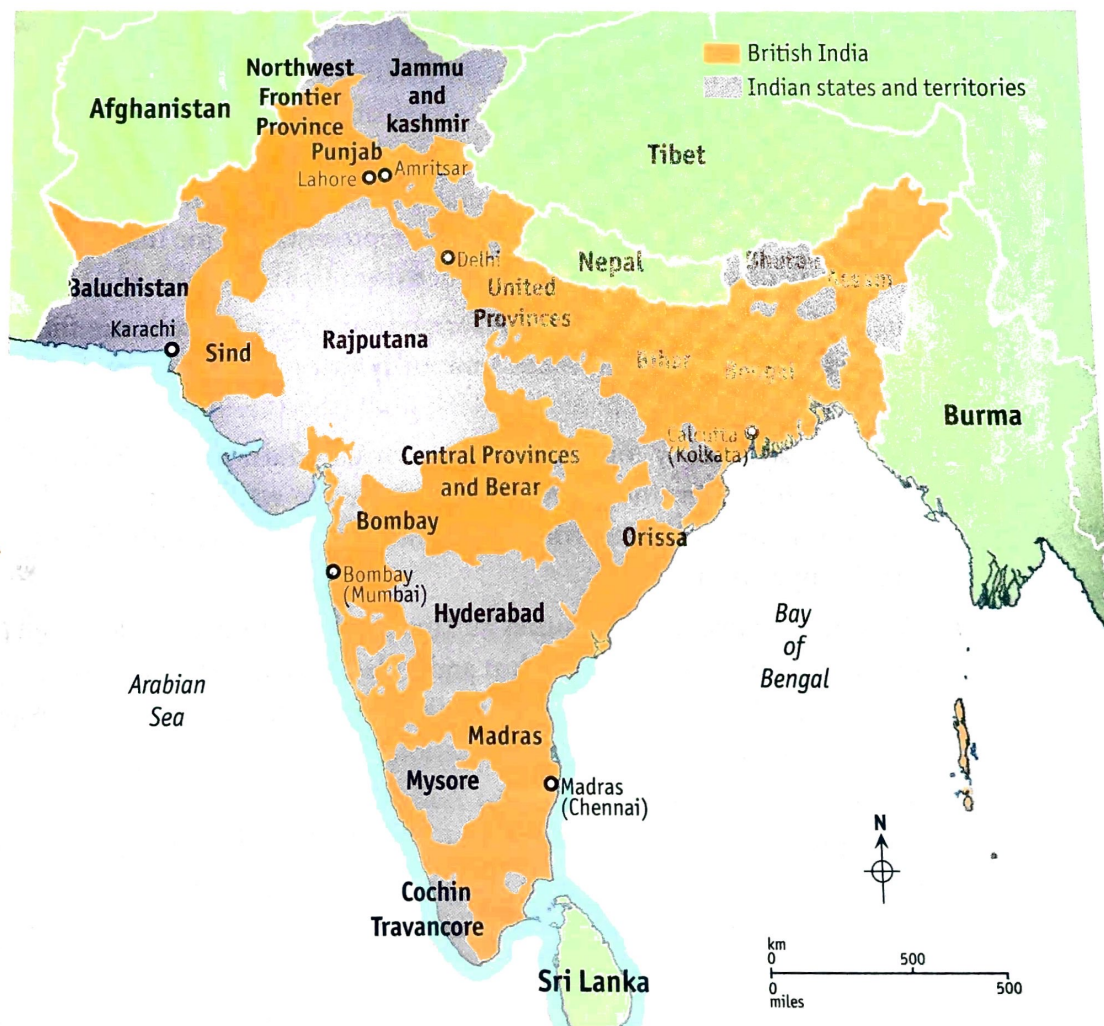


## Introduction

During the 19th century, when most of Africa and much of Asia were colonised by European powers, a large area of South Asia became the British colony of India. In all the colonial empires, resistance to the imposition of foreign rule took many forms, ranging from uprisings and armed rebellion to acts of defiance or the creation of anti-colonial literature, art and music. In India after the First World War, a strong nationalist movement developed, determined to end British rule. This was finally achieved after the Second World War, when India and Pakistan became independent countries. The success of the Indian nationalist movement inspired similar movements in other Asian and African colonies.

India emerged as a stable democracy, but Pakistan was not as successful in its transition to independence, lacking many of the advantages held by India. India has since developed into the world's largest democracy, and, with China, is well-placed to emerge as one of the most powerful and influential states in the 21st century. Pakistan, on the other hand, still faces considerable political, social and economic problems.



**Figure 3.1** Map showing pre-independence India, before its partition into India and Pakistan in 1947



# 1

## Unit The origins and rise of independence movements in the Indian subcontinent

### TIMELINE

- 1857–8** Indian uprising.
- 1858** British government takes over control from the East India Company.
- 1885** Indian National Congress (INC) formed.
- 1905** First partition of Bengal.
- 1906** Formation of the Muslim League.
- 1909** Morley reforms make concessions to the nationalists.
- 1914–18** First World War.
- 1919** Amritsar Massacre.
- 1929** Wall Street Crash leads to start of Great Depression.
- 1935** Government of India Act.
- 1939** Second World War begins.
- 1942** British government sends Cripps mission to negotiate with Indian leaders.
- 1945** Second World War ends.

### KEY QUESTIONS

- What role did nationalism and political ideology play in the origins of the nationalist movement in India?
- What role did race, religion and social and economic factors play?
- Which wars influenced the rise of nationalism?
- What other factors influenced the rise of nationalism?

### Overview

- India's complex cultural history is critical to understanding the development of the Indian nationalist movement and the progress towards independence from colonial rule.
- Until 1947, India was a British colony. Colonial rule was efficient but authoritarian, and Indians themselves had no meaningful representation.
- Britain derived great economic benefits from India, including raw materials. Indian soldiers fought Britain's colonial wars, and indentured workers from India provided labour in British colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and other parts of Asia.
- In 1885, the first nationalist organisation was formed – the Indian National Congress. It called for greater representation for Indians in government, rather than independence from British rule.
- In 1906, the Muslim League was formed to protect and advance the interests of Muslims, who were a minority in a predominantly Hindu country.
- Indians played a key role in supporting Britain during the First World War. In return, they hoped for self-rule after the war; but at the end of the war, instead of reform, Britain introduced stricter measures to crush opposition.
- A protest against these measures at Amritsar in 1919 had tragic consequences, when soldiers shot and killed nearly 400 unarmed civilians, and wounded more than 1,000. The Amritsar Massacre was a turning point in Anglo-Indian relations and in the development of the Indian nationalist movement.
- The announcement of further reforms by the British government failed to satisfy the demands of the growing nationalist movement, especially during the crisis of the Great Depression.



- Between the two world wars, Britain introduced some constitutional reforms but the pace of change was too slow to satisfy Indian nationalists.
- Needing support against Japan in the Second World War, Britain committed itself to independence for India once the war was over.
- India played a significant role in the Allied war effort, and by the end of the war was economically stronger. By contrast, Britain emerged from the war in a weak position and was ready to negotiate the end of its Indian empire.

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## 3.1 What role did nationalism and political ideology play in the origins of the nationalist movement in India?

### India before the British

The area of Asia in which India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are situated today is often referred to as the 'subcontinent' or South Asia. Over the centuries, many different people moved into this region, bringing with them their languages, traditions and religions. As a result, the area contains a rich mixture of people and cultures. At first the main religion was Hinduism, and Hindu princes ruled most of the region. Later, Muslim invaders brought Islam to the subcontinent and established the powerful Mughal Empire, which lasted for more than three centuries (1526–1858). Although the rulers of the empire were Muslim, most of the local leaders and the general population remained Hindu. The Sikhs were a much smaller, but significant, religious group.

### British rule in India

British interest in India began when the English East India Company (EIC) set up trading posts along the coast from the beginning of the 17th century. EIC rule gradually expanded into the interior, and by the middle of the 19th century the company controlled large parts of India. Although there was still a Mughal emperor, he had no real power. However, an uprising against EIC control in 1857–8 resulted in the intervention of the British government, which sent troops to crush the uprising and take over control from the EIC.

The Mughal emperor had supported the uprising, and after its failure he was removed from power and sent into exile. India became part of the British Empire. Large parts of the country were placed under direct British administration, but some areas remained under the control of hereditary Indian rulers, with whom the British signed treaties that recognised their autonomy over local affairs. There were more than 500 of these 'princely states', as they were called. India was ruled by a **viceroy** and an administration of 5,000 officials sent from London, who provided efficient, but authoritarian, government. Indians themselves had no meaningful representation in this government,

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### Theory of Knowledge

History and language: Indian nationalists regarded the uprising as the First War of Independence. The British, however, referred to it as the Indian Mutiny, because it started among sepoys – Indian soldiers serving in the army of the English East India Company. The uprising had broad-based support, however, from a wide range of Indians, including peasants, workers, landlords and princes. As a result, historians now describe it as the Indian Uprising. Use this example, and others you can think of, to explain how terminology can reflect bias in history.

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**Viceroy:** the highest official in the colonial administration, who ruled India on behalf of the British monarch. Although there was a great deal of status, material comfort and wealth attached to the position, the viceroy had limited power to influence policy, which was decided by the British government in London and implemented by the secretary of state for India.



# 3

## India and Pakistan

**Diaspora:** a scattering of people around the world, away from their country or continent of origin. Partly as a result of the system of indentured labour, there are substantial Indian minorities living in other parts of the world today. One such Indian community is in South Africa, where Mohandas Gandhi, later to become the dominant figure in the Indian nationalist movement, spent 20 years and developed his political ideas.

**Fact:** The caste system in India developed about 2,500 years ago. It divided society into a hierarchy of levels called castes. Status, occupation, rights, privileges and opportunities in life were all determined by the caste into which one was born. The caste system is usually associated with Hindu tradition but, according to historian Mridula Mukherjee, it was prevalent among Sikhs, Christians and Muslims too.

although they later formed the bulk of the junior staff in the Indian Civil Service. British control over 300 million Indians was enforced by a large army, staffed by British officers and Indian troops. The administration and the army were financed out of taxes paid by Indians.

Britain derived great economic benefits from its Indian empire. Money, collected from peasants in the form of taxes, was transferred to London to fund the British government's purchase of EIC shares, finance capital investments (especially railways) and provide funds for the administration of India. Critics felt that the money could have been better used for internal investments in India itself. Britain also benefited from the balance of trade with India, which supplied raw materials – mainly cotton, jute, indigo, rice and tea – to British factories. In return India bought manufactured goods such as textiles, iron and steel goods and machinery, and by 1914 was the biggest export market for British goods. As a result, India under colonial rule was no longer an exporter of cloth to European markets. Instead it produced raw cotton that was manufactured into cloth in British factories and re-exported to Asia. In this way, colonial rule 'de-industrialised' India. Another disadvantage for India was that land formerly used to grow grains for staple foods was now used for commercial cash-crop production, making peasants dependent on foods grown elsewhere.

India also served Britain's political and economic interests in other parts of the empire. Indian soldiers, paid for by Indian taxpayers, were used to protect trade routes and serve British interests in China, East Africa and the Middle East. India also served as a source of indentured labourers for British colonies in the West Indies, Africa and other parts of Asia. By 1920, however, the system of indenture was stopped, partly as a result of criticism from Indian nationalists, who saw it as one of 'imperial exploitation that brought shame to India', according to Barbara and Thomas Metcalf. These historians also note that the plight of **diaspora** Indians was a 'critical stimulus to Indian nationalism'.

## 3.2 What role did race, religion and social and economic factors play?

After the harsh suppression of the 1857–8 uprising, British power in India seemed to be secure. The British brought certain benefits to India. These included an efficient administration and judicial system, a good railway network and Western education for some. However, British rule was always based on an assumption of superiority, as the statement in **Source A** by a British official, quoted by historian Lawrence James, shows.

### QUESTION

How can the ideas expressed in **Source A** be considered a form of 'cultural imperialism'?

### SOURCE A

We must rule our Asiatic subjects with strict and generous justice, wisely and beneficently, as their natural superiors, by virtue of our purer religion, our sterner energies, our subtler intellect, our more creative faculties, our more commanding and indomitable will.

Quoted in L. James (1997), *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*, London: Abacus, p. 297.



Indians resented the harsh realities of colonial control and the superior attitudes of the colonising power towards them. This view was later explained by Jawaharlal Nehru, who became a leading figure in the nationalist movement against British rule (see **Source B**).

### SOURCE B

We in India have known racialism in all its forms since the beginning of British rule. The whole ideology of this rule was that of the master race, and the structure of government was based upon it; indeed the idea of the master race is inherent in imperialism. There was no subterfuge [nothing hidden] about it; it was proclaimed in unambiguous language by those in authority. More powerful than words was the practice that accompanied them and, generation after generation and year after year, India as a nation and Indians as individuals were subjected to insult, humiliation, and contemptuous treatment. The English were an imperial race, we were told, with the god-given right to govern us and keep us in subjection. As an Indian I am ashamed to write all this, for the memory of it hurts, and what hurts still more is that we submitted for so long to this degradation. I would have preferred any kind of resistance to this, whatever the consequences, rather than that our people should endure this treatment.

J. Nehru (1946), *The Discovery of India*, London: Meridian Books.

## The influence of religion on the early nationalist movement

The British believed that government should be firm and vigilant against the rise of any resistance to their rule. Above all, they wanted to prevent the formation of a united opposition movement. To this end, they stressed differences between people – significantly differences of religion and also of caste. They regarded caste as a form of fixed identity, instead of something that had developed and changed over time. According to the historian Thomas Metcalf, the British saw caste as a ‘concrete, measurable “thing” that could be fitted into a hierarchy able to be ascertained and quantified in reports and surveys’. The result of this colonial policy was to create and intensify existing differences in Indian society (see **Source C**).

### SOURCE C

Having unified India, the British set into motion contrary forces. Fearing the unity of the Indian people to which their own rule had contributed, they followed the classic imperial policy of divide and rule. The diverse and divisive features of Indian society and polity were heightened to promote cleavages among the people and to turn province against province, caste against caste, class against class, Hindus against Muslims, and the princes and landlords against the nationalist movement.

B. Chandra, M. Mukherjee and A. Mukherjee (2000), *India after Independence: 1947–2000*, London: Penguin, p. 18.

### KEY CONCEPTS ACTIVITY

#### Consequences:

Compare and contrast the views expressed in **Sources A and B**. Explain the consequences of colonial attitudes about race on the growth of nationalism and resistance in India.

### QUESTIONS

What is meant by a policy of ‘divide and rule’? How and why did the British use this policy in India?

How could a nationalist movement overcome such tactics?



Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a growing feeling among educated Indians that there should be more Indian representation in government. In 1885, they formed a nationalist organisation called the Indian National Congress (INC). In its early stages, the Congress represented the interests of the wealthy middle class and it did not have mass support. Most of the founding members were graduates and all spoke English. They saw themselves as a bridge between the Indian masses and the colonial power. As a result, the existence of the Congress tended to limit the development of more radical nationalist groups.

The élitist nature of the early Congress made it very conservative in its goals, and it used petitions to try to achieve them. It did not question the continuation of British rule, but called rather for greater Indian representation in the legislative councils, easier access to the Indian Civil Service and less expenditure on the army. Most of its membership was Hindu, although it also had Muslim members. Right from the start, Congress leaders made explicit efforts to draw Muslims into their meetings, and members of the organisation believed that the interests of caste or religious affiliation should be secondary to the needs of the Indian nation as a whole.

However, in 1906, Muslims established their own political organisation, the Muslim League, believing that this was the only way to protect the interests of the Muslim minority. At first the League was dominated by a similar middle- and upper-class leadership to the Congress.

### QUESTION

How did class and religion affect the make-up of the early nationalist movement in India?

## Conflict in Bengal and its impact on religious differences

Serious nationalist opposition to colonial rule in India started when the British decided to partition the province of Bengal in north-eastern India. Bengal had been the first region to come under British control, and its main city, Calcutta, was the capital of British India. The province had a population of more than eighty million people, the majority of whom were Bengali-speaking Hindus. In 1905, the British viceroy announced that the province would be divided into two, in order to provide more efficient administration. This partition created an eastern province with a Muslim majority, and a western part in which Bihari- and Oriya-speaking Hindus were in the majority. Bengali-speaking Hindus saw the partition as a threat to their position in the region and a deliberate attempt by Britain to weaken Bengali nationalism.

The partition prompted Congress into action. An anti-partition movement expressed its opposition using petitions, protests in the press and rallies. When these failed, protestors organised a boycott of British goods. They made public bonfires of manufactured goods from Britain and urged Indians to use local products instead. This boycott proved to be very effective. British imports into India dropped by 25 per cent, and the economy of some areas – such as the city of Bombay on the west coast – expanded as Indian industries developed to take advantage of the gap. The British authorities reacted to the anti-partition protests with mass arrests, which had limited impact. The events had significant results: Congress realised the political power of an economic boycott, and nationalists in other parts of India were united in support for the Bengali cause.

**Fact:** In recent years, many place names in India have been changed. In this chapter, we have used the names that were in use at the time of the historical events discussed. Among other changes, Calcutta is now Kolkata and Bombay is now Mumbai.



## The origins and rise of independence movements in the Indian subcontinent

The confrontation over Bengal radicalised parts of the Congress and a revolutionary wing, called the New Party, emerged. This faction was especially strong in Calcutta, Poona (Pune) and Lahore. This development was significant because it seemed that the more moderate leaders were being marginalised in favour of radicals such as **Bal Gangadhar Tilak**, who urged more active opposition to British rule. Another more radical group favoured assassination and sabotage as forms of protest against colonial policies and actions.

### SOURCE D

We have a stronger weapon, a political weapon, in boycott. We have perceived one fact; that the whole of this administration, which is carried on by a handful of Englishmen, is carried on with our assistance. We are all in subordinate service. This whole government is carried on with our assistance and they try to keep us in ignorance of our power of cooperation between ourselves by which that which is in our own hands at present can be claimed by us and administered by us. The point is to have the entire control in our hands.

Extract from Tilak's address to the Indian National Congress, 1907. Quoted in W.T. De Bary (1958), *Sources of Indian Tradition*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 719–20.

Muslims in Bengal became increasingly unnerved by the developments, and by the appeals to Hindu nationalism made by some anti-partition protestors. Support for the Muslim League increased as the Islamic minority sought to safeguard its own interests. Representatives met with the viceroy and stressed the view that Muslims were a distinct community that needed separate representation for its own protection.

The strength of opposition to the partition of Bengal forced Britain to reassess its policies in India. At first it tried to crush the protests, and by 1909 large numbers of Bengalis were in prison and the situation seemed to be running out of control. Then, in a change of policy, the secretary of state for India, John Morley, decided that concessions should be made to the nationalists so that Britain could maintain its control of the subcontinent. These reforms gave Indians some representation in government, and in 1910 elections were held for the central and provincial legislative councils. Muslims were given separate representation – separate electorates and reserved seats – in a move that shaped future political developments. Indians now had the power to question the decisions of colonial officials and debate the budget for the country.

In addition to this, Bengal was reunited and the capital of India was moved from Calcutta, the site of anti-British activism, to the city of Delhi, which had been the capital of the Mughal Empire. This move pleased Muslims. The Morley reforms cooled the situation in the subcontinent and restored the more moderate elements of Congress to power.

### Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920)

He was the first leader of the Indian National Congress to gain popular support. He demanded self-rule – or *swaraj* – from the British, who saw him as a dangerous troublemaker, and in 1908 sentenced him to prison for sedition (treason). He was released in 1914.

### QUESTION

In what ways is Tilak's address critical of Indians themselves, rather than of the British?

### KEY CONCEPTS ACTIVITY

**Significance:** Explain the significance of each of these:

- the anti-British boycotts
- separate representation for Muslims and Hindus
- the movement of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi.





**Figure 3.2** In an elaborate ceremony incorporating many features of the Mughal past, the British king George V was crowned emperor of India in 1911

### Social and economic developments

During the First World War (1914–18), key industries in India, such as cotton textiles, iron and steel, experienced a boom as manufacturers took advantage of the increased demands caused by the war. Agriculture, however, remained the dominant sector of the economy, and it faced increasing problems after the war. Food production could not keep up with the high population growth rate. In addition, India was badly affected by the Depression, which followed the **Wall Street Crash** in 1929. Overseas markets for India's exports declined, and the value of export crops dropped substantially. This forced Indian peasants to borrow to survive and, when debt became unmanageable, they were thrown off the land, creating masses of rural unemployed. As a result, millions of peasants migrated to the cities in search of work, adding to the numbers of urban unemployed. The impact of the Depression on India was one of the causes of civil unrest in the 1930s, as dissatisfied and unemployed people joined the nationalist movement.

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**Wall Street Crash:** the collapse of the New York stock exchange in 1929 caused a banking and economic crisis in the United States and spread to the rest of the world. It resulted in the Great Depression, which lasted for much of the 1930s.



## 3.3 Which wars influenced the rise of nationalism?

### The impact of the First World War

The First World War was essentially a conflict between European powers, but it involved their overseas empires as well. When war broke out in 1914, Britain expected support from its colonies, and India supplied large numbers of soldiers and huge amounts of resources to the cause. Some nationalists viewed the war as an opportunity to press for greater independence, but most Indians, including radicals such as Tilak, urged support for Britain's war effort.

However, as the war dragged on, dissatisfaction grew, partly due to heavy wartime taxation and increased efforts at recruitment. The war also caused a conflict of loyalties for Muslims in India, because the Ottoman Empire – the world's leading Islamic power – had an alliance with Germany. By the end of the war it had become obvious to many Indians just how dependent Britain had been on their help to secure victory over Germany. Indian soldiers returning from Western Europe passed on their experience of the high living standards and wealth of even the poorest classes in Britain and France when compared to the people of India. Indians hoped that their sacrifices in the war would result in reforms that would give them greater representation in government.

In this way, the experiences of the war heightened nationalist sentiments and many hoped that the British would soon allow India a greater degree of independence. Indeed, in 1917 the British government announced its intention to encourage 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions' in India. The proposals, however, were rejected by both Congress and the Muslim League as not going far enough. Then, in 1918, instead of reform a series of harsh repressive measures was introduced to crush opposition. The anger at this situation was compounded by the effects of the worldwide 1918 influenza epidemic, which killed twelve million Indians.

### The Amritsar Massacre (1919)

There were protests all over India against the new measures. A new form of protest was a nationwide *hartal*, or work stoppage, as well as large marches in major cities. Ignoring a ban on public meetings, a crowd of 5,000 gathered at Amritsar, where the British officer in charge, General Reginald Dyer, ordered his troops to open fire on the unarmed protestors. The soldiers killed 379 people and wounded more than 1,000 more in ten minutes. Many of those killed were women and children who had been trapped because soldiers had blocked the exits. Indians were shocked at the news of the massacre, and more especially by British reactions to it.

The British government ordered an inquiry into the incident and Dyer was forced to resign from the army, but some British officials expressed approval of his actions, some settlers in India regarded him as a saviour, and he was welcomed back in England as a hero.

After the massacre, many more people began to support Congress and its call for an end to British rule. Among the new supporters were moderate members of the

**Fact:** One and a half million Indians volunteered to serve in the British army during the First World War – the largest volunteer army in history. They fought on the Western Front, in Gallipoli, Palestine and North and East Africa. Indian troops won 13,000 medals for bravery, including 12 Victoria Crosses. About 65,000 Indian soldiers were killed in the war, and an equal number wounded.

**Fact:** Indian national pride was strengthened when Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), a Bengali poet, novelist, musician and playwright, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, becoming the first Asian Nobel laureate. He was later knighted by the British king, but returned his knighthood in protest after the massacre of hundreds of unarmed civilians in 1919 by British troops at Amritsar.





**Figure 3.3** An illustration from a German satirical magazine, 21 January 1920, showing British general Reginald Dyer surveying the aftermath of the massacre at Amritsar

### QUESTIONS

Why is the Amritsar Massacre considered to be a turning point in the development of the Indian nationalist movement?

How did differences between British and Indian perspectives of the massacre create further support for the nationalist movement?

Indian élite who until that point had considered themselves to be loyal British subjects. One of the Congress leaders who was outspoken in his condemnation of the Amritsar Massacre was Mohandas Gandhi. From this point, Gandhi emerged as the dominant figure in the nationalist movement (you will learn more about him in the next unit).

## Constitutional developments between the two world wars

In 1919, the British parliament passed the Government of India Act, which was regarded as a first step in the progress towards self-government for India. Although the central government in Delhi remained under British control, certain responsibilities in the provinces – such as agriculture, education and health – were given to Indian ministers. Crucially, however, the British retained control of the police and the justice system. About 10 per cent of the adult male population was given the right to vote for provincial legislatures. However, these tentative steps towards reform did not satisfy Indian nationalists.



In 1927, the British government appointed the Simon Commission to make recommendations for further constitutional reform. However, no Indians were included in the commission so the nationalists rejected it and called instead for dominion status and full self-government. When the British ignored the call and instead made vague statements about future constitutional developments, impatience at the slow pace of reform increased. The stagnation of British policy in the 1920s helped to foster the demands of the nationalist movement for complete independence for India.

In 1935, the British parliament passed the Government of India Act, a new set of constitutional reforms that gave more control in the provinces to elected Indian ministers. However, the Act ensured that Britain retained control through emergency powers, which could be imposed whenever it was deemed necessary. Although both Congress and the League condemned these measures as inadequate, they decided to participate in the provincial elections held in 1937. The right to vote was based on a property qualification, and so was limited to thirty-five million of the wealthier part of the Indian population, including women. In the elections, Congress emerged as the strongest political force, gaining a landslide victory with 70 per cent of the popular vote. In stark contrast, the Muslim League did not do well in the elections, winning barely 5 per cent of the total Muslim vote.

On the eve of the Second World War, the situation in India was a complex one for Britain. On the one hand, the lack of unity among the nationalists seemed to serve Britain's interests. On the other hand, growing tensions and divisions had the potential to cause unrest that would be difficult to contain. The outbreak of war in 1939 meant a postponement of the further constitutional reforms laid out in the 1935 Government of India Act.

### The impact of the Second World War

When the Second World War started in 1939, the British viceroy committed India to fight on the Allied side against Germany without consulting the Indian legislative council. This act was legal and constitutional, but it emphasised India's subservience to the colonial power. This strengthened the resolve of the nationalist movement to continue the independence struggle. In December 1941, Japan entered the war on Germany's side with a series of successful military strikes across East Asia. The Japanese rapidly overran European colonies in Indochina, the Malayan peninsula and Burma, bringing their armies to the border of India, and severely denting Britain's military and imperial prestige.

The war created political opportunities for the Indian nationalists. The British simply did not have the resources to suppress a potential nationalist rising in India while they were fighting the war. Consequently, Britain decided to make political concessions to Congress and the Muslim League. Although this seemed a wise decision – after all, neither Indian independence party was radical, nor were they champions of armed resistance – the British government was not prepared to make significant concessions. In 1941, the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, signed the Atlantic Charter, a document that supported the right of all peoples to political self-determination. However, shortly afterwards, Churchill told the British parliament that this provision did not apply to India. It was clear that the British





**Figure 3.4** Sikh soldiers serving alongside the British 8th Army in Italy during the Second World War

attitude towards India had changed little by 1941. Indian nationalists were outraged by this turn of events.

By 1942, however, Japan's sweeping victories in Asia forced Churchill to change his position. He recognised the urgent need to gain the support of Indian leaders in fighting Japan. In March 1942, he sent Stafford Cripps, a member of the British government, to India to negotiate with the nationalist leaders. Cripps made the commitment to grant India independence but only after the war was over. In return, Congress was to commit itself fully to the British war effort. (You will learn about the responses of the nationalist leaders to these conditions in the next unit.)



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## 3.4 What other factors influenced the rise of nationalism?

### The post-war situation in India

India made a major contribution to the Allied victory in the war. Not only did Indian soldiers fight in North Africa, Italy and Burma, but also the Indian economy was a significant factor in the final defeat of the Axis powers. An example is the Jamshedpur steel complex, which became the largest producer of steel in the British Empire for the duration of the war. The war transformed India's economic relationship with Britain. Before the war, India had been in debt to Britain. However, during the war, Britain's need to fund the war forced it to borrow heavily from India – so much so that by 1945 the economic relationship between the two states had been reversed, with Britain owing India huge sums of money.

The war also placed strains on India. Two million people died in the great Bengal Famine of 1943, which was caused partly by the loss of rice imports from Japanese-occupied Burma and partly by a British administrative decision to divert food from the Bengal countryside to feed the military instead. However, the war also brought opportunities. The economic demands of the conflict encouraged industrialisation on a scale unknown before 1939, and Bombay became a major centre of light engineering and manufacturing of pharmaceuticals and chemicals.

The Second World War had a negative impact on the British economy. Although Britain emerged victorious, the burden of sustaining the war effort proved costly. By 1945, Britain's economy was on the brink of collapse, and it became apparent that it would be impossible to maintain a global empire. Furthermore, in order to maintain Indian support in the war against Germany and Japan, the British had made serious commitments to the nationalist movement. With the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945, it was time for Britain to make good its promises of independence and negotiate with the nationalist leaders.

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## End of unit activities

- 1 'The British derived more benefits from India than Indians did from Britain.' Divide into two groups. One group should prepare an argument to support this statement, and the other group should prepare an argument to oppose it.
- 2 Find out what you can about the experiences of Indian soldiers during the First World War by looking at [www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/india\\_wwone\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/india_wwone_01.shtml). Explain how their exposure to new ideas, customs and perspectives might have affected them on their return to India after the war.
- 3 Draw up a table to contrast the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, using the following categories: support base; political outlook; attitude towards the British; political aims.



- 4 Write a short report to explain whether British policy towards India between 1909 and 1947 represented change or continuity.
- 5 In class, divide into small groups. Each group should prepare ten cards, each with a question based on this unit, that requires a single relevant fact as an answer. Each group exchanges cards with another group. The answers can be scored as a fun quiz activity. This is an example:

*What global event in 1929 had an impact on the Indian economy?*

*Answer: Wall Street Crash*

As an extension activity, after discussion, each group should write a short paragraph for each card. The paragraph should explain how each fact fits into the general historical process studied in this unit, showing how it relates to the Indian independence movement. This is an example:

*The Wall Street Crash created unemployment in India, both rural and urban, as markets shrank. The crisis in the global economy hindered India's ability to trade its way out of the crisis. Poverty and unemployment created political unrest and strengthened calls for independence.*