holiday marking the end of Ramadan], we were invited to Muslim homes.... [W]e were invited to the Hindu’s homes, for Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. When it was Christmas, they all came round to our place to taste my mother’s Christmas cake.”

—Reginald Massey, who was born in Lahore and was fifteen in 1947. A family friend, who was Muslim, drove the Massey family to India to escape the violence in Lahore.

leave. In some cases, wealthy Hindu and Muslim families arranged to switch homes. Others migrated because they lived close to the border between East Pakistan and West Bengal or had family who could help them adjust on the other side. People also considered whether they would be able to find work in a new community. However, as families heard word of horrifying violence across the subcontinent, they considered little else other than survival in making their decision to leave home.

What was life like for religious minorities who stayed behind in Bengal?

Even as millions of religious minorities left, millions more stayed behind to face post-partition life in West Bengal, East Pakistan, and other parts of the subcontinent. This was not always by choice, as the majority who stayed could not afford the high costs of travel and relocation. Others felt that it was a greater risk to give up their jobs than to face potential communal violence.

In **West Bengal (India)**, Muslim minorities faced violence and intimidation from community members and local authorities. For example, one district compiled a list of thirty thousand “undesirable Muslim families,” who became the targets of harassment. The Indian government’s response to these injustices was often contradictory—on the one hand claiming to uphold “citizen rights against aggression,” and on the other, claiming they would “not tolerate the existence within [India’s] borders of disloyal elements.”

Fearing for their safety, Muslims in West Bengal tried to avoid provoking their Hindu neighbors. Some members of the Muslim League joined the Congress to save their political careers. Meanwhile, many religious communities chose not to participate in Islamic rituals and public festivals for the first time in decades.

In **East Pakistan**, violence, harassment, and theft plagued many Hindu families. Middle and upper-class Hindus found it difficult to suddenly be treated as inferior members of society when compared with Muslims. For example, Hindu families were appalled that Muslim men with less wealth and social standing approached Hindu women for marriage. Some who had chosen to stay later migrated due to this shift in the relationship between Hindus and Muslims.

Why was housing segregation between religious groups more common after partition?

Housing segregation along religious lines became increasingly widespread after the partition announcement. Many minorities left their multi-religious neighborhoods for safer areas, or built fences and barricades around their homes. For example, the East Pakistani capital of Dacca was a Hindu-majority city prior to partition, but by 1950, over six thousand Hindu families had abandoned their homes. By 1951, the Muslim population in Calcutta had dropped by 50 percent.

Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.



Refugees traveling by train to Punjab, Pakistan.

“Sukea Street, Colootola, Fenwick Bazar...used to contain mixed population of Hindus and Muslims before the riots.... Between December 1950 and March 1951 almost all these deserted areas were...filled up by large settlements of Displaced Hindus from East Bengal.... They finally sorted out no more in mixed but clear-cut blocks of communities.”

—Census of India, 1951

Government officials in India and Pakistan did not discourage segregation according to religion. For example, local officials in India designated specific zones (called *mohallas*) for Muslim families to live. Safety was often used as a reason for sectioning off religious minorities, but it also signalled to minorities that they were not welcome.

Some refugees who had initially fled decided to return to their former communities even though they would be targeted as religious minorities. Some were unable to reclaim their homes, which were now occupied by refugees. In West Bengal, Congress volunteers patrolled neighborhoods to ensure that Muslim families did not return.

“My father died in 1958. He was still waiting to move back to his own house. He said: ‘this cannot happen that somebody can take away my property, my house, my land, everything.’”

—Mohammed, whose family migrated to Pakistan from eastern Punjab when he was eight years old, 2010

The issue of property control plagued cities across the subcontinent as homes were increasingly marked for Hindus or Muslims only, regardless of who had previously lived there.

Why were refugee communities segregated from the rest of society?

Large numbers of refugees were not welcomed in India and Pakistan even though they had traveled to become a part of the religious majority. Villages and cities were overwhelmed by the flow of people and longtime residents discriminated against refugees for taking up space and jobs.

“[A]ble bodied immigrants [that] do not accept offers of employment or rehabilitation facilities without justification should be denied gratuitous relief even if they may be found starving....”

—Memo No. 800 by secretary of the Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Government of West Bengal, sent to district officers, February 15, 1949

In Bengal, the central Indian and Pakistani governments gave little attention or money to curb the growing population of refugees. As a result, Bengali refugees had to fend for themselves or were forced to take jobs that could not sustain them. Many were told to move to the outskirts of towns. Outside of Calcutta, hundreds of squatter colonies were created by homeless refugees who could not find housing (see box). The most vulnerable—disabled, elderly, and children—remained in government refugee camps for years, unable to integrate into society.

How did Punjab, a Muslim-majority province in the west, experience partition?

The trends of violence, migration, and devastation in Bengal took an even more intense turn in the province of Punjab. The western part of Punjab along with two neighboring provinces formed West Pakistan, while the eastern part of Punjab joined India. Despite the focus given to Bengal in the years leading up to partition, the boundary decisions of 1947 turned all eyes to West Pakistan. As violence spiraled out of control, the Indian and Pakistani governments agreed upon a complete transfer of the Hindu and Muslim populations between East Punjab (India) and West Punjab (Pakistan). Ten million Punjabis were left with no choice but to leave their homes and cross the border.

“[M]uslims from regions other than East Punjab [should not] leave.... The Partition of the country was done on the principle that minorities would remain in their regions and the governments would provide protection to all its citizens, and give them equal rights.”

—Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistani prime minister, October 17, 1947

Independence

Although Nehru and Jinnah described the establishment of India and Pakistan in terms of “independence” and “freedom,” complete independence was not formally achieved until years later. In 1947, the British granted these countries “dominion status.” Dominion status meant that the British still governed the international affairs of both countries, while Indian and Pakistani leaders controlled domestic policy. Neither Gandhi nor Jinnah lived to witness full independence. Gandhi was assassinated in January 1948 by a Hindu nationalist and Jinnah died in September 1948 after a long illness.

In 1950, India enacted its first constitution, which made it an independent and democratic republic. In 1956, Pakistan adopted its first constitution, which declared it an independent, Islamic republic. Still, most Indians and Pakistanis continue to celebrate August 1947 as the month they gained independence.

Calcutta’s Slums: A Consequence of Partition

By the late 1970s, refugees from East Pakistan had populated over seven hundred squatter colonies in the land surrounding Calcutta, making the metropolis the most densely populated city in the world. The majority of refugees settling outside of Calcutta were illiterate, lower-caste Hindus. Jobs available to refugees in the city paid low wages, which meant families needed two sources of income. For the first time, many women from these communities entered the workforce, filling temporary positions in textile sweatshops or as house servants. Other women found jobs as teachers and bank tellers. By 1961, the ratio of women to men in the city had grown to 651 women per one thousand men (up from 456 in 1941).

To compete with workers in the city, refugees in squatter colonies insisted on learning how to read and write. As a result, literacy rates in many of Calcutta’s slums are higher than the national average for both men and women to this day. Nevertheless, residents experience discrimination, are often underpaid, and suffer from poor health and living conditions.



Ashfaq Mahmud, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Part of a mural depicting events during the 1952 Language Movement in East Bengal.

What challenges did India and Pakistan face after independence?

Having gained political freedom, people in India and Pakistan held expectations for rising standards of living, economic prosperity, and security. The Indian and Pakistani governments struggled to meet these expectations alongside the growing refugee crisis, territorial disputes, and food scarcities.

Rapid population growth and urbanization (the trend of people moving to cities) in both countries also placed strains on the governments to meet the needs of the public for housing, schooling, and healthcare. In rural agricultural regions, population growth made arable land scarce. Some individuals and families considered moving to more prosperous

regions within the subcontinent or abroad for better opportunities.

Why did some South Asians move to Great Britain?

Following partition, large numbers of Indians and Pakistanis moved to Great Britain seeking a better life, employment, or distance from their partition-torn communities. In the late 1940s, Britain was still reconstructing its economy after the devastation of World War II and needed a larger labor force. Indian and Pakistani migrants, often men, filled factory jobs and other low- or semi-skilled positions. Bengalis and Punjabis made up large numbers of these migrants and most settled in urban areas. Today, Indians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis,

1971: East Pakistan Becomes Bangladesh

Faced with a country divided into two parts—east and west—the Pakistani government made efforts early on to unify the nation under similar religious and linguistic customs. The central administration was dominated by officials from West Pakistan who wanted East Pakistanis to value Islamic tradition over their Bengali culture. But many in East Pakistan wanted to maintain their regional identity and resisted the central government’s heavy hand in local affairs.

In 1948, the Pakistani government passed a law making Urdu (a form of Hindustani) the national language. Many people, particularly students, in East Pakistan were outraged that the Bengali language was not also recognized. The Language Movement began in Bengal to reverse this decision, and on February 21, 1952, six students were killed during protests against the government. (Today, February 21 is known as Martyrs’ Day.)

The Language Movement was the first in a series of protests against the central government’s attempts to assimilate East Pakistanis into the culture of West Pakistan. In 1971, a civil war began between the two sides. During the war, soldiers from West Pakistan asked people in East Pakistan, “Are you a Muslim or a Bengali?” to determine who was loyal. After nine months of military occupation and over three hundred thousand deaths, East Pakistan declared independence. The new country was named Bangladesh.

and Sri Lankans make up 5.3 percent of the population in Britain.

Legacies of Partition

Partition is both a historical event and a process that continues to this day. Debates regarding national identity and the rights to specific territories along the Indian-Pakistani border that originated in 1947 remain. The following two examples highlight the ways in which partition still affects everyday life in the subcontinent.

■ Passports and Nationality

In 1952, the Indian and Pakistani governments agreed to implement a passport system to manage travel between the two countries. These passports listed the nationality of the passport holder. New rules in both India and Pakistan were passed to determine who qualified as “Indian” and who was considered “Pakistani.”

Meeting nationality requirements, however, was not a simple task for communities torn apart by partition. How would refugees and other individuals with relatives on both sides of the borders fit neatly into one nationality or the other? Would religious minorities be treated any differently when it came to citizenship?

In some cases, people who had fled across one of the borders to escape violence were forced to claim the nationality of the country in which they were refugees. Many were unable to return home since they were viewed as foreigners. Discrimination by local administrations prevented some religious minorities from gaining citizenship in the place they had lived



Baramula, Kashmir (pictured above) was destroyed during a three-day battle for territory between India and Pakistan in October 1947.

UN Photo # 150324.

their entire lives. And others were assigned the title of “undefined status” because government officials—judges, police, etc.—could not agree on where some people belonged.

These dilemmas of nationality remain in effect. International boundaries are tightly patrolled and visas are hard to obtain. Relatives remain separated from one another due to their different nationalities and some people still lack citizenship.

■ Kashmir

When the plans for partition were first announced, over five hundred autonomous princely states still dotted the subcontinent (see box on page 9 for overview of princely states). The British pressured the rulers of each princely state to become part of the country they shared a border with. This decision was complex for Kashmir, a princely state that shared borders with both India and Pakistan.

At first, the leader of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, held off on signing an agreement with either nation. Kashmir was a Muslim-majority region, but Singh felt strong ties to India as well. In October 1947, Singh could no longer delay a decision. Tribesmen from the west had crossed the border into Kashmir and headed toward the capital to claim the region for Pakistan. Fearful of losing his authority, Singh turned to India for military assistance. In exchange for troops, it was agreed that Kashmir would join India. Clashes soon broke out between Indian and Pakistani troops in Kashmir, marking the first armed conflict between the two nations.

“Kashmir remains the site of the world’s largest and most militarized territorial dispute....”

—CIA World Factbook, 2013

On October 31, 1948 the United Nations negotiated a cease-fire agreement and declared a boundary, later named the Line of Control, to divide Kashmir into areas governed by each country. Since then, three more wars have been fought over the disputed territory. Nuclear tests in both countries [India (1974) and Pakistan (1998)] have heightened tensions. To this day, India and Pakistan remain bitterly locked in conflict over the region. This has come at a cost to the people of Kashmir, who are caught between both sides. Electoral fraud, war, and human rights abuses plague the people of this former princely state.

Conclusion

Partition was one of the most catastrophic events of the twentieth century. Never before in recorded history or since have so many people been forced to leave their communities in such a short amount of time. Some twelve million people moved across new borders, one million died, and roughly seventy-five thousand women were victims of sexual violence. The human cost of partition cast a shadow over the subcontinent that continues to influence Indian-Pakistani-Bangladeshi relations today.

“I looked at what the large political facts of this history [of partition] seemed to be saying. If I was reading them right, it would seem that Partition was now over, done with, a thing of the past. Yet, all around us there was a different reality: partitions everywhere, communal tension, religious fundamentalism, continuing divisions on the basis of religion.... All this seemed to emphasize that Partition could not so easily be put away, that its deep, personal meanings, its profound sense of rupture...still lived on in so many people’s lives.”

—Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, 2000

In the history of the subcontinent, the long-awaited end of British rule and devastation of partition are entangled stories. The Indian political leadership and British colonial authorities who ultimately decided upon partition made a miscalculation; they did not anticipate the terror that filled the immediate months after August 1947. Meanwhile, the general public witnessed horrors and millions were forced to become refugees torn away from their ancestral homes. For many, celebrating their newly gained freedom was next to impossible in the midst of widespread communal violence and uncertainty.

Today, people on the subcontinent grapple with how their history will be retold, from the Mughal Empire to the present day. While some work to rewrite a history long dominated by the British perspective, others hurry to record the stories of those who experienced partition before they pass away.

Supplementary Resources

Books

Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2011). 270 pages.

Chatterji, Joya. *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). 324 pages.

Gilmartin, David. *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989). 258 pages.

Khan, Yasmin. *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). 272 pages.

Metcalf, Barbara D., and Thomas R. Metcalf. *A Concise History of Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). 360 pages.

Talbot, Ian and Gurharpal Singh. *The Partition of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). 224 pages.

Zamindar, Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali. *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). 304 pages.

Online Resources

Council on Foreign Affairs: Crisis Guide: Pakistan <http://www.cfr.org/interactives/CG_Pakistan/index.html#/overview/> Provides a multimedia presentation of Pakistan's history and future political and economic prospects.

PBS: The Story of India <<http://www.pbs.org/thestoryofindia/>> A six-part series that traces the history of the subcontinent from 60,000 BCE to the present. Each episode of the series is paired with a timeline, photographs, a map, and lesson plans.

PBS Newshour: India and Pakistan—60 Years of Independence <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/asia/partition/index.html> Provides an overview of the legacies of partition. Also includes an interactive political timeline dating back to 1757.

The National Archives (United Kingdom): The Road to Partition 1939-47 <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/topics/the-road-to-partition.htm>> Features over forty primary sources from the time period leading up to partition including memos, political cartoons, and speeches.

Indian Independence and the Question of Partition

Indian Independence and the Question of Partition examines the era of British colonialism, Indians' struggle for independence, and the legacies of the 1947 partition.

Indian Independence and the Question of Partition is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

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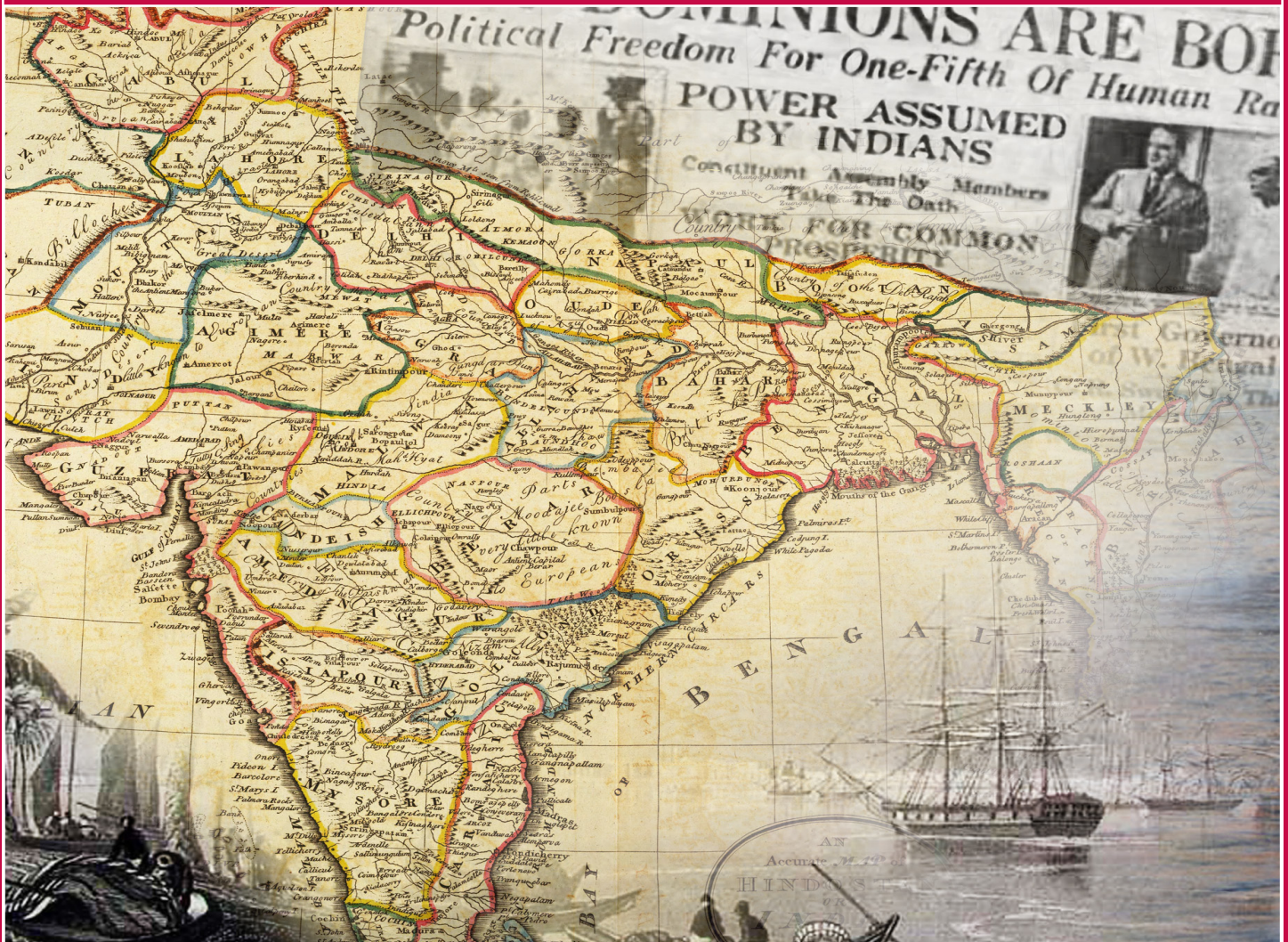
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Susan Graseck

Administrative Manager
Kathleen Magiera

Communications & Marketing
Jillian McGuire Turbitt

Curriculum Development Director
Andy Blackadar

Curriculum Writer
Susannah Bechtel

Curriculum Writer
Sarah Massey

Professional Development Director
Mimi Stephens

Program Associate
Leah Elliott

Program Associate
Maya Lindberg

Video & New Media Producer
Tanya Waldburger

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The Choices Program develops curricula on current and historical international issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

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Professor of History
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Professor of History
North Carolina State University

Sumit Guha
Professor of History
Rutgers University

John C. Hudson
Director of the Geography Program
Associate Director, Environmental Sciences Program
Northwestern University

Ayesha Jalal
Professor of History
Tufts University

Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar
Professor of History
Brown University

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The Watson Institute for International Studies was established at Brown University in 1986 to serve as a forum for students, faculty, visiting scholars, and policy practitioners who are committed to analyzing contemporary global problems and developing initiatives to address them.

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The Choices Approach to Historical Turning Points

Choices curricula are designed to make complex international issues understandable and meaningful for students. Using a student-centered approach, Choices units develop critical thinking and an understanding of the significance of history in our lives today—essential ingredients of responsible citizenship.

Teachers who use Choices units say the collaboration and interaction in Choices units are highly motivating for students. Studies consistently demonstrate that students of all abilities learn best when they are actively engaged with the material. Cooperative learning invites students to take pride in their own contributions and in the group product, enhancing students' confidence as learners. Research demonstrates that students using the Choices approach learn the factual information presented as well as or better than those using a lecture-discussion format. Choices units offer students with diverse abilities and learning styles the opportunity to contribute, collaborate, and achieve.

Choices units on historical turning points include student readings, a framework of policy options, primary sources, suggested lesson plans, and resources for structuring cooperative learning, role plays, and simulations. Students are challenged to:

- understand historical context
- recreate historical debate
- analyze and evaluate multiple perspectives at a turning point in history
- analyze primary sources that provide a grounded understanding of the moment
- understand the internal logic of a viewpoint
- identify the conflicting values represented by different points of view
- develop and articulate original viewpoints
- recognize relationships between history and current issues
- communicate in written and oral presentations
- collaborate with peers

Choices curricula offer teachers a flexible resource for covering course material while actively engaging students and developing skills in critical thinking, persuasive writing, and informed citizenship. The instructional activities that are central to Choices units can be valuable components in any teacher's repertoire of effective teaching strategies.

Historical Understanding

Each Choices curriculum resource provides students with extensive information about a historical issue. By providing students only the information available at the time, Choices units help students to understand that historical events often involved competing and highly contested views. The Choices approach emphasizes that historical outcomes were hardly inevitable. This approach helps students to develop a more sophisticated understanding of history.

Each Choices unit presents the range of options that were considered at a turning point in history. Students understand and analyze these options through a role-play activity. In each unit the setting is the same as it was

during the actual event. Students may be role-playing a meeting of the National Security Council, a town gathering, or a Senate debate. Student groups defend their assigned policy options and, in turn, are challenged with questions from their classmates playing the role of "decision makers" at the time. The ensuing debate demands analysis and evaluation of the conflicting values, interests, and priorities reflected in the options.

The final reading in a Choices historical unit presents the outcome of the debate and reviews subsequent events. The final lesson encourages students to make connections between past and present.

Note to Teachers

India's bid for independence from Great Britain is riveting history, yet it is often overlooked. The end of British rule occurred at the same time as partition, the division of the subcontinent into two countries: India and Pakistan. Why did these events happen at the same time? *Indian Independence and the Question of Partition* allows students to grapple with this question and others by exploring British colonial rule in the subcontinent, Indians' demands for independence, and the events leading up to and following the partition of 1947. In a central activity, students recreate the debate surrounding the partition of one province, Bengal.

Today, India and Pakistan face each other with hostility and suspicion. Both countries have nuclear weapons and tightly controlled borders. These tensions emerged in 1947, a pivotal year marked by both independence and the devastation of partition. The themes explored in this unit provide students with insight into the dynamics that continue to shape India and Pakistan today. The reading concludes with an examination of partition's legacies and touches upon important themes of the twentieth century: mass migration, refugees, imperialism, border disputes, and nation-state formation.

Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan: The Teacher Resource Book accompanying *Indian Independence and the Question of Partition* contains a day-by-day lesson plan and student activities that use primary source documents and help build critical-thinking skills. You may also find the "Alternative Three-Day Lesson Plan" useful.

• **Scholars Online Videos:** Short, free videos that you may find useful accompany these readings and lessons. They are available at <http://www.choices.edu/resources/scholars_india.php>.

• **Alternative Study Guides:** Each section of reading is accompanied by two study guides. The standard study guide helps students gather the information in the readings in preparation for analysis and synthesis in class. It also lists key terms that students will encounter in the reading. The advanced study guide requires that students analyze and synthesize material prior to class activities.

• **Vocabulary and Concepts:** The reading in *Indian Independence and the Question of Partition* addresses subjects that are complex and challenging. To help your students get the most out of the text, you may want to review with them "Key Terms" found in the Teacher Resource Book (TRB) on page TRB-52 before they begin their assignment. An "Issues Toolbox" is also included on page TRB-53. This provides additional information on key concepts of particular importance to understanding the foundations of the partition of the subcontinent.

• **Additional Resources:** Further resources can be found at <<http://www.choices.edu/indiamaterials>>.

The lesson plans offered in *Indian Independence and the Question of Partition* are provided as a guide. Many teachers choose to adapt or devote additional time to certain activities. We hope that these suggestions help you in tailoring the unit to fit the needs of your classroom.

Integrating this Unit into Your Curriculum

Units produced by the Choices Program can be integrated into a variety of social studies courses. Below are a few ideas about where *Indian Independence and the Question of Partition* might fit into your curriculum.

World History: *Indian Independence and the Question of Partition* focuses on four major themes in world history—imperialism, colonialism, decolonization, and nation-state formation. Examining British colonialism and the struggle for independence on the subcontinent helps students gain a greater understanding of South Asia’s history. The economic exploitation, discrimination, and violent oppression that frequently accompanied British colonial rule is covered in full. Indians’ varied methods of resistance are also given particular attention.

Following World War II, independence movements swept the globe. The readings and lessons of *Indian Independence and the Question of Partition* explore this moment in time, specifically Indians’ demands for self-governance and the process of achieving independence. The effects of partition are also covered, an issue that is relevant in Ireland, Palestine, and other parts of the world.

Political Science/Government: How can one small country, such as Great Britain, rule a much larger territory for well over one hundred years? Students explore the nature of British rule and the response of people in the subcontinent to British colonialism.

Students also examine the different political demands made by groups at both the central and provincial levels in India. Students review the various plans proposed by British and Indian politicians for how the government of India (and Pakistan) would be structured after independence.

Religion: Two world religions—Hinduism and Islam—have coexisted in the Indian subcontinent for centuries. Religious division between Hindus and Muslims has been given as a major reason for partition and the horrible brutality that followed. *Indian Independence and the Question of Partition* offers students the challenge of examining the ways religion intersects with politics, class, geography, and a sense of community before and after 1947.

Reading Strategies and Suggestions

This curriculum covers a wide range of issues over a long period of time. Your students may find the readings complex. It might also be difficult for them to synthesize such a large amount of information. The following are suggestions to help your students better understand the readings.

Pre-reading strategies: Help students to prepare for the reading.

1. You might create a Know/Want to Know/Learned (K-W-L) worksheet for students to record what they already know and what they want to know about the history of India and Pakistan (and Bangladesh). As they read they can fill out the “learned” section of the worksheet. Alternatively, brainstorm their current knowledge and then create visual maps in which students link the concepts and ideas they have about the topic.

2. Use the questions in the text to introduce students to the topic. Ask them to scan the reading for major headings, images, and questions so they can gain familiarity with the structure and organization of the text.

3. Preview the vocabulary and key concepts listed on each study guide and in the back of the TRB with students. The study guide asks students to identify key terms from the reading that they do not know. Establish a system to help students find definitions for these key terms.

4. Since studies show that most students are visual learners, use a visual introduction, such as photographs or a short video, to orient your students.

5. Be sure that students understand the purpose for their reading the text. Will you have a debate later, and they need to know the information to formulate arguments? Will they create a class podcast or blog?

Split up readings into smaller chunks:

Assign students readings over a longer period of time or divide readings among groups of students.

Graphic organizers: You may also wish to use graphic organizers to help your students better understand the information that they are given. These organizers are located on TRB-8, TRB-20, and TRB-39. In addition, a graphic organizer for the four options is provided on TRB-33. Students can complete them in class in groups or as part of their homework, or you can use them as reading checks or quizzes.

The Great Revolt of 1857: Source Analysis

Objectives:

Students will: Review the events of the Great Revolt of 1857.

Use different types of sources to identify different perspectives on the Great Revolt of 1857.

Consider the value of using multiple points of view to analyze historical events.

Required Reading:

Before beginning the lesson, students should have read the Introduction and Part I of the student text and completed “Study Guide—Introduction and Part I” (TRB 5-6) or “Advanced Study Guide—Introduction and Part I” (TRB-7).

Scholars Online Videos:

A short, free video on the Great Revolt of 1857 that you might find useful with this lesson is available at <http://www.choices.edu/resources/scholars_india_lessons.php>.

Handouts:

“The Great Revolt of 1857: Sources” (TRB 9-10)

“The Great Revolt of 1857: Stories” (TRB 11-13)

“The Great Revolt of 1857: A Memorial” (TRB 14-15)

(The unedited versions of the stories and images are available online at <www.choices.edu/indiamaterials>.)

In the Classroom:

1. Setting the Stage—Review with students their reading on the Great Revolt of 1857. What was the role of the British East India Company in India prior to 1857? What were the immediate causes of the revolt? What were some of the other reasons behind the revolt?

2. Analyzing Sources—Divide the class into groups of three or four and distribute the

three handouts to each group. Assign each group one of the handouts to complete. If time permits, you may assign more than one handout to each group.

Tell students that each group will use different types of sources to examine the Great Revolt of 1857 from British and Indian perspectives. Ask students to read the directions on their handout and answer the questions.

3. Group Responses—After small groups have completed the questions, have everyone come together in a large group. Call on small groups to share their responses to the questions. What types of sources did they review? Are there recurring themes and ideas that appear? Record them on the board.

4. Understanding Point of View—Ask students to assess the point of view of the sources. Discuss how students might recognize the point of view—through language or selective use of facts, for instance.

Review Source 3 by British historian Crispin Bates. What do students believe his point of view is on 1857? Why do they think it differs from Charles Ball in Source 1?

Ask students why the names for the events of 1857 differ? For example, why might Prime Minister Singh have called it India’s “First War of Independence” rather than a mutiny or revolt?

What value do students see in using different types of sources to examine historical events? What kinds of sources would they use to explain the events of 1857?

Can students think of how being aware of differing points of view affects how they understand history? What are the benefits of considering multiple points of view?

Homework:

Students should read Part II of the student text and complete “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 17-18) or “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-19).

Study Guide—Introduction and Part I

Vocabulary: Be sure that you understand these key terms from the Introduction and Part I of your reading. Circle ones that you do not know.

Indian subcontinent
partition
colonial rule
decolonization
British Crown
merchants
traders
trade routes

commerce
mansabdar
cavalry
provinces
export
mercantile class
nawab
treaty

zamindar
direct rule
indirect rule
sepoy
hierarchy
peasant
massacre

Questions:

1. Which countries are located on the subcontinent today?

2. Where did the Mughals come from and which regions did they conquer?

3. List three challenges to Mughal authority in the 1700s.
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

4.
 - a. Who owned the British East India Company?

 - b. Where were the Company's major ports located?

 - c. What goods did the Company trade?

5. Why did the British East India Company think the province of Bengal was valuable?

6. How did the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 affect Indians?

7. Provide a definition of the following concepts.

Direct rule:

Indirect rule:

8. Why did the *sepoys* start the Great Revolt of 1857?

9. a. Who else participated in the Great Revolt?

b. Why did they join?

10. After the British Crown took control, what promise did Queen Victoria make to Indians?

Shifting Powers in the Indian Subcontinent

Name: _____

The Mughal Empire

List three reasons that the Mughal Empire lost power and authority in the 17th and 18th centuries.

-
-
-

The British East India Company

What was the British East India Company?

Why did the Mughals grant the Company trading rights?

The Battle of Plassey

What happened in this battle?

The Battle of Buxar

What happened in this battle?

Crown Rule—1858

What was transferred from the Company to the Crown?

-
-
-
-

What did Queen Victoria promise her Indian subjects?

The Great Revolt—1857

What caused the Great Revolt?

Who participated?

Direct Rule

How did the British exert direct rule over Indian provinces?

Bengal

How did the British change Bengal's legal system?

How did the British change Bengal's land system?

Indirect Rule

How did the British exert indirect rule over Indian territories (princely states)?

The Great Revolt of 1857: Sources

Instructions: These are excerpts from descriptions or accounts of the events of 1857. Read them and then complete the worksheet. As you read, use different colors to mark 1) words or phrases that you do not understand; and 2) the words or phrases that you believe are the most important. Answer the questions for each source. Be prepared to share your answers with your classmates.

Source 1: Charles Ball, British historian, *The History of the Indian Mutiny (1858)*

“Before entering upon the details of a military outbreak that has, by its extent and duration, astonished the whole civilised world, and which at one time threatened seriously to affect the prestige of a flag that during the past century and a-half has waved in proud supremacy over the fortresses and cities of India, and proclaimed by its presence to subjugated races the irresistible power of British valour, and the wisdom of British councils...”

“We shall now proceed to inscribe upon the pages of history the frightful details of a series of catastrophes, among which the lavish outpouring of innocent blood is the least evil to be deplored; to record acts of atrocity that compel manhood to blush for the species to which it belongs, and that have indelibly stained the annals of India and its people with crimes that disgrace the name of humanity.”

Source 2: Manmohan Singh, Indian prime minister (July 13, 2006)

“I do believe that this opportunity to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the First War of Independence in 1857 should be used to recapture the spirit of our freedom struggle. I sincerely believe that a new generation of Indians must be made to feel the patriotism and the idealism of our forefathers. I also believe that this is an opportunity to derive inspiration from the unity of the Indian people exemplified in that struggle. Indians cutting across communities, religions, regions, castes and languages came together to fight for freedom from foreign rule.”

Source 3: Crispin Bates, British historian, *Subalterns and the Raj: South Asia since 1600 (2007)*

“The uprising was a clear sign that the East India Company had seriously misruled...[India], but they were reluctant to admit this, which is why in many subsequent British accounts 1857 is usually referred to as the ‘mutiny.’ By this it is implied that the insurrection was simply an act of treason by a group of soldiers that was dealt with appropriately. British descriptions of the ‘mutiny’ were also typically accompanied by accounts of various barbarities and horrors committed by the Indians as if to justify the violent means by which the restoration of colonial rule was accomplished. But this is not, of course, how Indians regarded the matter, then or now.”

Source 1

- a. Who is the author of the source and when was the source written?
- b. List the words used to describe the events of 1857 (for example, “series of catastrophes”).
- c. Briefly summarize the most important point(s) of the source. (No more than two sentences.)

Source 2

- a. Who is the author of the source and when was the source written?
- b. List the words used to describe the events of 1857.
- c. Briefly summarize the most important point(s) of the source. (No more than two sentences.)

Source 3

- a. Who is the author of the source and when was the source written?
- b. List the words used to describe the events of 1857.
- c. Briefly summarize the most important point(s) of the source. (No more than two sentences.)

The Great Revolt of 1857: Stories

Instructions: These two fictional stories recount the events of 1857 from two different perspectives. Read them and then complete the worksheet. As you read, use different colors to mark 1) words or phrases that you do not understand; and 2) the words or phrases that you believe are the most important. Answer the questions for each source. Be prepared to share your answers with your classmates.

Story 1: Excerpts from *The Defence of Lucknow (1879)*, by British Poet Laureate Alfred Lord Tennyson

The siege of Lucknow was one of the prolonged military confrontations of the 1857 rebellion.

“...Frail were the works that defended the hold that we held with our lives—
 Women and children among us, God help them, our children and wives!
 Hold it we might—and for fifteen days or for twenty at most.
 ‘Never surrender, I charge you, but every man die at his post!’...
 Death from their rifle-bullets, and death from their cannon-balls,
 Death in our innermost chamber, and death at our slight barricade,
 Death while we stood with the musket, and death while we stoop to the spade,
 Death to the dying, and wounds to the wounded, for often there fell,
 Striking the hospital wall, crashing thro’ it, their shot and their shell,
 Death—for their spies were among us, their marksmen were told of our best,
 So that the brute bullet broke thro’ the brain that could think for the rest;...
 Handful of men as we were, we were English in heart and in limb,
 Strong with the strength of the race to command, to obey, to endure,
 Each of us fought as if hope for the garrison hung but on him;...
 Praise to our Indian brothers, and let the dark face have his due!
 Thanks to the kindly dark faces who fought with us, faithful and few,
 Fought with the bravest among us, and drove them, and smote them, and slew,
 That ever upon the topmost roof our banner in India blew...
 Havelock* baffled, or beaten, or butchered for all that we knew—
 Then day and night, day and night, coming down on the still-shattered walls
 Millions of musket-bullets, and thousands of cannon-balls—
 But ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew...
 All on a sudden the garrison utter a jubilant shout,
 Havelock’s glorious Highlanders answer with conquering cheers,
 Sick from the hospital echo them, women and children come out,
 Blessing the wholesome white faces of Havelock’s good fusileers,
 ...saved!—we are saved!—is it you? is it you?
 Saved by the valour of Havelock, saved by the blessing of Heaven!
 ‘Hold it for fifteen days!’ we have held it for eighty-seven!
 And ever aloft on the palace roof the old banner of England blew.”

**Havelock was the British general leading the forces sent to help the British troops at Lucknow.*

Story 2: *Autobiography of the Old Banyan Tree*

This story was narrated to Badri Narayan by an elderly woman named Bhagwanti Devi from Duri, North India on January 10, 2007.

“I am an old banyan tree. I am the living history of the 1857 revolt. I have seen the entire revolt unfolding before my eyes. Now I am old and frail. My branches are bowed down with the weight of age. They are no longer covered with fresh green leaves, but look more like arms of skeletons. Thousands of people pass by me everyday but no one spares me a second glance. Birds don’t make nests in my branches any more. Squirrels don’t scurry up and down my trunk with nuts, looking for holes to hide them in. But although I have no strength in my branches today, once they were so strong that 137 Indians were hanged from them during the 1857 revolt. Under orders from the British officers, their soldiers used to drag the Indian revolutionaries by horses up to me.

“But sadly, no one sheds a tear at the memory of those dead dalits [a dalit is a member of the untouchable caste]. I have not become a memorial like other trees where Indian revolutionaries were hanged. No one prays at my roots like they do at other trees. There are no sounds of bells near me and no incense sticks are stuck in my roots. No flower garlands are hung on my branches. Today thick bushes have grown around me and I am overrun with weeds. Everything is still and quiet and there is an aura of sorrow surrounding me. But even today I can hear the sounds of horses galloping, the screams of revolutionaries and the firing of canons. I am an old banyan tree, relegated to the margins of history.

“They used to then tie ropes around the necks of the prisoners and throw the other end like lassoes on my branches. The ropes were then pulled till the necks of the prisoners broke. After they were sure that the men were dead, they dragged the bodies to the river Ganga and threw them into the water. Most of the men who were killed in this manner were dalits or belonged to other downtrodden castes and were mostly poor daily wage earners. They were all burning with the fire of the revolution to see their country free from the British, but I am sorry to say, their names are not mentioned anywhere in the history of the revolution.

“I am telling you all this because I want you to understand that I am not merely a banyan with branches and roots. I am a witness to the history of our country. I still remember the day of 4 June 1857 when the spark of revolution that was ignited in Meerut burst into fire in Kanpur.... When I remember the cruelty of the British while punishing the revolutionaries I still get shivers up my spine.

“But I was really broken that day when 137 poor dalits were hanged as a group from my branches. Their necks were tied to the branches and the other ends of the ropes were pulled mercilessly by the British army officers till all of them had died. That day I wept so loudly that my throat became parched. I cried and cried till all my tears had dried. Even today when I recall that agonising incident I break down in a flood of tears.”

Name: _____

Story 1

- a. Who is the author of the poem and when was the poem written?
- b. How does this poem describe the actions of the British?
- c. How does this poem describe the actions of Indians?
- d. What important idea(s) does the author express about the events of 1857?

Story 2

- a. Who is the author of the story and when was the story recorded?
- b. How does this story describe the actions of the British?
- c. How does this story describe the actions of Indians?
- d. What important idea(s) does the author express about the events of 1857?

The Great Revolt of 1857: A Memorial

Instructions: These images are of a memorial built by the British in Delhi in 1863. Use the information in the captions to answer the questions that follow on the worksheet. Be prepared to share your answers with your classmates.

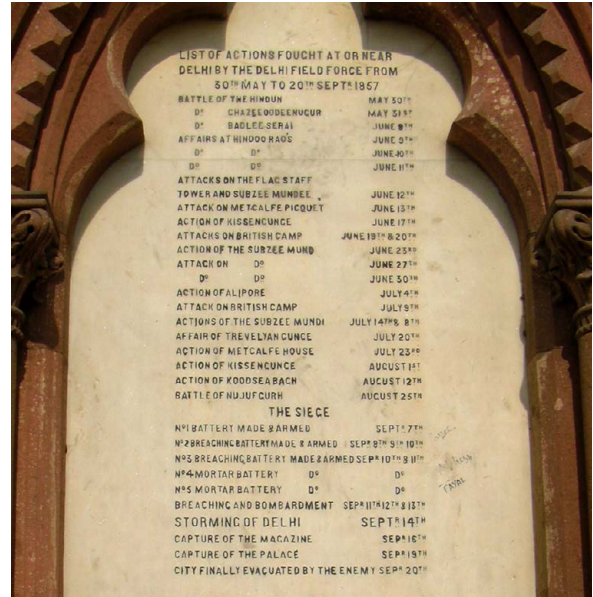
Image 1



Pallav/journo, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA3.0

In 1863, the British built this memorial in the city of Delhi to memorialize the deaths of 3,028 Europeans and their “native” allies in the Delhi Field Force during the revolt of 1857. The British called the memorial “The Mutiny Memorial.” The memorial still stands in Delhi. In 1972, the Indian government renamed the memorial “Ajitgarh” or “Place of the Unvanquished” (unvanquished means unconquered).

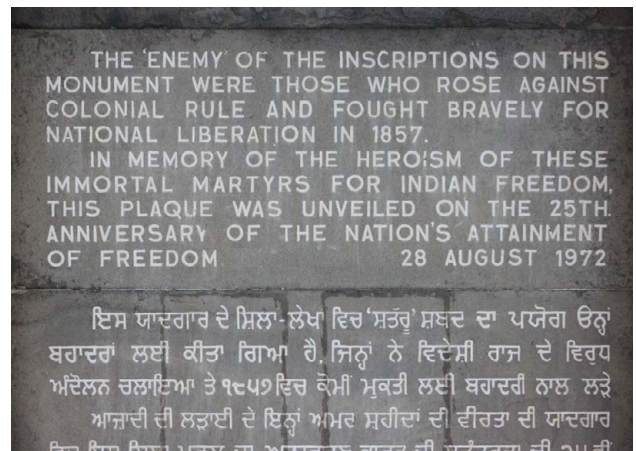
Image 2



Photograph by Lindsay Proctor. Used with permission.

This plaque was part of the memorial built by the British. It is a list of the actions of the Delhi Field Force from May 30, 1857 to September 20, 1857. The last line reads, “City finally evacuated by the enemy Sep^r the 20.”

Image 3



Photograph by Lindsay Proctor. Used with permission.

This plaque was added by the Indian government in 1972. It refers to the last line of the plaque (Image 2) that the British installed in 1863.

Name: _____

Image 1

- a. What name did the British give to the memorial?
- b. What name did the Indian government give to the memorial?
- c. Why do you think the Indian government changed the name?

Image 2

- a. Who is the “enemy” referred to in this caption?
- b. Who considered them the “enemy”?

Image 3

- a. When was this plaque added to the memorial and by whom?
- b. How does this plaque describe the actions of the “enemy”?
- c. What does this plaque state the “enemy” was fighting for?

Mapping Religion in Bengal

Objectives:

Students will: Practice general map-reading skills.

Calculate and analyze data from the 1931 All-India Census.

Explore the religious distribution of Bengal in 1931.

Required Reading:

Before beginning the lesson, students should have read Part II of the student text and completed “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 17-18) or “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-19).

Note:

Colored pencils might be helpful for each group as students fill in their maps. A calculator may be helpful for the data section of the lesson. Have students read all the directions carefully before beginning the exercise.

Scholars Online Videos:

There are short, free videos designed to be used with this lesson at http://www.choices.edu/resources/scholars_india_lessons.php.

Handouts:

“The 1931 All-India Census” (TRB 21-22)

“Bengal—1931” (TRB-23)

(A PowerPoint presentation of this map is available for download at www.choices.edu/indiamaterials. You will find an additional map, also based on census statistics, depicting religion in the entire subcontinent.)

In the Classroom:

1. Introduction—Ask students to recall information about Bengal’s geography and history from their reading. Why is this province important? Why was it partitioned in 1905, and how did some Indians pressure the British to unify the province in 1911?

Ask students to recall what they learned about the All-India Census. How did it influence British policy on the subcontinent? How did the British focus on religious differences affect Indian communities?

You may wish to show the following Scholars Online Videos to prompt discussion: “How has religion influenced the history of India and Pakistan?” answered by Professor Vazira Zamindar, Brown University, and “What effect did the All-India Census have on Indian identities?” answered by Professor David Gilmartin, North Carolina State University.

2. Forming Small Groups—Divide the class into groups of three or four. Distribute the worksheet and map to each group. Each group should read and follow the instructions.

3. Sharing Conclusions—After about twenty minutes, call on students to share their findings. What observations did students make about religion in Bengal? Ask students to make connections to the reading when they can.

Does labeling districts by their majority religion paint a complete picture of that district’s population? (You may wish to refer students to question 6a.) What additional information would be useful to gain a better understanding of religion in the province? Based on the maps and data, why would it be difficult to partition the province of Bengal based on religion? Remind students that the British often used religious labels, such as “majority” and “minority,” to guide their policies in the region. Why might this be problematic? According to Professors Zamindar and Gilmartin, in what other ways did British emphasis on religious differences influence India?

Homework:

Students should read “1947: Weighing Partition in Bengal” and “Options in Brief” in the student text.

Study Guide—Part II

Vocabulary: Be sure that you understand these key terms from Part II of your reading. Circle ones that you do not know.

industrialization
British Raj
governance
nationalist movement
natural resources
urban
census
elites
all-India politics
caste identity
market

goods
artisan
indentured servant
cash crop
swadeshi
reserved seats
separate electorates
self-governance
self-determination
ballot
mass movement

satyagraha
swaraj
boycott
civil disobedience
Great Depression
legislation
interim government
hunger strike
communal violence
autonomy
sovereignty

Questions:

1. List three ways the British tried to strengthen their authority following the Great Revolt of 1857.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
2. What did the British emphasize in the All-India Census?
3. What are four ways Indians participated in the *swadeshi* movement?
4. Why did the Muslim League ask Viceroy Minto for reserved seats in the legislatures?

5. Indians noted that the British were fighting for _____ and _____ in Europe while Indians lacked these same _____.

6. Which groups participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement?

7. What impact did the 1935 Government of India Act have...

a. on the provinces?

b. at the all-India level?

8. a. Under what two conditions did the Indian National Congress say it would support the British during World War II?

b. Did the British meet its demands?

9. Why was the 1940 Lahore Resolution unclear?

10. What did the British announce would happen by June 1948?

Indian Resistance

Instructions: Fill in the chart below. Begin by recording what caused the event or movement and what Indians were hoping to achieve. Then describe how Indians participated. Finally, describe the results of the movement. How did the British respond? What did Indians achieve? Do not fill in the shaded box.

Causes	Movement	How did Indians participate?	Outcome
	<i>Swadeshi</i>		
	Rowlatt <i>Satyagraha</i>		
	Non-Cooperation Movement		
	Civil Disobedience		
	Pakistan Movement		
	Quit India		

The 1931 All-India Census

Instructions: Follow the directions below as you fill in the map “Bengal—1931.” All data is from the 1931 All-India Census.

Part I

- Fill in the key on the map by shading the boxes with different colors or patterns.
- Shade in the following districts on the map according to the colors on your key:

Districts of Bengal

Muslim-majority: Malda, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bogra, Mymensingh, Murshidabad, Pabna, Dacca, Nadia, Jessore, Faridpur, Tippera, Bakarganj, Noakhali, Chittagong

Hindu-majority: Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Birbhum, Burdwan, Bankura, Midnapore, Hooghly, Howrah, 24-Parganas, Khulna, Tripura State

Buddhist-majority: Chittagong Hills Tracts

- Can you make any observations about religion in Bengal based on the information on the map? For example, are Muslim-majority districts clustered together, or in different parts of the province? What about Hindu-majority districts?

Part II

The table provides a sample of the 1931 All-India Census data, and includes data on four of the twenty-nine districts in Bengal. Listed below are the numbers of Hindus and Muslims per 10,000 in the total population of each district.

Religious Distribution within Districts of Bengal

District	Hindu	Percent Hindu	Muslim	Percent Muslim	Percent Other
Dacca	3,277	32.8	6,681	66.8	
Darjeeling	7,412		263		
Dinajpur	4,522		5,051		
Khulna	5,022		4,950		

- Calculate the percentage of the district populations that are Hindu and Muslim. (Hint: divide each value by 100.) Round to the nearest tenth. Write your answers in the table above. *Note: Your answers for the percentage of Hindus and Muslims in each district, when added together, will not equal one hundred. The remaining percentage represents other religious groups.*
 - Calculate the percentage of each district’s population that identifies with other religions. (Hint: add the “Percent Hindu” and “Percent Muslim” values and then subtract this value from 100.) Write your answers in the “Percent Other” column in the table above.

5. On your map, locate the four districts from the chart. Label each district on the map with its percentages of Hindu and Muslim residents.

6. Which of the four districts have a population that is...

a. roughly split between Hindus and Muslims?

b. largely Hindu?

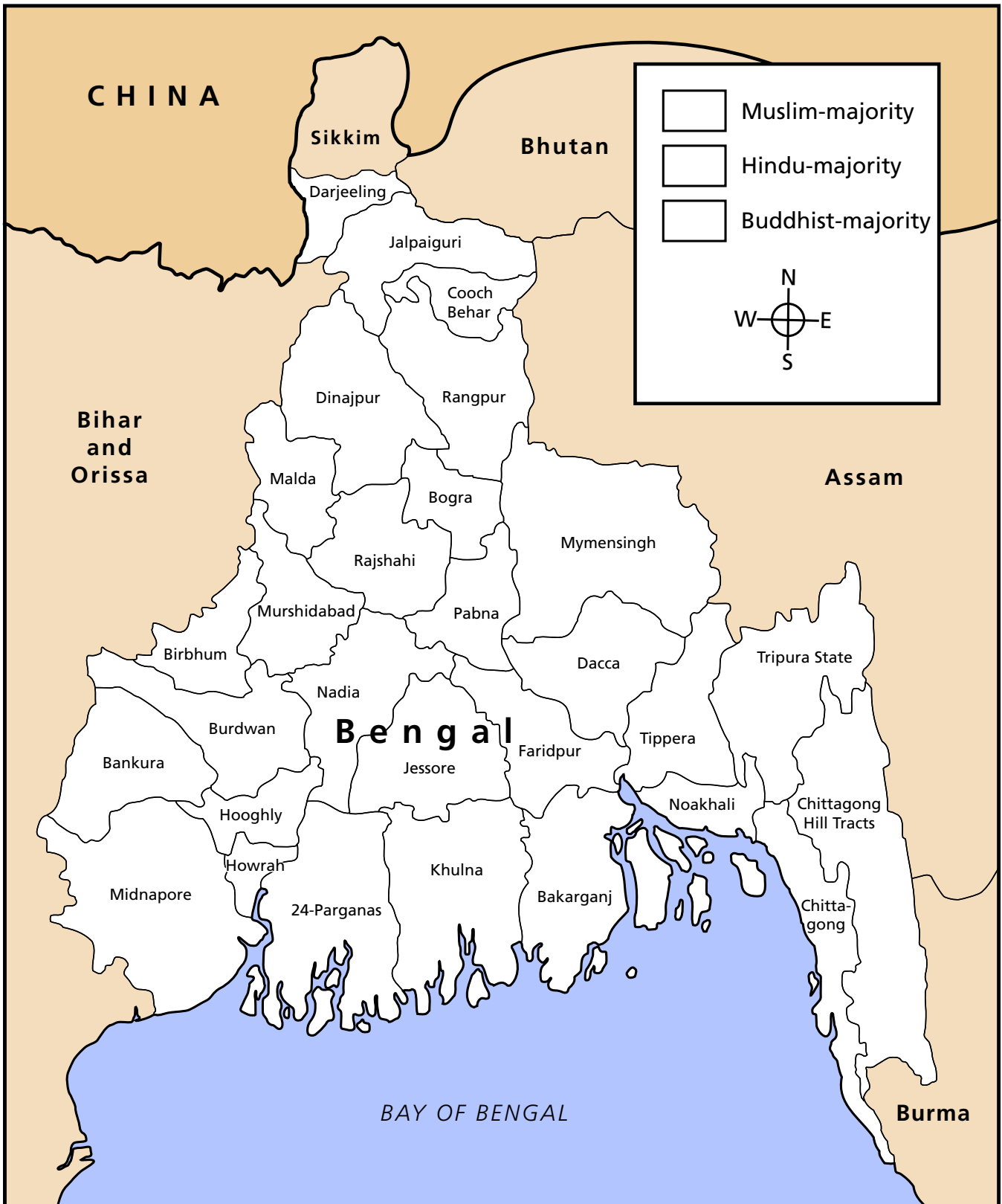
c. largely Muslim?

7. Which of the four districts has the largest percentage of its population that is neither Hindu nor Muslim? What percentage of this district's population represents other religious groups?

District: _____ Percentage other religious groups: _____

8. Can you draw any new conclusions about religion in Bengal based on this data? For example, are all Muslim- or Hindu-majority districts overwhelmingly Muslim or Hindu? Are populations more religiously diverse than the shadings on the map suggest? Explain.

Bengal—1931



Satyagraha: Gandhi, King, and Mandela

Objectives:

Students will: Explore Gandhi’s concept of *satyagraha*, or nonviolent resistance.

Assess the relationship between *satyagraha* and international movements.

Examine the impact of *satyagraha* on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part II of the student text and completed “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 17-18) or “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-19).

Scholars Online Videos:

Short, free videos that you may find useful in this lesson are available at <http://www.choices.edu/resources/scholars_india_lessons.php>.

Handouts:

“*Satyagraha*” (TRB 25-26)

“A Global Look at *Satyagraha*” (TRB 27-30)

Note:

For a shorter lesson, focus on Gandhi’s perspective on *satyagraha*. Use the handout “*Satyagraha*” and parts 1-3 of the instructions below. You may want to close with the last discussion questions in part 5.

In the Classroom:

1. Setting the Stage—Have students recall the “A New Era: Mass Movements” section of their reading in Part II. What were the goals of these movements? What protest strategies were used? Remind students that Gandhi advocated for nonviolence during these campaigns. Why do students think Gandhi promoted non-violence? Ask students to recall if and why violence broke out during certain mass movements. How did Gandhi respond?

2. Group Work—Divide the class into groups of three or four and distribute the handout, “*Satyagraha*,” to each student. Students should read each excerpt carefully and answer the questions that follow. Tell students they will go over their answers with the class.

3. Making Connections—Call students back together. Go over the questions on the handout. How do students define *satyagraha*? Why did Gandhi view *satyagraha* as a powerful “weapon” against injustice? In what ways did *satyagrahis* practice nonviolent resistance?

4. Group Work—Distribute the second handout, “A Global Look at *Satyagraha*,” to each student. Instruct groups to look for where Gandhi’s teachings appear in the quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela. When are Gandhi, *satyagraha*, and nonviolence mentioned? Is *satyagraha* praised? Or did these activists view *satyagraha* with skepticism?

5. The International Impact of *Satyagraha*—Call students back together. What did students learn about the ways *satyagraha* influenced the anti-apartheid and civil rights movements? How did Gandhi’s philosophy of nonviolent resistance impact Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.? Nelson Mandela? What similarities exist between Gandhi, King, and Mandela? How are their perspectives different?

Now ask students to share their perspectives on *satyagraha* as a way to combat oppression and injustice. Do students feel there are any limitations to *satyagraha*? Is it a good strategy even when governments use extreme violence? Why or why not? Encourage students to use excerpts from the sources or other examples in history to back up their claims. Do students feel that *satyagraha* is relevant today? How so?

Homework:

Students should read “1947: Weighing Partition in Bengal” and “Options in Brief” in the student text.

Name: _____

Satyagraha

Instructions: In this activity, you will consider Gandhi’s strategy of *satyagraha*, or nonviolent resistance. Read the information and quotes on *satyagraha* below and then answer the questions.

Definition: *Satyagraha* is a Sanskrit term that combines the principle of *satya* (truth) with *agraha* (insistence). *Satyagraha* can be understood as holding fast to a “truth” or a cause. In the case of Indians living under British colonial rule, this cause was self-government.

Satyagraha and Nonviolence: Gandhi believed that injustice could only be overcome with nonviolent resistance. Someone who practices *satyagraha*—a *satyagrahi*—refuses to harm an adversary. They believe evil must be targeted with good, hatred with love, anger with patience, untruth with truth, and violence with nonviolence. Gandhi hoped that nonviolent resistance would make clear that Indians had suffered at the hands of the colonial government and would compel top British officials to change policies and grant self-governance to Indians.

■ Quotes from Mohandas Gandhi

Mohandas Gandhi, Young India (a publication), November 5, 1919

“[*Satyagraha*] has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form.... In the application of *Satyagraha*, I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of Truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one’s opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy.”

Mohandas Gandhi, Young India, May 21, 1931

“It is a fundamental principle of *Satyagraha* that the tyrant, whom the *Satyagrahi* seeks to resist, has power over his body and material possessions, but he can have no power over the soul. The soul can remain unconquered and unconquerable even when the body is imprisoned. The whole science of *Satyagraha* was born from a knowledge of this fundamental truth.”

Mohandas Gandhi, Harijan, December 10, 1938

“The idea underlying *satyagraha* is to convert the wrongdoer, to awaken the sense of justice in him....”

William Hunter’s questioning of Mohandas Gandhi before the Disorders Inquiry Committee, January 9, 1920

“Q. [William Hunter] I take it, Mr. Gandhi, that you are the author of the *Satyagraha* movement.

A. [Gandhi] Yes, Sir.

Q. Will you explain it briefly?

A. It is a movement intended to replace methods of violence and a movement based entirely upon Truth.... [M]y experience has led me to the conclusion that [the] movement and that alone can rid India of the possibility of violence spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land....

Q. It was adopted by you in connection with the opposition to the Rowlatt Act. And in that connection you asked the people to sign the *Satyagraha* pledge.

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Was it your intention to enlist as many men as possible in the movement?

A. Yes, consistently with the principles of Truth and Non-violence. If I got a million men ready to act according to those principles, I would not mind enlisting them all....

Q. If there is a *hartal* [a strike] side by side with the preaching of *Satyagraha*, would it not be calculated to promote violence?

A. My experience is entirely to the contrary. It was an amazing scene for me to see people collected in their thousands--men, women, and even little children and babies marching peacefully in procession. The peaceful *hartals* would not have been at all possible if *Satyagraha* was not preached in the right way.”

The All-India Congress Committee, "The Satyagraha Pledge," March 21, 1930

“1. I desire to join the civil resistance campaign for the Independence of India undertaken by the [Indian] National Congress.

2. I accept the Creed of the National Congress, that is, the attainment of *Purna Swaraj* (complete independence) by the people of India by all peaceful and legitimate means.

3. I am ready and willing to go to jail and undergo all other sufferings and penalties that may be inflicted on me in this campaign.

4. In case I am sent to jail, I shall not seek any monetary help for my family from the Congress funds.

5. I shall implicitly obey the orders of those who are in charge of the campaign.”

Mohandas Gandhi, Harijan, October 22, 1938

“[*Satyagrahis*] must be prepared to lose all, not merely their personal liberty, not merely their possessions, land, cash, etc. but also the liberty and possessions of their families, and they must be ready cheerfully to face bullets, bayonets, or even slow death by torture.

“They must not be violent in thought, word or deed towards the ‘enemy’ or among themselves.”

Questions

1. What is *satyagraha*? (Provide a definition in your own words.)

2. Why did Gandhi view *satyagraha* as a powerful “weapon” against injustice?

3. What are three ways people practiced *satyagraha*? List them below.

Name: _____

A Global Look at *Satyagraha*

Introduction: International newspapers relayed stories of Gandhi’s *satyagraha* campaigns to all parts of the world. In this section, you will examine how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a leader in the U.S. civil rights movement, and Nelson Mandela, a South African activist, drew upon *satyagraha* in their own campaigns. Pay close attention to sections that mention Gandhi, *satyagraha*, or nonviolence.

■ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: The Civil Rights Movement in the United States

During the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, many African American activists drew comparisons between their struggles against white supremacy in the United States and Indians’ hardships under British rule. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. embraced satyagraha as a guiding principle for the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott in 1955-56 and later campaigns. While Dr. King remained committed to satyagraha, which he often referred to as “soul-force,” other civil rights activists were skeptical that nonviolence would be effective against the persistent threat of violence from white supremacists.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Martin Luther King Explains Nonviolent Resistance,” Eyewitness, 1967

“The nonviolence of Mahatma Gandhi and his followers had muzzled the guns of the British Empire in India and freed more than three hundred and fifty million people from colonialism. It brought victory in the Montgomery bus boycott.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “His Influence Speaks to World Conscience,” Hindustan Times, January 30, 1958

“Mahatma Gandhi has done more than any other person in history to reveal that social problems can be solved without resorting to primitive methods of violence. In this sense he is more than a saint of India. He belongs—as they said of Abraham Lincoln—to the ages.

“In our struggle against racial segregation in Montgomery, Alabama, I came to see at a very early stage that a [combination] of Gandhi’s method of nonviolence and the Christian ethics of love is the best weapon available to [African Americans] for this struggle for freedom and human dignity. It may well be that the Gandhian approach will bring about a solution to the race problem in America. His spirit is a continual reminder to oppressed people that it is possible to resist evil and yet not resort to violence.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., transcript from a Press Conference USA radio broadcast, July 5, 1963

“Some years ago when I first studied the Gandhian philosophy and the method of nonviolent resistance, I came to the conclusion that it was the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom and human dignity. And I would say that this over-all direct action movement with its sit-ins, its stand-ins, its wade-ins, its kneel-ins, its mass marches and pilgrimages, and all the other elements that enter the struggle have been patterned a great deal after Gandhi.”

A commitment card signed by volunteers participating in the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s campaign against social injustice in Birmingham, Alabama, April 3, 1964

“I HEREBY PLEDGE MYSELF—MY PERSON AND BODY—TO THE NONVIOLENT MOVEMENT. THEREFORE I WILL KEEP THE FOLLOWING TEN COMMANDMENTS:

1. MEDITATE daily on the teachings and life of Jesus.
2. REMEMBER always that the nonviolent movement in Birmingham seeks justice and reconciliation—not victory.
3. WALK and TALK in the manner of love, for God is love.

Name: _____

4. PRAY daily to be used by God in order that all men might be free.
5. SACRIFICE personal wishes in order that all men might be free.
6. OBSERVE with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy.
7. SEEK to perform regular service for others and for the world.
8. REFRAIN from the violence of fist, tongue, or heart.
9. STRIVE to be in good spiritual and bodily health.
10. FOLLOW the directions of the movement and of the captain on a demonstration.

I sign this pledge, having seriously considered what I do and with the determination and will to persevere.”

Questions

1. What impact did Gandhi’s idea of *satyagraha* have on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.?

2. List two similarities between the commitment card from April 3, 1964 on pages 27-28 and the “*Satyagraha Pledge*” from March 21, 1930 on page 26. What are two differences?

Similarities:

a.

b.

Differences:

a.

b.

Name: _____

■ Nelson Mandela: The Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa

Gandhi described South Africa as the birthplace of satyagraha. Before Gandhi organized mass movement campaigns in India, he used nonviolent protests to fight for the rights of Indian immigrant communities in South Africa between 1893 and 1914. Decades later, in the 1950s, Gandhi's methods of nonviolent resistance once again emerged in South Africa to protest the injustice of apartheid. Apartheid was a severe form of segregation used by the white, Afrikaner government (Afrikaners are South Africans of Dutch descent) to discriminate against "coloured" and Asian people in South Africa. Nelson Mandela, a prominent anti-apartheid activist, who later became president of South Africa's first multiethnic government in 1994, viewed satyagraha as one of many strategies to fight injustice, violence, and segregation.

Nelson Mandela, Long Walk To Freedom (Mandela's autobiography), 1994

"The Indian campaign became a model.... It instilled a spirit of defiance and radicalism among the people, broke the fear of prison.... They [Indians] reminded us that the freedom struggle was not merely a question of making speeches, holding meetings, passing resolutions, and sending deputations, but...above all, the willingness to suffer and sacrifice.

"We also discussed whether [our] campaign should follow Gandhian principles of nonviolence, or what the Mahatma called *satyagraha*, a nonviolence that seeks to conquer through conversion. Some argued for nonviolence on purely ethical grounds, saying it was morally superior to any other method.... I saw nonviolence in the Gandhian model not as an inviolable principle but as a tactic to be used as the situation demanded. The principle was not so important that the strategy should be used even when it was self-defeating, as Gandhi himself believed. I called for nonviolent protest for as long as it was effective....

"In India, Gandhi had been dealing with a foreign power that ultimately was more realistic and farsighted. That was not the case with the Afrikaners in South Africa. Nonviolent passive resistance is effective as long as your opposition adheres to the same rules as you do. But if peaceful protest is met with violence, its [effectiveness] is at an end. For me, nonviolence was not a moral principle but a strategy; there is no moral goodness in using an ineffective weapon."

Nelson Mandela, speech at the unveiling of the Gandhi memorial in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, June 6, 1993

"Gandhi is most revered for his commitment to non-violence and the Congress Movement was strongly influenced by this Gandhian philosophy, it was a philosophy that achieved the mobilisation of millions of South Africans during the 1952 defiance campaign, which established the ANC¹ as a mass based organisation. The ANC and its congress alliance partners worked jointly to protest the pass laws and the racist ideologies of the white political parties.

"In 1960 after nearly 50 years of passive resistance and struggles which were mass-based but non-violent in character the ANC decided to embark on an armed struggle. We were convinced that our oppressors would never be moved through means other than organised armed and militant action. It was a painful decision originating out of our reluctant acknowledgement that if we did not fight back the racists would destroy our people through genocide. The dramatic socio-economic deterioration [caused] by apartheid is here for all of us to witness....

"It is the combination of non violent struggles and military action that inspired our people to carry on struggling under the most heinous conditions...."

1. African National Congress (ANC), a South African political party that rallied against the apartheid government. Between 1960 and 1990, the ANC operated underground since it was banned by the apartheid government.

Name: _____

Questions

1. Look at the underlined sections in the quotes. Why does Nelson Mandela believe that *satyagraha* was more useful as a “tactic” and not as a “moral principle”?

2. Why did Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) eventually adopt an armed struggle in 1960 alongside its nonviolent strategies?

The Four Options: Organization and Preparation

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze the issues involved in the debate over the partition of Bengal.

Identify the core assumptions underlying each option.

Integrate the arguments and beliefs of the options into a persuasive, coherent presentation.

Work cooperatively within groups to organize effective presentations.

Required Reading:

Students should have read “1947: Weighing Partition in Bengal” and “Options in Brief” in the student text.

Handouts:

“Presenting Your Option” (TRB-32) for each option group

Options from student text, one option for each group

“Options: Graphic Organizer” (TRB-33)

In the Classroom:

1. Planning for Group Work—In order to save time in the classroom, form student groups before beginning Day Three. During the class period, students will be preparing for the Day Four simulation. Remind them to incorporate the reading into their presentations.

2. Option Groups—Form four groups of at least four students each and assign an option to each group. Inform students that each option group will be called upon on Day Four to present the case for why Bengal should be partitioned or remain unified. Explain that the option groups should follow the instructions in “Presenting Your Option.” Note that the option groups should begin by assigning each member a role (students may double up).

3. Evaluating the Options—Give each student a copy of “Options: Graphic Organizer.” Students should fill in the row that corresponds to their assigned option while they are preparing their presentations. (*Students will have to shade in the box in the fifth column of their row because they will not be able to answer that question.*) During the class presentations, they should fill in the remainder of the chart.

Note:

Inform students that while the four option groups in the role play never actually gathered to debate the partition of Bengal, it was important for each group to be aware of what the others were arguing to the public, all-India leaders, and the British. As each group struggled to make their case for the future of Bengal, they often referenced the plans that other groups proposed. For example, the Bengal Partition League’s argument for partition challenged the Bengal Muslim League’s hopes for Pakistan. And Governor Burrows’s desire for unity drew upon the plans for a United Sovereign Bengal. Students should keep their relationship to other groups in mind as they prepare their presentations.

It is also important to note that these groups were not so clearly divided. For instance, the United Sovereign Bengal plan was constructed by former (and some current) members of the Bengal Congress and Bengal Muslim League.

Homework:

Students should complete preparations for the simulation.

Presenting Your Option

The Setting: It is May 1947. Viceroy Mountbatten will address the public on June 3 to announce Britain's final plans for withdrawal. Whether Bengal will be partitioned has yet to be decided. Political leaders in Bengal stand on both sides of the debate and are rushing to make their demands clear to the public and negotiators in the capital.

Message to the Public: In Bengal, the streets and meeting spaces are filled with people trying to convince the public to support their cause. With your group members, come up with a flyer relaying your position on the partition of Bengal. You will present your flyer to the class during your presentation. *Note: If your assigned option is Governor Burrows, you may want to create and illustrate a memo addressed to Viceroy Mountbatten instead.*

Presentation: Your group represents one of four political options in the province of Bengal. Your assignment is to make your case for why Bengal must be partitioned or remain unified. Your group will be called upon to present

a three-to-five minute summary of your option to the class, including a presentation of your group's flyer. You will be judged on how well you present your option. This worksheet will help you prepare.

Organizing Your Group: Each member of your group will take on a specific role. Below is a brief explanation of the responsibility of each role. Before preparing your sections of the presentation, work together to address the questions below. The **group director** is responsible for organizing your presentation. The **historian** is responsible for explaining how history has affected your group's perspective. The **political expert** is responsible for explaining how your group's position relates to politics in Bengal and at the all-India level. The **communications director** is responsible for presenting your group's flyer.

In your presentation, be sure to use quotes and evidence from your reading to help explain the views of your group.

Questions to Consider

1. What does your group have to gain or lose from partition? From keeping the province unified?
2. Is your group's position on partition a result of its short-term or long-term goals in the province, or both?
3. How does your option connect to the perspectives of other groups in Bengal?
4. Why is your option best for the future of Bengal? The process of British withdrawal and independence?

Name: _____

Options: Graphic Organizer

Instructions: As you prepare your presentation, fill in the row that corresponds to your assigned option group. (Since you cannot answer the question in the last column for your assigned option, color in that box with a pen or pencil.) During the presentations of other option groups, fill in the remainder of the chart.

	Does this group support or oppose the partition of Bengal?	What does this group want for the future of Bengal?	What historical events have shaped this option's perspective?	What obstacles exist that might prevent this group from achieving its vision for Bengal?	What does this group think of your perspective?
Bengal Partition League					
Bengal Muslim League					
United Sovereign Bengal					
Governor Burrows					

The Four Options: Presentation and Discussion

Objectives:

Students will: Articulate the perspectives of their assigned group from Bengal.

Sharpen rhetorical skills through debate and discussion.

Cooperate with classmates in staging a persuasive presentation.

In the Classroom:

1. Setting the Stage—Tell students that they will be presenting their case for the future of Bengal. Remind students that there is very little time left before Viceroy Mountbatten will announce the final plans for British withdrawal. How will groups make their demands clear? How will they convince British and Indian politicians to support partition? Unity?

2. Managing the Simulation—Be sure that each student has their copy of “Options: Graphic Organizer.” Explain that each group will give a three-to-five minute presentation to the class explaining the option that they have been assigned and sharing their flyer. Encourage all to speak clearly and convincingly. As groups present, the rest of the class should fill in their charts.

3. Guiding Discussion—Following the presentations, encourage students to challenge members of the other option groups. You may want to have students ask clarifying questions after each group presents or following the conclusion of all presentations. When students

have finished asking questions, review with the class what was at stake for each group. What reasons did groups provide for their position? What themes were brought up in the presentations (e.g. religion, class, and nationhood)?

4. Gaining More Perspective—Ask students to consider the role of groups in Bengal during the final stage of negotiations with the British. How did these groups in Bengal make their voices heard? To whom did they direct their demands? Do students predict that Bengali leaders influenced the final decision on partition or unity? What groups in Bengal do students think might have been left out of the debate completely?

Have students consider the relationship between the debate about partition in Bengal and the debate about independence at the all-India level. How did the fate of Bengal relate to the fate of other provinces in India? Encourage students to remember the different objectives of all-India leaders, the British, and groups in Bengal as they approach the reading in the Epilogue.

Homework:

Students should read the Epilogue in the student text and complete the “Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB 36-37) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB-38).

Remembering Partition

Objectives:

Students will: Use primary sources to understand the experiences of people who lived through partition.

Assess the value of personal stories for understanding history.

Required Reading:

Students should have read the Epilogue in the student text and completed the “Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB 36-37) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB-38).

Scholars Online Videos:

Short, free videos that you may find useful in this lesson are available at http://www.choices.edu/resources/scholars_india_lessons.php.

Handouts:

“Partition Stories: Worksheet” (TRB-40)

“Partition Stories” (TRB 41-44)

In the Classroom:

1. Examining History—Have students brainstorm the various ways in which history is interpreted and shared (e.g. textbooks, films, poetry, and oral histories). You may want to have them list the types of sources on the board. What are some of the pros and cons of each type of source? Do students feel that it is important to learn history from a variety of sources? Why or why not?

Now inform students they will be reading excerpts from the personal accounts of individuals who lived through partition. Remind students that first-hand accounts provide one person’s view of the events and do not reflect the opinions or experiences of all people living in the subcontinent at the time.

2. Group Work—Divide students into small groups and distribute the handouts. The worksheet provides space for students to analyze two sources. You may want to assign more (or fewer) stories for each group.

Tell students to read carefully the directions on the worksheet. As they read, students should draw connections between places and events mentioned in the stories and what they have read in the Epilogue. The instructions ask that students mark difficult words or phrases, references to events described in their reading, and sentences that they found particularly important or surprising.

3. Analyzing Partition Stories—Call students back together after they have finished their worksheet. What were students’ immediate reactions to reading personal accounts of partition? Have students describe the authors of the partition stories they read. The authors of Sources 4 and 5 are anonymous. Why do students think they may not have wanted their name published with their story? What were some of the events described in the sources? What were some of the important phrases students marked?

Did students learn anything new about the process and/or experience of partition? How did the experience of reading partition stories differ from reading the Epilogue?

Going back to the discussion at the beginning of class, have students reconsider the pros and cons of learning history through personal accounts. What are the limitations of personal stories? What elements of history appear in first-hand accounts that may not show up in textbooks?

Study Guide—Epilogue

Vocabulary: Be sure that you understand these key terms from the Epilogue of your reading. Circle ones that you do not know.

rural	literacy rate
administration	dominion status
migration	urbanization
religious minority	arable
social standing	assimilate
refugee	linguistic
illiterate	cease-fire agreement
sweatshop	

Questions:

1. How did the following groups respond to the news of partition in Bengal?
Bengal Partition League:

Bengal Muslim League:

United Sovereign Bengal supporters:

2. a. What was the purpose of the Boundary Commissions?

b. Give five examples of things that the Boundary Commissions were responsible for dividing between India and Pakistan.

3. Who became the first leader of...

India? _____

East and West Pakistan? _____

4. List two provinces that the Radcliffe Award partitioned between India and Pakistan?

Name: _____

5. List three reasons why people left their homes during partition.

a.

b.

c.

6. List two challenges religious minorities faced who stayed behind in West Bengal and East Pakistan.

a.

b.

7. In 1947, the British granted India and Pakistan “dominion status.” What is dominion status?

8. Why did East Pakistan become Bangladesh in 1971?

9. Why is there a conflict between India and Pakistan over the region of Kashmir?

10. As a result of partition, some _____ million people moved across new borders, _____ million died, and roughly _____ women were victims of sexual violence.

After Partition

East Pakistan
Regions of which two provinces became East Pakistan?
How did the central government of Pakistan attempt to assimilate East Pakistan after partition?
What country did East Pakistan become in 1971?

West Pakistan
Which provinces made up West Pakistan? (see map p. 51)

Kashmir
The Line of Control divides Kashmir into areas controlled by _____ and _____.
What are some of the challenges that people in Kashmir face today?

Bengal
List three reasons people in Bengal left their homes after partition.
a.
b.
c.

Punjab
How did the governments of India and Pakistan attempt to address the issue of religious minorities in East and West Punjab?
How many Punjabis crossed the border?

Partition Stories: Worksheet

Instructions: The following excerpts come from personal accounts and interviews with people who lived through the partition of 1947. Read the excerpts your teacher has assigned you and then complete the worksheet. As you read, use different colors to mark 1) words or phrases that you do not understand; 2) any reference to events described in the reading; and 3) sentences that you think are the most important or surprise you in some way. Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

	Source A	Source B
Who is the author of this story?		
What regions, cities, or towns are mentioned?		
What experiences of partition does the author describe?		
What is the most interesting or powerful aspect of the story for you?		
What do these stories tell you about the experience of living through partition?		

Name: _____

Partition Stories

Source 1: From “Remembering Partition, Part 2,” a series of interviews by *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, August 15, 2007.

Below is a transcription of a video interview with Dr. Gautam Sachdev, a Hindi poet and novelist. Sachdev’s family left their home near Lahore after partition.

“I was eight years old when the partition of India was announced.

“I can’t describe in words. There’s the street where our home was [pointing to a photograph in a family album]. This probably is the home. In terms of our family, my father’s friend suggested, ‘Don’t live here, leave it! This will be a very dangerous place.’ And my father insisted, ‘No, we won’t go.’ I cannot forget. The people who were leaving...my father used to make fun of them saying, ‘Oh, he’s a goat, he’s a fox hiding in the hole. Nothing will happen here.’ And his belief was shattered.

“So we go to the train and that journey, really, I cannot forget, ever. It took nine days from Amritsar to reach Delhi, and I saw a lot of dead bodies and people without limbs lying on the sides of the railroad track.... I used to have nightmares and wet my bed almost every night even after months [after] that journey.

“Even my father believed he would go back. He locked all the wardrobes and all these suitcases and trunks and made a big bunch of keys, keys of home. Eighty, ninety, or a hundred keys. He kept those keys with him till his death in 1957.... And that is a symbol that we were ourselves trapped in our beliefs of going back, as if everything would be found intact and we would repossess it....

“I’ve used these images [of partition] in my stories because I get relief from writing. I want to shed that terror, that fear, that trauma, that troubles, that sorrows, which became a part of my psyche and my experiences. But they keep on haunting me. People ask me, ‘Why do

you write about partition even after sixty long years?’ I say, ‘They [memories] don’t go.’”

Source 2: From Masud Hasan Shahaab Dehlvi, “From the Valley of Jamuna to the Valley of Hakra,” in *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom* edited by Mushirul Hasan, Roli Books Pvt Ltd, 1995, pp. 193-205.

Dehlvi moved to Pakistan from Delhi during partition.

“On a day in the month of August 1947, the sun rose heralding the dawn of India’s Independence. Delhi too breathed the air of freedom. But this freedom brought with it a message of death and destruction for the Muslims. All through the War of Independence they were often subjected to the tyranny of an alien government. But now they were attacked by their own people.... The whole of India had become independent, but the areas where Muslims were in a majority were now called Pakistan. The erstwhile India was divided into two regions. One continued to be called India, while the other, Muslim India, assumed the name of Pakistan.... Those who were not prepared to leave the country were told at the point of a dagger, that from now on their country was Pakistan, and there was no room for them in India. People who refused to listen were promptly dispatched.

“The sight of people being murdered was extremely disturbing for me. I had got married on 4 May and had just begun to experience the joys of marriage. These joyous moments were completely overshadowed by the atmosphere of violence and suffering....

“Only a few days after my marriage, bloody riots broke out. Because of them we had absolutely no idea how the great occasion of Independence was celebrated in the city. September turned out especially gruesome for us....

“Seeing that our area was not very safe, I persuaded my people to leave the house and move over to my office.... We planned to go to Lahore by air and then overland to Bahawalpur....

“That is how this land, which is called the valley of Hakra and which has been the centre of one of the most ancient civilizations and cultures, became our permanent abode. Forty years have elapsed since we settled here. Now we have become a part of this country [Pakistan], but memories of Delhi still linger.

“The heart still yearns for Delhi’s literary gatherings. What a wonderful time it was! What [marvelous] people! The anxiety to provide for our daily needs was very much a part of life even then. But despite this burden, people did not deprive themselves of the other pleasures that life offered them.”

Source 3: From Begum Anis Kidwai, “In the Shadow of Freedom,” in *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom* edited by Mushirul Hasan, Roli Books Pvt Ltd, 1995, pp. 167-180.

Kidwai was a Muslim social worker who worked in the Muslim refugee camps in Delhi. Below is an excerpt from one of her diary entries, which were published in multiple languages in 1978.

“September 1947 began, and brought many anxieties. In fact from the beginning of the year, news of Hindu-Muslim riots had been pouring in—from direct action in Calcutta to Noakhali. The heart-breaking events in [other cities] were still fresh in public memory. Thousands had fled from Pakistan and already come to India and a several mile long caravan of people whose homes had been wrecked was creeping towards the India-Pakistan frontier....

“From Calcutta to eastern and western Punjab, the country was in a fog rent with sighs and shrieks. We had freedom drenched in blood and gore.... Nevertheless we strove to be happy. Despite everything, the yoke of slavery has been cast off.... No doubt the country had been divided, but perhaps, both communi-

ties would be happy in their own parts of the country.

“But no. Disappointment and hopelessness overwhelmed us, we felt alienated. Even on such a happy occasion, our hopes were turned to dust. I covered most of the city on foot, rickshaw and car but I came back in the same mood. There was no happiness anywhere.

“My heart sank, as if someone was strangling my happiness. The tricolor [flag of India] did not tug at my heart.... The signboards, slogans and posters inscribed in Hindi looked as they were mocking us....

“Hardly 15 days had gone by since Indian freedom, than beating and killing began in Delhi. The tricolors on houses and shops had hardly become grimy when they began to be streaked with blood....

“The telephones were dead. The mail stopped. Trains stopped. Bridges were demolished.... Probably, India had never witnessed such a storm of murder and mayhem in her history....

“Delhi, which was an open book of India’s past, which had been pulled out by the roots as many times as it had been replanted. Sometimes it had been ransacked by foreigners, sometimes it has been ravaged by its own people and sometimes by outsiders.

“In its ancient book of history, a new and bloody chapter began on 5 September 1947. In this storm-tossed city, I came to drown my deepest grief in the hope that I might find some clue to the future.”

Source 4: From “Partition Journeys—A Hindu Refugee’s Story,” Irna Qureshi & Tim Smith, Bradford Libraries.

This anonymous personal account was shared by a Hindu man, whose family left the Punjab following partition.

“We left Sialkot on 12 August 1947.

“It took us 12 hours to reach Lahore and when we got there, people were being massa-

Name: _____

cred left right and centre at the Lahore Railway Station. Our driver was also a Hindu but he refused to go further until we were certain we were safe.

“We got to Badami Bagh in Lahore and stopped. We didn’t know what to do. Then some soldiers took us to a refugee camp.... We got to the train station and the train wasn’t going anywhere. The train driver was a Muslim and he refused to leave for Amritsar without a police escort. Nobody wanted to die. In our hearts of hearts we were thinking they’ll make an announcement on 15 August and then we’ll be able to go back home. We didn’t think partition was really going to happen, and even if it was, we just thought we’ll go back and carry on living where we’ve been living all our lives. We only left Sialkot to get away from the violence. We didn’t think to bring anything with us. We just locked the doors and left.

“We got to Amritsar on the train in the end. Transport was free. You just got on whatever mode of transport you could find. Nobody charged you a fare or anything like that. The train came straight to Amritsar from Lahore. There was no question of it stopping anywhere in between....

“We were only young boys, me, and my brother.... Some Hindus got killed by mistake you know. People mistaking them for Muslims because we all dressed the same. We had the ‘Om’ symbol tattooed on the backs of our hands so people would know we are definitely Hindus. Our elders insisted the whole family have it done....

“From there [Jalandhar, the train stop after Amritsar] we came to Panipat and we’ve been here ever since. We were allotted this house in Qalandar Chowk. This had been a Muslim area you know but all the Muslims had fled. This place was deserted. There was nobody here except for us. Just like we fled to save our skins, I suppose the Muslims did the same.”

Source 5: From “Partition Journeys—A Muslim School Girl’s Story,” Irna Qureshi & Tim Smith, Bradford Libraries.

This anonymous personal account was shared by a woman from the region of the Punjab that became part of Pakistan after 1947. She now lives in Bradford, England.

“I think people started to realise what would happen at partition a couple of years before 1947. The educated Hindu people who knew that this was going to happen, they started leaving a couple of years before partition.... And the other people who didn’t know, thought people were just spreading rumours.... The world wasn’t as small as today because of TV and radio, and we were living in a village which was very remote, about 35 or 40 miles from a main city. So it was only the people who had to buy things for their business that went to the big cities, and they must have known.... But other people who didn’t believe at that time, they just had to leave everything and carry whatever they could....

“The people that went to India from our area, they left their houses and their property behind in our village. And somebody from the government, an official, he came and sealed the houses.... [W]hen the Muslim refugees came from India, [the] government needed somewhere to put them as well.... We were standing there looking at them sitting there with their belongings—whatever they could carry from their own houses and they were with their children. And the army officer was asking, ‘How many family members are you?’, and then they were handing them the keys of the empty houses. The people from our village helped them. If a new family arrived, they would go and check that they had everything. If they needed food or anything, they would provide it for a couple of months until they were on their feet....

“It is still in my memory. After the partition the schools were full because suddenly so

Name: _____

many other people came from India—the children. You see, ours was the only girl’s school so there were new girls every day. Some girls were just in such a terrible situation—no books, no uniforms, nothing. So our teacher used to tell us that we have to help these girls, that these are new arrivals and what happened to them and their families.... [B]efore the new girls arrived in our class...she would say to the class that this happened, and you know we are not Indian now, we are Pakistani. And she would tell us, ‘You are lucky that you are in this part already, but people in India, they have to come here without anything.’... So the teacher would say if somebody turns up in the class in tatters or very upset or very depressed, we should try to help them instead of laughing at them.... So we would take our clothes, uniforms, shoes, whatever we could spare, to the office. And this continued from 1947 till 1948 and even later because some people didn’t leave India immediately.... It was just getting worse and worse, so people kept coming to Pakistan after three or four years.”

Looking at Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan Today

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze photographs of present-day Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

Formulate ideas about life and society in these countries.

Consider the benefits and limitations of using photographs as a source for learning about the subcontinent.

Required Reading:

Students should have read the Epilogue and completed the “Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB 36-37) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB-38).

Handouts:

“Looking at Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan Today” (TRB-46)

Resources:

This lesson requires access to the internet for students or the ability to project a PowerPoint document of the photographs in the classroom. The PowerPoint document can be found at <www.choices.edu/indiamaterials>

In the Classroom:

1. Reviewing the Reading—Begin class by briefly reviewing with students what they know about the subcontinent. Prompt students to recount what they know about the history of each country, and the challenges that exist in each of these places today. Ask students to each write one question about what they want to know about Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan today.

2. Exploring Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan—Divide the class into small groups and distribute the handout. Direct students to the PowerPoint or show the images to the

class. Assign each group four photos and instruct students to examine each image closely and answer the questions on the handout. Alternatively, have students choose their own photos to analyze.

Note: Teachers should point out that it is important to be careful about drawing conclusions from photos. Remind students they cannot be certain that a photo is an accurate or complete reflection of reality. While photos can provide clues about societies and how people live, they should be aware that photos, like written documents, show a small piece of a bigger picture. When analyzing photos, students should think about both the content of the photo and the point of view of the photographer.

3. Presentations and Class Discussion—

After small groups complete the questions, have everyone come together in a large group. Ask students to display their photos to the class and share their observations.

After students present their findings, have students reflect on what they learned from the photos. Did any of the photos change students’ ideas or assumptions about Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan? Have the photographs raised any new questions about the subcontinent? Where do students think they might find answers to these new questions?

What are the benefits of using photographs as a resource for learning about other countries and societies? What are the limitations of using photographs as a source for learning about different countries? How might photos present a selective or misleading portrait of the subject matter? Do students think it is important to consider the point of view of the photographer when analyzing photos? Did the photographers have a purpose in taking these photographs?

Looking at Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan Today

Instructions: Examine your photos and answer the following questions for each on a separate sheet of paper. Your group will be asked to share its impressions with the class. Keep in mind that photos cannot give you a complete picture of societies in the subcontinent, and you should be careful about drawing conclusions from the photographs.

1. Describe the photo (the setting, architecture and landscape, what is happening, etc.). If there are people in the photo, what are they doing? How would you describe their appearance (gender, age, expressions, body language, clothing, etc.)? How would you describe the types of interactions people are having? If people are working, what types of jobs do they have?
2. How does this photo relate to what you know about Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan?
3. Does this image offer any clues about life and society in Bangladesh, India, or Pakistan? For example, does the photo reveal anything about religion, transportation, or geography? Can you learn anything new about these countries from the image?
4. Does this image raise questions for you about Bangladesh, India, or Pakistan?

Documents

Document 1: From an address given by the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, November 4, 1949.

“In a sense we are...not interested in world affairs. That is because we are so interested in putting our own house in order that we do not wish to meddle in other people’s houses. But though we do not wish to meddle in other people’s affairs, it is clear that we just can not ignore what other people are doing.... So, whether we want to or not, these burdens of world affairs come to us. We knew we could not escape them, however much we tried.”

Document 2: “UNEF [United Nations Emergency Force] Troops from India on Patrol.” Photograph by the United Nations, June 1, 1958. Private Kahan Singh of India is pictured below observing the Demarcation Line in Egypt.



United Nations Photo #142703.

Name: _____

Document 3: From “Explaining Sixty Years of India’s Foreign Policy,” by Sumit Ganguly and Manjeet S. Pardesi, *India Review*, January-March, 2009, pp. 5-6.

“At a national level, the memories of colonial rule contributed to a political culture which privileged the concept of national autonomy. The desire to maintain the greatest possible independence in the conduct of India’s foreign affairs was a sentiment that pervaded the country...”

“At least two factors can be [offered] to explain Nehru’s adoption of nonalignment as the [guiding principle] of India’s foreign policy. First, he was acutely concerned about the opportunity costs of defense spending. Any involvement with the two emerging blocs [the Soviet Union and the United States], he feared, would draw India into the titanic struggle and divert critical resources from economic development. Second, he was intent on maintaining India’s hard-won independence.”

Document 4: From Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s speech at the Non-Aligned Nations summit meeting in Belgrade, September 4, 1961.

“We call ourselves a conference of nonaligned countries. Now the word nonaligned may be differently interpreted, but basically it was used and coined almost meaning nonaligned with the great power blocs of the world.... [I]t means: nations which object to this lining up for war purposes, military blocs, military alliances, and the like. Therefore we keep away from it, and we want to throw our weight, such as it is, in favor of peace.”

Document 5: Agenda topics for the first meeting of the Non-Aligned Nations summit in Belgrade, September 1, 1961. Some of the twenty-five countries in attendance were Afghanistan, Cuba, Egypt, Ghana, India, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia.

“(1) Respect for the rights of peoples and nations to self-determination, struggle against imperialism, [ending] colonialism....

(2) Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, noninterference and nonintervention in internal affairs of states.

(3) Racial discrimination and apartheid.

(4) General and complete disarmament: banning of nuclear tests, problem of foreign military bases.

(5) Peaceful coexistence among states with different political and social systems.

(6) Role and structure of the United Nations and the implementation of its resolutions.”

Document 6: From “India’s Strategic Defense Transformation: Expanding Global Relationships” by Brian K. Hedrick, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009, pp. 5-6. Hedrick serves as a U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer with a focus on South Asia.

“The decade beginning in the early 1960s and extending a few years into the 1970s witnessed India’s involvement in three wars on the subcontinent; one with China and two with Pakistan. These three wars significantly altered India’s global views and challenged the efficacy of the NAM [Non-Aligned Movement]....

“Nehru naively believed that China would not use military force to assert its claims and even moved Indian forces into disputed areas. Once China attacked, Nehru was left with no choice but to accept the U.S. offer of military assistance.... This highlighted the weakness of NAM in two areas (1) nonalignment did not protect India from China in the way that Nehru envisioned it would, nor did the other nonaligned countries rally to India’s aid; (2) in an ironic twist of fate, it was the United States and other powers that India specifically wanted to remain unentangled from that came to India’s rescue with support and equipment. India continued to hold to the lofty ideals of NAM, but the war itself was a wakeup call....”

Document 7: From “India is key to Asia’s balance,” by Subir Bhaumik in *The Times of India*, June 29, 2013. Subir Bhaumik is a journalist based in Kolkata, India.

“India has decided to stick to its non-alignment era policy of staying away from multilateral military alliances, but retains its options to develop bilateral defence ties with those seeking it. This is smart diplomacy and seeks to make the most of being sought after by the key players in Asia’s new security and economic architecture....

“[I]ndia holds the key to Asian peace and power balance. All it needs is an effective government in New Delhi backed by a dynamic foreign office which can use the enormous opportunities to play the role of a bridge and hold the white flag in Asia’s volatile waters....”

Name: _____

Document 8: From “Can India become a great power?,” in *The Economist*, an international magazine, March 30, 2013.

“Yet India’s huge potential to be a force for stability and an upholder of the rules-based international system is far from being realised.... Despite a rapidly rising defence budget, forecast to be the world’s fourth-largest by 2020, India’s politicians and bureaucrats show little interest in grand strategy.... The foreign service is ridiculously feeble—India’s 1.2 billion people are represented by about the same number of diplomats as Singapore’s 5 [million]....

“These weaknesses partly reflect a pragmatic desire to make economic development at home the priority.... But Nehruvian ideology also plays a role.... [D]iplomatically, 66 years after the British left, it still clings to the post-independence creeds of semi-pacifism and “non-alignment”: the West is not to be trusted....

“[I]ndia tends to respond to provocations with caution. It has long-running territorial disputes with both its big neighbours, but it usually tries not to inflame them.... India does not go looking for trouble, and that has generally been to its advantage....

“India should start to shape its own destiny and the fate of its region. It needs to take strategy more seriously and build a foreign service that is fitting for a great power—one that is at least three times bigger....

“Most of all, though, India needs to give up its outdated philosophy of non-alignment....

“That India can become a great power is not in doubt. The real question is whether it wants to.”

Key Terms

Introduction and Part I

Indian subcontinent
partition
colonial rule
decolonization
British Crown
merchants
traders
trade routes

commerce
mansabdar
cavalry
provinces
export
mercantile class
nawab
treaty

zamindar
direct rule
indirect rule
sepoy
hierarchy
peasant
massacre

Part II

industrialization
British Raj
governance
nationalist movement
natural resources
urban
census
elites
all-India politics
caste identity
market

goods
artisan
indentured servant
cash crop
swadeshi
reserved seats
separate electorates
self-governance
self-determination
ballot
mass movement

satyagraha
swaraj
boycott
civil disobedience
Great Depression
legislation
interim government
hunger strike
communal violence
autonomy
sovereignty

Epilogue

rural
administration
migration
religious minority
social standing
refugee
illiterate
sweatshop

literacy rate
dominion status
urbanization
arable
assimilate
linguistic
cease-fire agreement

Issues Toolbox

Communalism:

Of or pertaining to a religious community. While in some parts of India, communalism can refer to different Hindu castes, in this reading, the term mainly refers to the relationship between Hindu and Muslim communities. While the Congress Party stated they did not think in communal terms (Gandhi insisted that Muslims and Hindus were one people), the Muslim League advocated a two-nation theory, arguing that Hindus and Muslims comprised distinct nations and that communal violence would only worsen if they remained within the same country.

Imperialism:

The policy of extending the rule of one nation over foreign countries as well as acquiring colonies and dependencies. Imperialism has traditionally involved the use of coercion, whether by military force or some other form. Throughout history, supporters of imperialist policy have used several arguments to justify their actions. One argument was economic; imperialism was profitable. A second school of thought drew on Darwinian theory and suggested that there was a struggle between nations and people in which only the fittest would survive. They believed that the Anglo-Saxon race and northern Europeans were best suited to spread their religious, cultural, and civic values throughout the world. A third argument was based on security issues; a nation could protect itself by acquiring territory and wealth around the world. The fourth argument was often religious or moral; imperial powers could improve the lives of indigenous people. All four arguments can be found in Great Britain's rule over India.

Partition:

The process of dividing a territory into two or more parts. Historian T.G. Fraser refers to partition as a “problem-solving device,” and,

indeed, the British resorted to partition in an attempt to settle conflicts in Ireland, India, and Palestine (the latter through a United Nations resolution). All three of the above examples utilized, to some extent, communal aspirations (e.g. many Muslims wanted a Pakistan separated from India). The same cannot be said for other, post-World War II partitions in Germany, Korea, and Vietnam.

Satyagraha:

Civil disobedience characterized by non-violent non-cooperation. According to Gandhi, *satyagraha* meant “holding to the truth” and inspired believers to risk their lives without resorting even to violent words. Under Gandhi's leadership, *satyagraha* created a mass political movement and caused much of the world, including many British, to sympathize with India's struggle for independence. Gandhi led three major *satyagraha* campaigns against the British. Despite his teachings, all three campaigns resulted in acts of violence. One of the reasons Jinnah broke with Gandhi in the early 1920s was the Gandhi's rejection of constitutional reform in favor of civil disobedience.

Self-determination:

The right of a people to govern their own affairs. Widely accepted today, this was a radical notion at the beginning of the twentieth century, when India's independence movement was just beginning. The idea of self-determination gained salience during World War I, and was promoted by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. The British government emphasized reform and gradual self-government within the British Empire. Meanwhile, Indian nationalists fought for their immediate right to self-determination, although they differed in their strategies for how best to achieve it.

Making Choices Work in Your Classroom

This section of the Teacher Resource Book offers suggestions for teachers as they adapt Choices curricula on historical turning points to their classrooms. They are drawn from the experiences of teachers who have used Choices curricula successfully in their classrooms and from educational research on student-centered instruction.

Managing the Choices Simulation

A central activity of every Choices unit is the role-play simulation in which students advocate different options and question each other. Just as thoughtful preparation is necessary to set the stage for cooperative group learning, careful planning for the presentations can increase the effectiveness of the simulation. Time is the essential ingredient to keep in mind. A minimum of 45 to 50 minutes is necessary for the presentations. Teachers who have been able to schedule a double period or extend the length of class to one hour report that the extra time is beneficial. When necessary, the role-play simulation can be run over two days, but this disrupts momentum. The best strategy for managing the role-play is to establish and enforce strict time limits, such as five minutes for each option presentation, ten minutes for questions and challenges, and the final five minutes of class for wrapping up. It is crucial to make students aware of strict time limits as they prepare their presentations.

Adjusting for Students of Differing Abilities

Teachers of students at all levels—from middle school to AP—have used Choices materials successfully. Many teachers make adjustments to the materials for their students. Here are some suggestions:

- Go over vocabulary and concepts with visual tools such as concept maps and word pictures.
- Require students to answer guiding questions in the text as checks for understanding.

- Shorten reading assignments; cut and paste sections.
- Combine reading with political cartoon analysis, map analysis, or movie-watching.
- Read some sections of the readings out loud.
- Ask students to create graphic organizers for sections of the reading, or fill in ones you have partially completed.
- Supplement with different types of readings, such as short stories or news articles.
- Ask student groups to create a bumper sticker, PowerPoint presentation, or collage representing their option.
- Do only some activities and readings from the unit rather than all of them.

Adjusting for Large and Small Classes

Choices units are designed for an average class of twenty-five students. In larger classes, additional roles, such as those of newspaper reporter or member of a special interest group, can be assigned to increase student participation in the simulation. With larger option groups, additional tasks might be to create a poster, political cartoon, or public service announcement that represents the viewpoint of an option. In smaller classes, the teacher can serve as the moderator of the debate, and administrators, parents, or faculty can be invited to participate. Another option is to combine two small classes.

Assessing Student Achievement

Grading Group Assignments: Students and teachers both know that group grades can be motivating for students, while at the same time they can create controversy. Telling students in advance that the group will receive one grade often motivates group members to hold each other accountable. This can foster group cohesion and lead to better group results. It is also important to give individual grades for group work assignments in order to

recognize an individual's contribution to the group. The "Assessment Guide for Oral Presentations" on the following page is designed to help teachers evaluate group presentations.

Requiring Self-Evaluation: Having students complete self-evaluations is an effective way to encourage them to think about their own learning. Self-evaluations can take many forms and are useful in a variety of circumstances. They are particularly helpful in getting students to think constructively about group collaboration. In developing a self-evaluation tool for students, teachers need to pose clear and direct questions to students. Two key benefits of student self-evaluation are that it involves students in the assessment process, and that it provides teachers with valuable insights into the contributions of individual students and the dynamics of different groups. These insights can help teachers to organize groups for future cooperative assignments.

Testing: Teachers say that students using the Choices approach learn the factual information presented as well as or better than from lecture-discussion format. Students using Choices curricula demonstrate a greater ability to think critically, analyze multiple perspectives, and articulate original viewpoints. Teachers should hold students accountable for learning historical information and concepts presented in Choices units. A variety of testing questions and assessment devices can be used to draw upon students' critical thinking and historical understanding.

For Further Reading

Daniels, Harvey, and Marilyn Bizar. *Teaching the Best Practice Way: Methods That Matter, K-12*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

Assessment Guide for Oral Presentations

Group assignment: _____

Group members: _____

Group Assessment	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Needs Improvement</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
1. The group made good use of its preparation time	5	4	3	2	1
2. The presentation reflected analysis of the issues under consideration	5	4	3	2	1
3. The presentation was coherent and persuasive	5	4	3	2	1
4. The group incorporated relevant sections of the reading into its presentation	5	4	3	2	1
5. The group's presenters spoke clearly, maintained eye contact, and made an effort to hold the attention of their audience	5	4	3	2	1
6. The presentation incorporated contributions from all the members of the group	5	4	3	2	1
 Individual Assessment					
1. The student cooperated with other group members	5	4	3	2	1
2. The student was well-prepared to meet their responsibilities	5	4	3	2	1
3. The student made a significant contribution to the group's presentation	5	4	3	2	1

Alternative Three-Day Lesson Plan

Day 1:

See Day Two of the Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan. (Students should have read Part II of the reading and completed “Study Guide—Part II” or “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” before beginning the lesson. To gain an introduction to the topic, students should also read the Introduction.)

Homework: Students should read “1947: Weighing Partition in Bengal” and “Options in Brief.”

Day 2:

Assign each student one of the four options, and allow students a few minutes to familiarize themselves with the mindsets of the option groups. What are the goals of each option group? How do these goals differ?

Homework: Students should read “Epilogue: The Effects of Partition” and complete “Study Guide—Epilogue” or “Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue.”

Day 3:

See Day Five of the Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan.

Indian Independence and the Question of Partition

Indian Independence and the Question of Partition examines the era of British colonialism, Indians' struggle for independence, and the legacies of the 1947 partition.

Indian Independence and the Question of Partition is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

THE CHOICES PROGRAM

WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
BROWN UNIVERSITY, BOX 1948, PROVIDENCE, RI 02912
WWW.CHOICES.EDU