

KEY QUESTIONS

- What methods did the Indian nationalist movement use to achieve independence?
- What role did Mohammad Ali Jinnah play in the struggle for independence?
- What role did Mohandas Gandhi play in the struggle for independence?
- Why did the Indian nationalist movement succeed?

Overview

- Mohandas Gandhi, his philosophy of *satyagraha* and his campaigns of non-cooperation were at the core of the independence movement in India.
- Indian nationalists were frustrated by the slow pace of constitutional reform, and in 1929 Congress demanded complete independence.
- The 1930 Salt March gained worldwide attention and forced Britain to start negotiations with the nationalists at a series of Round Table conferences in London.
- There were increasing political tensions in the 1930s, and the Muslim League made calls for the recognition of their identity as a separate nation.
- In 1942, Congress adopted the 'Quit India' campaign to force Britain to leave India immediately.
- The Muslim League cooperated with Britain during the war and so was in a stronger position at the end of the war, when negotiations about independence began.
- Between 1945 and 1947, British control of India collapsed, as anti-British protests mounted and demands for independence grew.
- However, there were differences of opinion between Congress and the Muslim League about the form that an independent Indian state should take.
- The Muslim League's call for 'direct action' led to an outbreak of communal violence in which thousands died.
- As tensions rose, Congress accepted the concept of partition, and India and Pakistan became separate independent states in August 1947.
- Both Jinnah and Gandhi played critical roles in the independence movement, but they differed fundamentally about the form that an independent Indian state should take.
- The success of the nationalist movement was due not only to the strength of the movement itself, but must also be seen in the wider context of the time.

TIMELINE

- 1920–2** Gandhi's first non-cooperation campaign begins.
- 1929** Congress demands complete independence for India.
- 1930** Salt March.
- 1937** Congress wins elections for provincial legislatures.
- 1939** Second World War begins.
- 1942** 'Quit India' resolution by Congress.
- 1943** Bose forms Indian National Army under Japanese command.
- 1945** Second World War ends.
- 1946** Direct Action Day triggers widespread communal violence.
- 1947** Mountbatten arrives as last viceroy of India; Pakistan and India become independent.

3.5 What methods did the Indian nationalist movement use to achieve independence?

The person who transformed the Indian National Congress into a mass nationalist movement after the First World War was Mohandas Gandhi. Until then, support for Congress had come from the Indian élite, so, for the movement to succeed in challenging British rule in India, it needed to expand its appeal. This was Gandhi's great achievement.

Gandhi and *satyagraha*

Gandhi championed a form of non-violent resistance, or civil disobedience, to colonial rule that stemmed from an Indian concept called *satyagraha*, or 'soul force'. It was based on the belief that ordinary people can bring about political change by using peaceful means to fight for justice.

SOURCE A

Soul force, or the power of truth, is reached by the infliction of suffering, not on your opponent, but on yourself. Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood... The government of the day has passed a law which I do not like. If, by using violence, I force the government to change the law, I am using what may be called body-force. If I do not obey the law, and accept the penalty for breaking it, I use soul force. It involves sacrificing yourself.

Gandhi describes the concept of *satyagraha*. Quoted in J. Bottaro and R. Calland (2001), *Successful Human and Social Sciences Grade 9*, Cape Town, South Africa: Oxford University Press, p. 45.

Theory of Knowledge

History and ethics: Gandhi believed that the authorities could be forced to give in, by the firm yet peaceful demonstration of the justice of a cause. How could *satyagraha* be an effective moral force to bring about political change? Can you think of other contexts in 20th-century history where non-violent resistance has been used effectively?

Satyagraha involved a campaign of non-cooperation with the British administration, boycotts of British schools, universities and law courts, and, critically, boycotts – called *hartal* – of British goods. Gandhi consciously rejected Western values and adopted the dress and lifestyle of a simple peasant. He established an ashram, or community, committed to non-violence and self-sufficiency using traditional methods. This appeal to traditional cultural values allowed him to connect to the mass of the Indian peasantry. He also identified with the problems of specific groups, earning their respect and support: tenant farmers exploited by landlords, industrial workers involved in disputes with factory owners, and poor farmers unable to pay taxes after bad harvests.

This non-violent opposition stemmed in part from the fact that armed resistance was not practical given the military power of the British. *Satyagraha* would exploit Britain's greatest weakness in India – the British economy's reliance on the subcontinent. Simply boycotting British goods would have a massive effect on the colonial power's ability to trade successfully, and non-cooperation in the form of strikes would severely damage

British-owned companies. Non-violent resistance also suited the Indian élite, who feared that an armed struggle would destabilise India so much that potentially radical groups and individuals might gain a foothold and threaten their position in Indian society.

Gandhi changed Congress from a narrow, élite organisation into a mass nationalist movement that incorporated all sectors of Indian society. This inclusiveness was not only based on class, but also crossed ethnic and religious lines. After the First World War, one of Gandhi's strongest sources of support was the **Khalifat** movement, led by the brothers Mohammed and Shaukat Ali. Historians Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal describe the 'courageous display of unity among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs' that existed at this period. Although the British tried to crush resistance by implementing harsh laws and jailing Gandhi and other leaders, the movement gained increasing support.

The non-cooperation campaign, 1920–2

In 1920, Congress formally agreed to support Gandhi's plan for a campaign of non-cooperation, which now included a call for *swaraj* (self-government) as well, through legitimate and peaceful means. The boycott of British goods and institutions had some success. The British reacted to the campaign by arresting 20,000 protesters, but this only

Khalifat: 'caliph' is a Muslim term for a supreme political and spiritual leader in the Muslim world. The Khalifat movement among Muslims in India wanted to protect the Ottoman Empire by putting pressure on the British. When the Ottoman Empire was broken up after the First World War, and Turkey became a secular state, the movement lost its primary goal and became part of the wider nationalist movement in India.

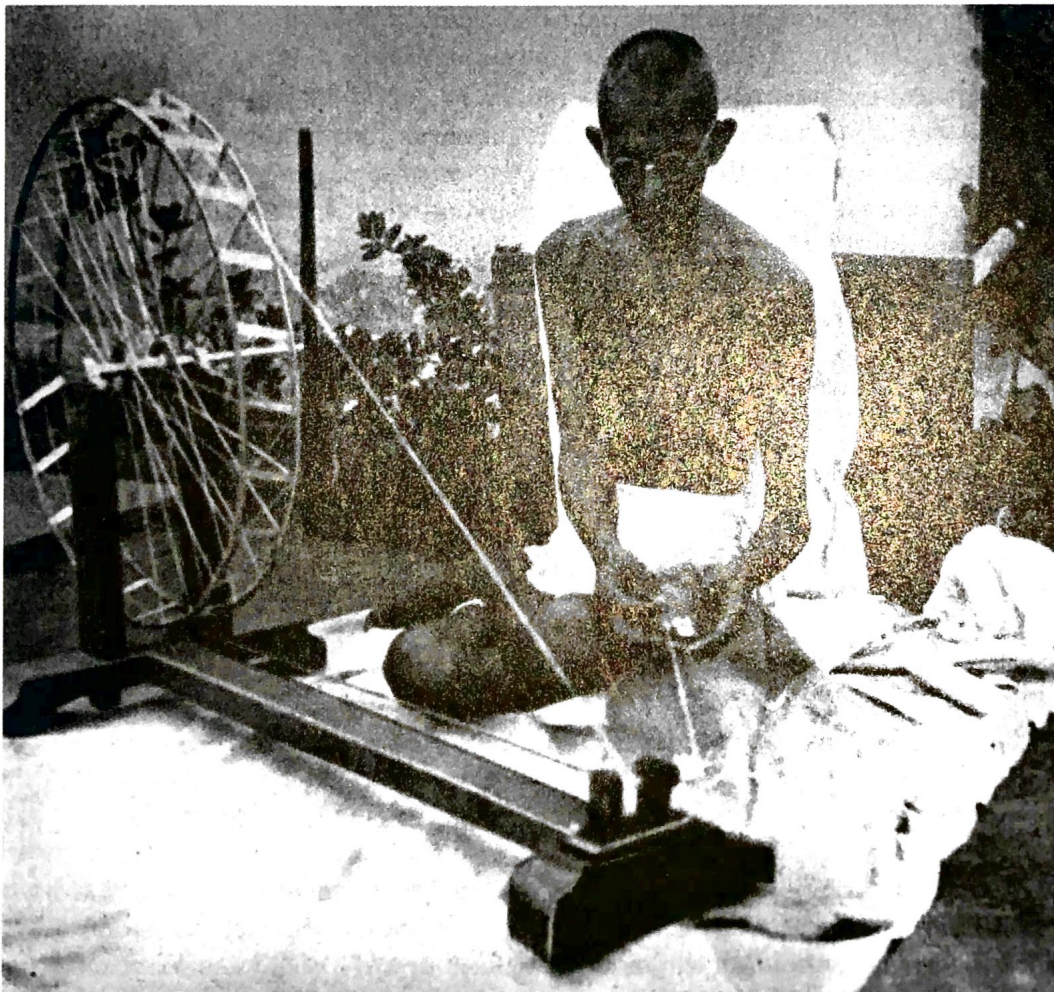


Figure 3.5 Gandhi at his spinning wheel; his promotion of spinning had symbolic significance rather than practical use – hand-woven cloth symbolised a rejection of foreign manufactured goods and the promotion of self-reliance; the spinning wheel became the symbol of the Indian nationalist movement

'Untouchables': the lowest category in the caste system, they traditionally suffered many forms of discrimination. They could not own land, enter temples or use common resources such as village wells or roads. They performed all the menial work, such as carrying water, tanning leather and working the land, usually as sharecroppers. The British colonial administration referred to them as the 'depressed classes'. Gandhi fought for their rights and called them *Harijans*, or children of God.

Fact: *Hindutwa*, or the promotion of Hindu values and the creation of a state modelled on Hindu beliefs and culture, was the aim of a militant Hindu nationalist group, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which was formed in 1925. It was a member of the RSS who later assassinated Gandhi because of his tolerant attitude towards Muslims. The ideas of *Hindutwa* re-emerged as a powerful political force in Indian politics in the 1980s, in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political group associated with Hindu nationalism.

QUESTION

Explain the dilemma facing Muslims in India during the 1920s.

prompted further resistance. However, when protests got out of control and protesters turned to violence, Gandhi called off the campaign. A month later, Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to six years in prison. Although he was released after two years for health reasons, he abstained from direct political activity until 1929. During this period he abandoned any political action and withdrew to fast and to meditate. He called for a 'constructive programme' of local hand-weaving industries and social programmes to promote self-reliance.

During this period, Gandhi fought for greater rights for the 'Untouchables' and managed to negotiate some reforms to the caste system in the province of Travancore, allowing freedom of movement. By championing their cause, Gandhi encouraged social integration and, critically, sent out a significant signal that post-colonial India would be a modern state based on the values of social equality for all.

Communal tensions

A feature of the early non-cooperation campaign had been the unity between Hindus and Muslims. For example, the Khalifat leader Mohammed Ali had served as president of Congress as well. However, a disturbing development in the mid-1920s was the growth of tension and violence between religious communities. This was partly due to the emergence of a politicised form of Hinduism, called *Hindutwa*, which promoted an anti-Muslim message.

The 1920s also saw a strengthening of the Muslim League, as the Khalifat movement declined with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the leader of the League, offered to cooperate with Congress to draw up proposals for constitutional reform, in return for safeguards for the Muslim minority. But, under pressure from Hindu nationalists, Congress rejected this offer. Tensions between the two communities were heightened in some regions by economic factors. In many – but certainly not all – provinces, many of the landlords and traders were Hindu, while the Muslims were peasant farmers or poor workers.

SOURCE B

I have a culture, a polity, an outlook on life – a complete synthesis which is Muslim. Where God commands I am a Muslim first, a Muslim second, and a Muslim last, and nothing but a Muslim. . . . But where India is concerned, where India's freedom is concerned, where the welfare of India is concerned, I am an Indian first, an Indian second, an Indian last, and nothing but an Indian.

Mohammed Ali, commenting on the conflicting sense of identity facing Muslims in India in the 1920s. Quoted in S. Bose and A. Jalal (1996), *Modern South Asia*, London: Routledge, p. 143.

In 1927, when the British government was investigating constitutional reform in India, **Motilal Nehru** drafted a proposed constitution that called for **dominion status** and full self-government. Younger and more radical members of Congress, such as Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru, went even further and called for complete self-government outside the British Empire. At the same time, Jinnah and the Muslim League were insisting that Muslims should be given separate representation to protect their position as a minority.

During 1928, there were radical protests by students and urban youth and a series of strikes by workers in Bombay, backed by the Communist Party of India. The British authorities responded by charging thirty-one trade union leaders with planning to overthrow the government, although they were eventually freed after their trials collapsed. At the 1929 session of Congress, Gandhi backed the demand for *purna swaraj*, or complete independence. The failure of Britain to negotiate meaningfully with the nationalists had pushed Congress into radical action. Even Gandhi had, to a degree, become more radical as a result of the slow pace of reform in the 1920s.

The development of a mass-based nationalist movement

The move to a mass-based nationalist movement in the 1930s started with the Salt March. Gandhi chose to make salt the issue upon which he would base his second great *satyagraha* campaign. Salt was a vital commodity in India, a basic life-sustaining resource. Not only did the British tax it heavily but its production was a state monopoly – it was illegal for ordinary Indians to manufacture or sell salt. In March 1930, Gandhi began a march of nearly 400km (250 miles) to the coast. Crowds gathered to support him and the event received media coverage all over the world. When Gandhi arrived at the sea, he picked up a lump of natural salt, symbolically breaking the law. The authorities made no attempt to stop this act, so powerful was the message that the protest action sent out to millions of Indians and to people around the world. Soon the protests spread, and thousands of people began to break the salt laws. Eventually, the authorities reacted by imprisoning thousands of protesters, including Gandhi. His arrest prompted nationwide strikes and rioting in the larger urban centres. By the end of 1930, 100,000 people had been arrested and one hundred had been killed by the police.

Eventually the British decided on negotiation, and a Round Table conference was held in London. However, without any representatives from Congress – which boycotted the meeting – little progress was made. In 1931, Irwin, the viceroy of India, released Gandhi and began talks with him in Delhi. Given Irwin's previous opposition to reform in India, this shows just how seriously the British viewed the situation. Irwin and Gandhi reached an agreement: Gandhi called off the civil disobedience campaign and, in return, the British recognised the development of a local Indian manufacturing economy and invited Gandhi to London for a second round of talks. The second Round Table conference in London did little to advance India's cause, and on his return to India, Gandhi called for renewed civil disobedience.

Increasing political tension

In 1932, Gandhi was arrested and imprisoned once again, leading to widespread resistance to the colonial power. Peasants refused to pay taxes and support for the boycott of British goods increased. During this period another 80,000 Indians were imprisoned. As well as repression, Britain also resorted to 'political engineering to divide and deflect the nationalist challenge', according to Bose and Jalal. This took the form of the Communal Award, a voting formula that confirmed separate electorates for religious minorities, such as Muslims and Sikhs, and also for the 'depressed castes' (the Untouchables). Gandhi viewed this development as a serious challenge to the unity of the nationalist movement, and threatened to fast to death in his prison cell. The fast had a wide impact on public opinion and eventually led to an agreement between Gandhi and Dr B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchables, that a separate electorate would

Motilal Nehru (1861–1931)

He was an early leader of the Indian nationalist movement, a leader of the Indian National Congress and founder of the influential Nehru-Gandhi family. His son, Jawaharlal Nehru, was independent India's first prime minister (1947–64); his granddaughter, Indira Gandhi, was prime minister from 1966 to 1977 and from 1980 to 1984; and his great-grandson, Rajiv Gandhi, was prime minister from 1984 to 1989.

Dominion status: gave colonies autonomy to run their own affairs. They were linked to Britain as members of the empire but not ruled by Britain. Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada had dominion status; British colonies in Asia and other parts of Africa did not.

Historical debate:

There are different interpretations of modern Indian history. Imperialist historians focus on the role of the British in the progress towards independence. Indian nationalist historians focus on the role played by Indian leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru in the independence movement. Historians of the more recent 'subaltern studies' group focus on the role played by ordinary people in this struggle, and how they too were agents of political and social change. The word 'subaltern' is a military term meaning someone of inferior rank, but in this context it is used to refer to anyone who holds an inferior position in society in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity or religion.

ACTIVITY

In pairs create a chart. On one side list Gandhi's actions and policies, on the other rate their effectiveness in bringing about an end to British domination in India from 1 (very ineffective) to 5 (very effective).



Figure 3.6 A significant feature of the salt campaign was the involvement of large numbers of women as marchers and speakers

be abandoned in favour of a larger number of reserved seats. Some more traditionalist Congress members were troubled by Gandhi's pact with Ambedkar and his championing of the depressed castes.

Around this time, the Muslim League began calling for a separate Muslim state as part of the process of decolonisation. During the First World War, the League and Congress had made an agreement, the Lucknow Pact, to cooperate in striving for independence. However, this agreement had later collapsed and the two organisations became alienated from one another. After the failure of the Round Table talks in 1930, the League drafted its first demands for an independent Muslim state, which it called Pakistan. The name means 'land of the pure' in the Urdu language, and was made up from the initial letters of the Muslim-majority provinces of Punjab, the Afghan frontier, Kashmir and Sind. The aspirations of the League were further reinforced in 1932 with the British government's announcement of the Communal Award.

Nationalist leaders from both movements condemned the British government's proposals in the 1935 Government of India Act as too little too late. Nehru called the act a 'charter of slavery'; Bose dismissed it as a scheme 'not for self-government, but for maintaining British rule'; and Jinnah described it as 'most reactionary, retrograde, injurious and fatal to the interest of British India vis-a-vis the Indian states'. Nevertheless, Congress and the League decided to participate in the provincial elections held in 1937. But the success of Congress in winning 70 per cent of the popular vote in these elections, and the failure of the League to win much support at all, added to the tensions between the two movements.

Growing divisions

Although the League had fared badly in the elections, Jinnah hoped that the League could form part of coalition governments in the provinces that had large Muslim minorities. Having won the elections so convincingly, however, Congress was not prepared to compromise with the League in this way. It turned down Jinnah's offer of cooperation, although it did appoint some of its own Muslim members to provincial governments. Historians such as Barbara and Thomas Metcalf refer to the attitude and actions of Congress towards the League at this time as arrogant and 'high-handed', and say that they caused the League to strengthen its efforts to gain a mass following. In some provinces, Muslim leaders complained of favouritism towards Hindus, and the promotion of Hindu symbols and the Hindi language, although this was never Congress policy. Using the slogan 'Islam in danger' as a rallying call, Jinnah tried to build up his powerbase by uniting all Muslims within the League. Support for the idea that India's Muslims were a distinct nation entitled to a separate state gained ground, especially as the election results had revealed the electoral dangers that Muslims faced as part of a

SOURCE C

I am proud of being an Indian. I am proud of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality... Islam has now as great a claim on the soil of India as Hinduism. If Hinduism has been the religion of the people here for several thousands of years, Islam has also been their religion for a thousand years. Just as a Hindu can say with pride that he is an Indian and follows Hinduism, so also we can say with equal pride that we are Indians and follow Islam.

Statement by Maulana Azad, president of the Indian National Congress, 1940. Quoted in B. Metcalf and T. Metcalf (2006), *A Concise History of Modern India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 198.

QUESTION

Compare and contrast the views expressed in **Sources B** and **C**. How might Jinnah have responded to this statement by Maulana Azad? What response would a supporter of *Hindutwa* make to it?

**Jawaharlal Nehru
(1889–1964)**

He played a key role in the Indian nationalist movement, as a leader of the Indian National Congress and as the recognised heir of Gandhi. A strong supporter of democracy and secularism, he advocated socialist central planning to promote economic development in India. He served as India's first prime minister, leading the Congress Party to victory in India's first three general elections. He died of a heart attack while still in office.

**Subhas Chandra Bose
(1897–1945)**

He was an Indian nationalist leader who supported radical social and economic policies and a more militant nationalism. He believed that a non-violent approach to British rule would not be effective and advocated violent resistance. He later formed the Indian National Army to fight the British during the Second World War.

**KEY CONCEPTS
QUESTION**

Causes and consequences: What caused the split in the Indian National Congress in 1939? What were the consequences of this split?

single state. However, some Muslims continued to support the goal of a united India, as the statement by Maulana Azad, president of Congress in 1940, shows (**Source C**).

By the late 1930s there was growing conflict between the left- and right-wings within Congress itself. The most prominent leaders in the left-wing were **Jawaharlal Nehru** and the more radical **Subhas Chandra Bose**. They were impatient with the cautious and conservative approach advocated by Gandhi and others. Gandhi tried to maintain unity by ensuring that first Nehru (in 1936–7) and then Bose (in 1938) served as president of Congress.

In 1939, Bose was re-elected as president of Congress in the first contested election in the history of the movement. He was supported by the youth, trade union and peasant wings of the party. It seemed that elements within Congress had run out of patience and were moving towards support for a more radical revolutionary – and potentially violent – solution to British domination of India.

However, Bose's re-election was opposed by Gandhi and many of the most powerful figures in Congress, and the election threatened to split the party in two, weakening the nationalist movement. When Bose realised he would not have the cooperation of the moderates in Congress, he left to form the revolutionary Forward Bloc Party. These developments showed that, despite the emergence of radical forces, the moderates managed to maintain control of the nationalist movement. But the tensions and divisions threatened the unity of the nationalist movement at a critical time when the Second World War was starting in Europe.

The nationalist movement during the Second World War

The war created political opportunities for the Indian nationalists when it became obvious that Britain needed the full support of India in the war against Japan. The Cripps mission offered the nationalists independence after the war, in return for support for the British war effort.

Congress rejected the offer. It accepted that, in the long term, a Japanese victory in Asia would simply replace one form of colonial domination with another; however, the postponement of independence seemed unreasonable. As a result, Congress began to campaign actively for immediate independence from Britain. In August 1942, it adopted the 'Quit India' resolution and re-launched the campaign of non-cooperation with the colonial power. Britain reacted by imprisoning Congress leaders and banning the organisation. As Britain's repressive policy took hold, almost 60,000 Indians, including Gandhi and Nehru, were detained without trial. British attempts to control the increasingly dangerous situation in India led to more than 1,000 people being killed.

SOURCE D

India will attain her freedom through her non-violent strength, and will retain it likewise. Therefore, the committee hopes that Japan will not have any designs on India. But if Japan attacks India, and Britain makes no response to its appeal, the committee will expect all those who look to the Congress for guidance to offer complete non-violent non-cooperation to the Japanese forces, and not to render any assistance to them. It is no part of the duty of those who are attacked to render any assistance to the attacker. It is their duty to offer complete non-cooperation.

Extract from *Gandhi's 'Quit India' resolution*, 1942.

The war also created opportunities for the Muslim League. The League's leader, Jinnah, at first approached Congress with an offer of cooperation in the face of British repression. When Congress rejected this offer, the Muslim League continued to cooperate with Britain. Jinnah accepted Cripps's offer of delayed independence, but he demanded a two-state solution after independence. As the situation in India grew increasingly tense, and Congress became the target of British repression, the League moved to give full support to the British war effort. In return, Britain gave serious consideration to a two-state solution to the problem. The League was therefore in a strong negotiating position at the end of the war. Its support for Britain's actions in India would be a key factor in the emergence of the separate Muslim state of Pakistan after independence.

The move to independence, 1945–7

After the end of the Second World War, anti-British feelings in India intensified. In 1945, Indians who had fought in Bose's Indian National Army alongside the Japanese were put on trial for treason. The trial turned them into national heroes – they were seen as fighters for Indian freedom who were now being unfairly tried by the colonial power. Massive protests followed, and the British were forced to reduce the punishment to suspended sentences. This failed to stop the protests, which included a mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy involving twenty naval bases and seventy-four ships. Faced with a rapidly deteriorating situation, the British government realised the importance of reaching a settlement in India urgently. Britain had been seriously weakened by the war, and did not have the economic resources to maintain control in these uneasy circumstances.

The situation in India was further complicated by differences of opinion over the specific form of a post-colonial state. Congress wanted the creation of a single, secular state, in which religious affiliation would not be significant. The Muslim League, however, wanted India to be divided. Muslims formed only about 20 per cent of the population at that stage, and they feared that their interests would be neglected in a Hindu-dominated state. They wanted a separate country, Pakistan, to be created in the northern parts of the subcontinent, where most Muslims lived. Congress vigorously opposed the concept of a divided India. Congress leaders, such as Gandhi and Nehru, tried to persuade Muslim leaders that they would be safe in a united India.

The leader of the Muslim League, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, put pressure on Britain to support the creation of two separate states. The League also appealed to popular fears and prejudices – Muslims of all classes flocked to join the organisation, believing that Islam was in danger. In **Source E**, historian Ramachandra Guha analyses the contrast between the election messages of Congress and the League in the 1946 elections for provincial assemblies.

SOURCE E

The world over, the rhetoric of modern democratic politics has been marked by two rather opposed rhetorical styles. The first appeals to hope, to popular aspirations for economic prosperity and social peace. The second appeals to fear, to sectional worries about being worsted or swamped by one's historic enemies. In the elections of 1946 the Congress relied on the rhetoric of hope. It had a strongly positive content to its programme, promising land reform, workers' rights, and the like. The Muslim League, on the other hand, relied on the rhetoric of fear. If they did not get a separate homeland, they told the voters, then they would be crushed by the more numerous Hindus in a united India.

R. Guha (2007), *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, London: Macmillan, p. 28.

Fact: Subhas Chandra Bose viewed the war as an opportunity to force Britain to grant independence immediately. He allied himself with the Axis powers, and tried unsuccessfully to raise an Indian Legion in Europe to fight for the Germans. When the Germans transferred him to Southeast Asia by submarine in 1943, he formed a 60,000-strong Indian National Army (INA) among Indian prisoners of war and civilians there. He also established a Free India government in the Burmese capital of Rangoon. The INA fought Allied forces in Burma, and invaded and briefly captured parts of north-eastern India, before being defeated.

QUESTION

Comment on whether the course of action outlined in Gandhi's 'Quit India' resolution is consistent with his philosophy of *satyagraha*.

QUESTION

Does **Source E** show a biased view? Explain how it can be argued that the language used in the source can contribute to bias. How could one establish whether it is an accurate and reliable interpretation of the situation?

ACTIVITY

Design two essay plans, one arguing that the Second World War was the critical factor in bringing independence to India, the other arguing that the war was secondary to other factors. In pairs, decide which essay plan is more convincing.

Communalism: the belief in promoting the interests of one ethnic, religious or cultural group rather than those of society as a whole. Communal groups were responsible for promoting violence between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.

ACTIVITY

Contrast the responses of Congress and the Muslim League towards Britain during the Second World War, and comment on their significance.

QUESTION

How and why had the situation in India changed after the Second World War?

Communal violence

As negotiations between the British government and Indian representatives dragged on, tensions mounted. Fearing that Britain and Congress would push forward with plans for a single state, Jinnah called for 'direct action' in support of the Muslim League's demand for partition. He wanted to show the other parties that Muslim aspirations could not be ignored.

On 16 August 1946, or 'Direct Action Day', there was rioting in Calcutta, which soon turned into widespread **communal** violence between Muslim and Hindu communities, with both sides committing atrocities. In this Great Calcutta Killing, as it became known, more than 4,000 people were killed and thousands more wounded or made homeless. There were violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims in other parts of India as well, and thousands more were killed. The British interpreted the violence as a sign that there were irreconcilable differences between Hindus and Muslims, an interpretation that is questioned by many historians today.

Independence and partition, 1947

In an atmosphere of escalating violence, Congress reluctantly came to accept that partition was the only viable solution and that British India would be divided into two separate states. The violence also exposed the weakness of Britain's position in the subcontinent, and the British decided to quit India as soon as possible.

In February 1947, Lord Louis Mountbatten was sent as the last viceroy of India, to facilitate and oversee the handover of power by June 1948. He later brought the date forward to 15 August 1947. In only six months, therefore, Mountbatten had to decide whether power would be handed over to one, two or more states, where the borders between them would be, and what was to happen to the 'princely states' – those parts of India that had remained under the control of hereditary rulers.

Mountbatten opted for the Muslim League's two-state solution and created two enclaves in north-western India and eastern Bengal, containing large numbers of Muslims, to form Pakistan. The rulers of the princely states were allowed to choose which state to join. The problems were not, however, solved by the partition plan. The ethnic and religious mix of the subcontinent was far more complex than implied by the simple geographic division devised by the British. For the partition plan to work, millions of people would have to relocate to one country or the other, depending on their ethnicity and religion.

In August 1947, British rule came to an end when the subcontinent became independent as two separate states: India and Pakistan. But the challenges facing the new states, especially in the immediate aftermath of independence and partition, were immense. (You will read about them in the next unit.)

3.6 What role did Mohammad Ali Jinnah play in the struggle for independence?

Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948) was an important figure in the Indian independence movement. Like many other nationalist leaders, he had a Western

education. After studying at Bombay University, he trained as a lawyer in London in the 1890s where he was influenced by British liberal ideas. As a result he came to believe that the Indian independence struggle should use constitutional methods. He was a member of the Indian National Congress from 1896, but only became active in Indian politics after defending the leading nationalist Tilak who was arrested and charged with sedition at the time of the conflict in Bengal in 1905.

In 1913, Jinnah joined the Muslim League and in 1916 became its president for the first time. He believed that India had a right to independence, and argued that Indians were entitled to agitate for this goal. However, he also recognised the benefits that British rule had brought to India in the form of law, culture and industry. In many ways these were the views of most Indian nationalist leaders at the time. At the same time, Jinnah was also a member of the Home Rule League, which wanted India to be given dominion status. This would give India autonomy rather than complete independence within the British Empire. Initially Jinnah had been a moderate liberal Anglophile, but Britain's failure to give independence to India after the First World War caused him to adopt more radical views.

In 1920, when the Indian National Congress launched a non-cooperation campaign, Jinnah resigned from Congress. He thought that Gandhi's tactics of non-cooperation could destabilise the political structure. He was also uneasy about Gandhi's public image as a traditional Hindu holy man. But the key difference between Jinnah and other Congress leaders was his promotion of a two-state solution for India after independence. He claimed that, in a single post-colonial state, Muslims would be swamped by the Hindu majority. Congress continued to believe firmly in a united India.

Under Jinnah, the Muslim League became an alternative pressure group that the British sometimes played off against Congress. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Jinnah campaigned for independence, but he became disillusioned at the slow pace of reform. He fought successfully for separate Muslim representation in elections, but was bitterly disappointed about the poor performance of the League in the 1937 elections. From then on, he set out to build up support for the League as the sole representative of Indian Muslims.

During the Second World War, Jinnah astutely supported the British, and this strengthened the position of the League in later negotiations. In 1941, he started a newspaper, *Dawn*, to spread the League's views, and he put considerable pressure on Cripps during the British representative's visit to accept the concept of a separate Muslim state. During this period, Gandhi tried unsuccessfully to come to an agreement with Jinnah, but there were fundamental differences in their ideas about partition.

In the tense period after the war, Jinnah took advantage of the confusion to continue to demand a separate Muslim state. On 16 August 1946, he instructed his followers to engage in 'direct action'. This led to strikes and protests and, eventually, communal violence on a large scale.

Eventually the British and Congress leaders accepted the partition of India, with Pakistan as a separate Muslim state. Jinnah became its first leader, but died of tuberculosis within a year. The new state of Pakistan, for which he had fought so hard, was a fragile political entity, with its Western and Eastern zones separated by 1,500km (930 miles) of Indian territory.

Historical debate:

Some historians believe that it was Jinnah's call for direct action that caused much of the violence and bloodshed that followed. Metcalf believes that, perhaps unintentionally, Jinnah's call precipitated the '*horrors of riot and massacre that were to disfigure the coming of independence*'. Ramachandra Guha states that Jinnah was deliberately trying to '*polarise the two communities further, and thus force the British to divide India when they finally quit*'. However, other historians, including Bose and Jalal, believe that Jinnah's intentions have been misinterpreted and that he was merely trying to ensure '*an equitable share of power for Muslims*' in a united India, and not the creation of a separate Islamic state.

Historical debate:

There is some debate about whether Mohammad Ali Jinnah wanted a secular or an Islamic state in Pakistan. He died before he could put policy into action. Many scholars believe that he wanted a state similar to modern Turkey. It is interesting to note Jinnah's comments on the nature of the state he envisaged for Pakistan in Source F, in an address he made to the first meeting of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, on 11 August 1947.

SOURCE F

You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan... You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the state... We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, quoted in S. Bose and A. Jalal (1996), *Modern South Asia*, London: Routledge, p 194.

Many historians are critical of Jinnah for his insistence on a two-state solution. Some also argue that he encouraged communal violence in the final months before independence. Others, however, believe that that it would have happened anyway, given the tensions at the time. Other historians believe that Congress should share the blame for the partition of India. Scholars such as Seervai and Jalal argue that Jinnah never really wanted partition but used the concept of it as a means to try to force Congress to share power with the Muslim League and in this way get political rights for Muslims, but that Congress leaders would not accept this.

3.7 What role did Mohandas Gandhi play in the struggle for independence?

Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948) is one of the outstanding figures of the 20th century, so much so that it is difficult to evaluate objectively his impact on the Indian nationalist movement and India's final transition to independence in 1947. In many ways he was similar to Jinnah. He certainly had the same liberal Western-influenced background. Where he differed from the Muslim leader, however, was in his public image as a Hindu holy man. In addition, his policies of *satyagraha* were directly opposed to Jinnah's more constitutional political approach.

Gandhi was born into a middle-class Indian family; his father had been a high-ranking official in Porbander, one of the princely states. Gandhi was brought up in the Jain religious tradition, which influenced his later political belief in *satyagraha*. He trained as a lawyer at University College London. One of his first legal positions was in South Africa, where he experienced racial discrimination at first hand. He also saw the British colonial authorities in South Africa use extreme violence to quell opposition to its rule, in the ruthless suppression of a Zulu rebellion in 1906. These formative years led Gandhi to reject racism and injustice, not only for Indians but for all people. These experiences, together with his religious background, convinced him that the most effective way of fighting colonial oppression was by non-violent methods. He believed that any other strategy in India might lead to the same violent response by the British that he had seen in South Africa.

He returned to India in 1915, and spent more than a year travelling around the country assessing local conditions. He also focused on issues of self-reliance and social mobility,

encouraging the building of schools, hospitals and clean water facilities. From this early period there was a combination of Western liberal thought and an Indian approach to non-violent protest in his actions. By 1918, Gandhi had led the first non-violent acts of non-cooperation in the Champaran agitation. The success of this event established his reputation as an effective leader of mass civil disobedience. The strategy was very effective when used against a liberal democracy like Britain, where suppressing such protests was a difficult public-relations problem for the British to solve.

Gandhi became a national figure following the Amritsar Massacre in 1919, after which he launched his first all-India non-cooperation campaign. Through this and later campaigns he was able to transform the nationalist struggle into a mass movement. Gandhi also proved to be adept at propaganda. The Salt March of 1930 is an excellent example of this (see Section 3.5, The development of a mass-based nationalist movement). By marching hundreds of kilometres in full view of the media to collect salt illegally, Gandhi made a most effective political statement. The salt tax was patently unfair and Gandhi responded with non-violent protest. The British reaction, imprisoning more than 60,000 people, only served to damage their credibility as rulers of the subcontinent. Gandhi was imprisoned several times during the independence struggle and he used hunger strikes – both inside and outside prison – as a form of political and social protest.

Gandhi can be seen as a social liberal. He certainly wanted reform of the Indian caste system to create greater equality, and his liberal attitude also extended to the emancipation of Indian women. He was partly successful on both counts, which is significant given the deeply rooted cultural attitudes that he was challenging.

Fact: The Champaran agitation was one of Gandhi's first major successes. He supported the cause of peasant farmers in the Champaran district of Bihar, who were being forced to grow indigo for British planters, instead of food crops for their own use.



Figure 3.7 Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Mohandas Gandhi in 1944

Historical debate:

Historians often debate the impact of individuals on the historical process. One school of thought is that certain individuals can change the course of history; Gandhi is one of these individuals. Another argues that developments in social, cultural and economic structures are the key part of the historical process. In this perspective, individuals such as Gandhi are nothing more than actors in a play whose lines have already been written. Re-read this unit and decide which school of thought you most favour.

ACTIVITY

Read the news report published on the 50th anniversary of Gandhi's death on www.bbc.co.uk (enter 'The lost legacy of Mahatma Gandhi' into the search box to find the report).

How valid are the criticisms of Gandhi from left- and right-wing perspectives? Does he deserve the title of 'father of the nation'? How appropriate is the title of this article?

Gandhi took advantage of Britain's involvement in the Second World War to increase the pressure for independence in the 'Quit India' campaign. He has been criticised for this because of his failure to make a stand against Nazism. He was, however, quite correct in pointing out the inconsistencies of the British position in fighting Nazism without giving self-determination to the Indian population. The events of the First World War period had also taught him that British promises could not necessarily be relied upon.

Gandhi has been criticised too for his attitude to the form of the post-colonial state in India. India was a diverse society, but 80 per cent of the population was Hindu. Many of the ethnic and religious minorities – especially Muslims – genuinely feared Hindu domination in an independent India. Gandhi has been accused of not fully understanding the depth of Muslim fears. When Congress considered the idea of a federated India in 1934, in which Muslims would have some autonomy in Muslim majority provinces, Gandhi made his opinions public by resigning from the party in protest. The result of this failure to compromise arguably contributed to the final division of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, an event that was accompanied by considerable bloodshed.

Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a Hindu extremist, Nathuram Godse, who felt that Gandhi had weakened India by upholding secular rather than Hindu nationalist values. (You will read more about this in Unit 3) In India, Gandhi is seen as the father of the nation. Although he was not the originator of non-violence as a means of political action, he was the first to apply it successfully on a large scale. He became the pre-eminent independence politician of the day, and a great spiritual and moral leader. He became known as the 'Mahatma' – a semi-religious term meaning 'great soul'.

3.8 Why did the Indian nationalist movement succeed?

Some historians emphasise the role played by Gandhi in the success of the Indian nationalist movement. There can be no doubt that his leadership and actions played a big part in it, especially by turning what had been a small organisation dominated by elite middle-class leaders into a mass movement. By appealing to traditional cultural values and identifying with specific groups and their problems, he generated wide support for the Congress movement. However, there were other very astute and able leaders in Congress who also played important roles in the success of the nationalist movement, one of them being to recognise and use Gandhi's broad-based appeal.

However, the success of the Indian nationalist movement cannot simply be accounted for by the actions and appeal of the 'Great Men'. Some historians believe that it was the pressure from below – the 'subalterns' – that made the British position untenable in the end. These came in the form of peasant resistance, strikes by workers and actions by individuals, both non-violent and violent. The sheer numbers involved gave the nationalist movement increasing momentum.

Source G suggests that we also need to examine the wider context to understand why the nationalist movement succeeded:

SOURCE G

The reasons for independence were multifaceted and the result of both long and short-term factors.

The pressure from the rising tide of nationalism made running the empire politically and economically very challenging and increasingly not cost effective. This pressure was embodied as much in the activities of large pan-national organisations like the Congress as in pressure from below – from the 'subalterns' through the acts of peasant and tribal resistance and revolt, trade union strikes and individual acts of subversion and violence.

There were further symptoms of the disengagement from empire. European capital investment declined in the inter-war years and India went from a debtor country in World War One to a creditor in World War Two...

Britain's strategy of a gradual devolution of power, its representation to Indians through successive constitutional acts and a deliberate 'Indianisation' of the administration, gathered a momentum of its own. As a result, India moved inexorably towards self-government.

The actual timing of independence owed a great deal to World War Two and the demands it put on the British government and people. The Labour party had a tradition of supporting Indian claims for self-rule, and was elected to power in 1945 after a debilitating war which had reduced Britain to her knees. Furthermore, with US foreign policy pressurising the end of western subjugation and imperialism, it seemed only a matter of time before India gained its freedom.

C. Kaul (2011), 'From empire to independence: the British Raj in India 1858–1947', www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/independence1947_01.shtml.

ACTIVITY

Use the information in the text and in **Source G** to make a spider diagram to analyse the reasons why the Indian nationalist movement succeeded.

End of unit activities

- 1 Working in small groups, debate the effectiveness of *satyagraha* as a political tactic. Refer to events in Gandhi's fight against British rule in India to support both sides of the argument. Report your conclusions to the rest of the class.
- 2 Write two letters to the press that might have appeared in *The Times of India* in 1942. The first should urge support for the 'Quit India' campaign launched by Congress. The second should argue that the special circumstances of the war require patience, restraint and loyalty to king and empire.
- 3 Draw up a table to compare the views of Gandhi and Jinnah. Use the example below as a model:

Views about:	Gandhi	Jinnah
Political tactics		
Britain and British rule		
The place of religion in society and state		
Visions for the future of India		

India and Pakistan

- 4 'Britain had hoped to continue to rule India after the war, but Indian nationalists hoped for change.' Write a response to this statement, explaining whether continuity or change was a more realistic hope in the aftermath of the Second World War.
- 5 'The Muslim League emerged from the Second World War in a far stronger position than it had held in 1939.' Do you agree with this view? Write a paragraph to support your answer.
- 6 Work in small groups of four or five. Each student should assume a role and prepare to defend the policies and actions of that role. Examples could be Gandhi, Bose, Nehru, Jinnah or Mountbatten. In turn, each character should make a short presentation, explaining his beliefs, policies and actions, and then defend them when cross-questioned by the rest of the group.