

F. The British Conquest of South Asia (c.1756-1858)

1. Starting in the 1600s, most of the main European nations created “East India” companies in order to become the middlemen of trade between Asia and Europe.
2. The destiny of India was permanently changed by the competition of these companies, which also engaged in colonization. (We mostly think of colonial times when it comes to American history, where the British and French sent settlers to bring new territory under the control of the home country, but even though India was a densely populated place, they treated it the same way.)
3. As their trading empires grew, Britain and France collided in colonial wars. The war that started the main colonization phase in Indian history is called the *Seven Years War* from **1756 to 1763**. (Students of American history may recall that this war also determined the fate of North America: Previously French-controlled Canada became part of the British Empire, and America soon rebelled to become independent when taxes were raised to pay for the war!)
4. At first Britain was not interested in conquering India. The mission of expanding trade had been delegated to the *East India Company*, which proceeded to make deals with local princes called “rajās” and create relationships that led to “company rule” over parts of India. Often the deals were struck as a way to get rid of (Mughal) Muslim overlordship. In other cases, bargains were made by power-hungry rajās who wished to take over their neighbors lands. The British were adept at taking advantage of local politics in order to expand their power, until, amazingly and almost accidentally they had become the single dominant force in India.
5. Through a series of wars that ended in **1858**, the British either directly took over the rule of various regions, or forged alliances with princes who accepted their overlordship.
6. In **1858**, by the **Government of India Act**, Great Britain became the imperial ruler of India. Queen Victoria, the famous English queen, became Empress of India.
7. The number of separate conflicts starting with the *Seven Years War* up until **1858** is a very messy picture that is hard to organize. The key is not the details, however, but in the overall trend, so we will use the *entire period* of the **British Conquest of South Asia (1756-1858)** as our anchor fact.

G. The Tutelary Imperialism of the British “Raj”

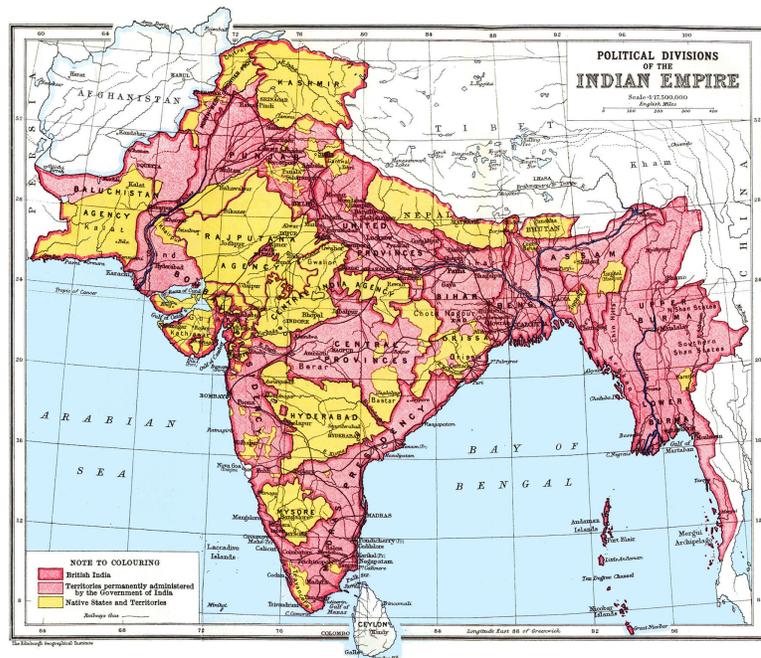
1. Britain took over a politically un-integrated South Asia that was still at a very low level of technological development at a time when Britain itself was becoming the most technologically advanced country in the world because of its *Industrial Revolution*.
2. Britain was also a politically integrated country with a successful record of democratic and constitutional government, so it had economic and political strengths that allowed it to control a distant land like India.
3. The natural function of empires, as they have been built over human history, is to provide resources of every kind (“natural resources” and human labor, especially) to the conquering nation.

4. Although the British certainly wanted to take advantage of South Asia's resources, they also proposed to do something more. They proposed to help the people they had conquered, to serve their needs, and promote progress in their society.
5. This kind of altruistic imperialism can be called "*tutelar*y imperialism." (The word "tutelar" means "educational." It shares the same root as the word "tutor" and "tutelage.")
6. Among the legitimate improvements enacted by the British in India was a vast railway network, and a system of universities (and associated schools). Wealthy Indian families could also send their children to universities in England, to receive professional training.
7. By providing a stable government and other tutelary benefits, the British Empire was helping India to rise up as a nation which, based on its history, it could almost certainly have never done on its own, but the real test of tutelary imperialism was whether or not Britain would ever choose India's interests over its own.



South Asia experienced political integration for the first time under the British Raj, which stretched from Pakistan to Burma (Myanmar today).

(The regions in yellow were princely states that had some autonomy, but were ultimately controlled by Britain).



H. The World Wars and the Push for "Swaraj"

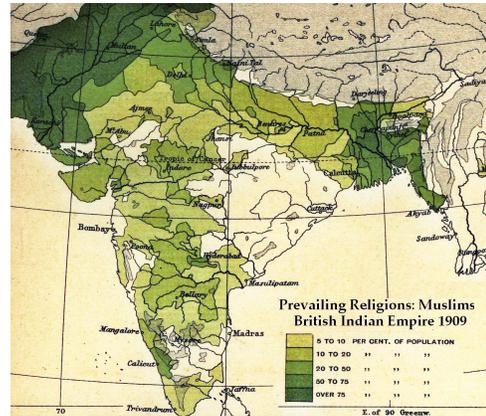
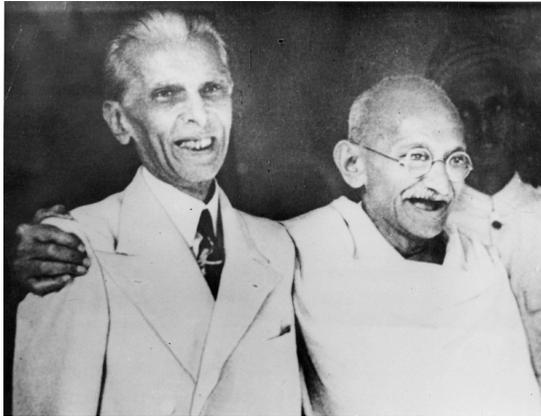
1. When **World War I (1914-19)** arrived in Europe (a war caused mainly by European empires such as Germany, France and Britain) India became entangled despite being completely outside Europe.
2. India, like every part of the British Empire, was technically required to participate. India was notified of its required role, and the enlistment of a million soldiers was undertaken.
3. Being forced to participate in the war created a greater desire for "swaraj" (*self rule*) in South Asia.
4. The champion of this movement was Mohandas Gandhi, a lawyer trained in England.

5. As the war came to a close in 1919, a protest in the city of Amritsar resulted in the massacre of protesters by British troops.
6. Gandhi became an advocate of non-violent resistance as a way to avoid bloodshed of this sort. He referred to this type of protest as “satyagraha,” which literally means “truth-force,” but it often figuratively translated as “non-violent resistance.” Gandhi believed that this type of resistance would “force” the oppressors (the British) to see the truth of their unjust rule and give up their power.
7. The first satyagraha was a general strike after the Amritsar Massacre. It was at this point that Gandhi began to dress differently, in very humble garb, as a way to symbolize a refusal to participate in the British imperial system of trade, which used poor India cotton farmers as suppliers for great manufacturing enterprises back in England.
8. Another famous satyagraha was the “Salt March” or “Salt Satyagraha” of 1930. Again the target was the British imperial system, which imposed a monopoly on salt. Indians had to buy authorized salt from stores and pay taxes on it, when they normally would be able to make it themselves. Gandhi marched 240 miles to pick up a handful of sea salt, in a symbolic protest to show how Indians could each resist the British empire in their daily lives.
9. The British had no direct answer to satyagraha, but it also did not produce any quick or decisive outcomes.
10. When **World War II (1939-45)** also required India’s participation, the desire for “swaraj” mounted. Gandhi’s satyagraha against the war was known as the “Quit India” movement. He gave a speech against helping Britain. He hoped to bargain for independence by promising to help *after* being given independence. The British had no tolerance for bargaining. Gandhi and tens of thousands of his supporters were immediately imprisoned. He was kept in prison for two years—and only released to prevent him from becoming a martyr, when he became very ill.
11. The efforts of Gandhi and others at satyagraha did not directly result in independence. The most obvious impact of the wars was on the imperial ruler, Britain, which was exhausted by fighting for its national survival against Germany in the two wars, and ultimately decided that it was not practical or proper to retain control of India.

I. Independence and Partition (1947)

1. With World War II behind it, the British Empire began to collapse, as the British government was desperately focused on rebuilding its own country.
2. The push for “swaraj” (self rule) by India was thus finally met with the acquiescence of the British, who began to negotiate to allow independence.
3. The great challenge of independence was the desire for the two main groups of South Asian people to have “swaraj.” Hindus would have been satisfied to make one country, in which they would be the majority, but India’s Muslims feared that outcome, and had organized a “Pakistan Movement,” led by Muhammad Jinnah of the Muslim League, to create a separate country.

- That would not be easy, because the Muslim population was distributed very unevenly throughout South Asia.



Muhammad Jinnah (the leader of the Muslim League) and Mohandas Gandhi both wanted “swaraj” for South Asia. Jinnah, however, wanted Muslims to have their own country. The areas in dark green on the map (right) show where Muslims were the majority.

- The outcome of the negotiations by all the groups involved was the creation of two countries: India and Pakistan (which at first included Bangladesh as “East Pakistan.”)

J. Post-Colonial South Asia (1947-)

- As soon as the lines were drawn, a crisis occurred. There were ten of millions of Hindus in the new Pakistan and tens of millions of Muslims in India. Many were afraid of being stuck there, so a mass migration occurred in both directions.
- One region in northern India called “Jammu and Kashmir” wanted to stay independent, but its population was mainly Muslim, and the leaders of Pakistan tried to force it to join them. The ruler joined India to avoid this outcome, which sparked the *First Indo-Pakistani War (1947-9)*, which did not resolve the problem, and led to the *Second Indo-Pakistani War (1965)*, which also was inconclusive.
- The other territorial problem was that Pakistan had two very different parts, separated by a thousand miles—and a hostile India! More than that: the people of Bangladesh speak a language called Bengali, and the people of Pakistan speak Urdu. Even though both were Muslim, their cultures had developed separately throughout history. Islamic culture was not enough to maintain their unity, and the *Bangladesh War of Independence* became the *Third Indo-Pakistani War (1970-1)* when India helped Bangladesh to become independent.
- Although hostile to one another, Pakistan and India were both mainly *post-colonial* cultures. That means that their main goal was to be independent of any powerful nation that might seek to control them.

5. When Russia and America squared off for control of the world, India became the leader of the “Non-Aligned Movement” (an organization with many Asian, Africa, and Latin American countries) in order to avoid being controlled by either one.
6. Pakistan took advantage of India’s desire not to work with the United States and decided to cozy up to America in order to avoid communism and get military help.
7. India, feeling insecure, in a world of nuclear superpowers, decided to develop nuclear weapons of its own, causing Pakistan to do the same in self-defense.
8. The nuclear standoff between the two is part of the puzzle of the world today, and it makes the fate of Pakistan a very difficult problem.
9. Pakistan is not only a Muslim country, but an *Islamist* one, where most of the population is committed to the idea of Islamic culture conquering other cultures. (This is hardly surprising given that *Triumphal Islam* spent a thousand years trying to do just that to India.)
10. That the United States has a kind of alliance with Pakistan, which an Islamist country and a nuclear power, makes the problem of how to stop terrorism much more difficult, because the United States is basically allies with one of the countries that creates more terrorists by the day.
11. America’s relationship with Pakistan also prevents America from becoming friends with India, which has the same problem of Islamic terrorism that America does, but which must view America as a kind of imperial power with no real respect for India, and thus, because of India’s still post-colonial thinking, not a possible ally.