

Timeline

By the end of World War I in 1919, Indian leaders began fighting for independence from Great Britain. At this time, two major ethnic populations existed in India: Hindus, who were the great majority, and Muslims, who were a minority. Many Hindus hoped that India would remain united once the British left. But some Muslims, especially leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah, worried about being a minority. When the British finally left India in 1947, they divided the Indian subcontinent, creating an independent India and a new state called Pakistan for Muslims. They called this division the Partition Plan.

1930s: The idea for a separate homeland for Muslims is introduced.

1935: Great Britain reforms policies to grant greater independence to Indians. Muslims worry they will be a permanent minority in a fully independent India.

1940: Muslim leader Jinnah calls for the establishment of Pakistan as a separate state for Indian's Muslims.

1944: Hindu leaders fail to convince Jinnah to keep India unified.

Aug. 1946: Hindus and Muslims clash in Calcutta over formation of interim government. Approximately 5,000 die.

March 1947: The British Government sends Louis Mountbatten to India to determine a plan for transferring power to Indians before June 1948.

June 3, 1947: Mountbatten announces the Partition Plan and speeds up the transfer of power by ten months.

Aug. 14-15, 1947: Transfer of Power: India gains independence from Great Britain.

Aug. 16-17, 1947: Decision for partition boundaries is released and published.

Migration and violence due to partition continues until the end of 1947. Approximately 15 million people migrated, and between 300,000 and one million refugees lost their lives during partition.

Document A: Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Modified)

The passage below is a speech by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was known as the founder of Pakistan. Jinnah served as president of the All-India Muslim League from 1913 until Pakistan's independence on August 15, 1947. The speech became known as the "Two Nations" speech and was delivered at the Muslim League's annual meeting in 1940.

If the British Government really wants to secure the peace and happiness of the people of this Subcontinent, the only course open to us is to allow Hindus and Muslims separate homelands, by dividing India into "autonomous national States."

It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders. It is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality. This misconception of one Indian nation has gone far beyond the limits and is the cause of most of our troubles and will lead India to destruction, if we fail to revise our notions in time. The Hindus and the Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literature. They neither intermarry, nor inter-dine together, and indeed they belong to two different civilizations, which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. To **yoke** together two such nations under a single State, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and the final destruction of the government of such a State.

Muslim India cannot accept any Constitution that will lead to a Hindu majority Government.

The Muslims are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homelands, their territory and their State. We wish to live in peace and harmony with our neighbors as a free and independent people.

Vocabulary

yoke: to join

Document B: Jawaharlal Nehru (Modified)

The passage below is an excerpt from the book The Discovery of India, by Jawaharlal Nehru published in 1946. Nehru was India's first Prime Minister and a member of India's Congress during pre-Independence. Nehru was actively involved in India's Independence Movement, and he wrote the book between 1942-1945 when he was in prison for civil disobedience.

Any division of India on a religious basis as between Hindus and Muslims, as proposed by the Moslem League today, cannot separate the followers of these two principal religions of India, for they are spread out all over the country. Even if the areas in which each group is in a majority are separated, huge minorities belonging to the other group remain in each area. Other religious groups, like the Sikhs, are split up unfairly against their will and placed in two different states. In giving freedom to separate to one group, other groups are denied that freedom . . .

If the economic aspects of separation are considered, it is clear that India as a whole is a strong and more-or-less self-sufficient economic unit. If the division is made so as to separate the predominately Hindu and Muslim areas, the Hindu areas will not be so hard hit. The Muslim areas, on the other hand, will be economically backward. Thus, the odd fact emerges that those who today demand separation will suffer the most from it.

The astonishing fact remains that those who propose "Pakistan" or partition have consistently refused to define what they mean or to consider the implications of such a division. They move on the emotional plane only . . .

It is difficult to imagine any free state emerging from such **turmoil**, and if something does emerge, it will be full of contradictions and **insoluble** problems.

Vocabulary

turmoil: confusion and uncertainty
insoluble: can't be dissolved

Document C: Lord Louis Mountbatten (Modified)

The excerpt below is from an interview with Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last British leader of India. The interview was recorded over 20 years after the partition of India. The excerpt presents Mountbatten's views on Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who died somewhat suddenly of tuberculosis on September 11, 1948.

You see, Jinnah was so much of a one-man band. If somebody had told me he's going to be dead in a few months would I then—I am asking myself this question now—would I have said, Let's hold India together and not divide it? . . . Most probably . . . Jinnah was a lunatic. He was absolutely, completely impossible. I don't think we could have waited for him to die because, I don't think . . . we neither could have afforded the time, nor could we have felt certain of it. But what we could have done is to argue with him in a very different way. I assumed I was dealing with a man who was there for keeps, and had Pakistan as his object on which I couldn't steer him around. If in fact, we suppose for a moment that Jinnah had died, literally before the transfer of power, I believe the [Indian] Congress would have been so relieved that their arch enemy was dead—we would have been dealing on a basis where Congress would have been prepared to give up much more and the other Muslim leaders would have been ready to accept that. It's a horrifying thought that we were never told . . . Anyway, that I wasn't told [that Jinnah was dying], was almost criminal. The only chance, and I'm saying this now on the spur of the moment, it was the only chance we had of keeping some form of unified India, because he was the only, I repeat the only, stumbling block. The others were not so **obdurate**. I am sure the Congress would have found some compromise with them.

Vocabulary

obdurate: stubborn

Document D: Stanley Wolpert (Excerpt)

Stanley Wolpert is an American historian specializing in Indian history. The following excerpt is from the introduction of Wolpert's book, Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India, published in 2006, in which he expresses his views on India's partition. Wolpert has made several trips to India.

In mid-August of 1947 the world's mightiest modern empire [Great Britain] . . . abandoned its vow to protect one-fifth of humankind . . .

Prime Minister Clement Attlee and his cabinet gave Mountbatten until June of 1948 to try to **facilitate** agreement between the major competing political party leaders of India to work together within a single federation. But adrenaline-charged Mountbatten **scuttled** that last best hope of the British Imperial *Raj* . . . to leave India a single independent government, deciding instead to divide British India into fragmented **dominions** of India and Pakistan. The hastily and **ineptly** drawn lines of partition of North India's two greatest provinces, Punjab and Bengal, slashed through their multicultural heartlands . . .

. . . the tragedy of Partition and its more than half century legacy of hatred, fear and communal conflict . . . might well have been avoided, or at least **mitigated**, but for the arrogance and ignorance of a handful of British and Indian Leaders. Those ten additional months of post war talks, aborted by an impatient Mountbatten, might have helped all parties to agree that cooperation was much wiser than conflict, dialogue more sensible than division, words easier to cope with and pay for than perpetual warfare . . .

Vocabulary

facilitate: to make a process easier

scuttle: to cause something to fail

dominions: the territory of a government

ineptly: clumsily

mitigate: to make less severe

India Partition Guiding Questions

Timeline

- 1) When was the idea of a separate homeland for Muslims first introduced?
- 2) Who was one of the biggest proponents of a separate Muslim state?
- 3) Why did some Muslim leaders want a separate Muslim state? What worried them about a united India?
- 4) Why might some blame the British for the violence that resulted from Partition?

Document A: Jinnah

- 1) (*Sourcing*) Who gave this speech and who was his audience?
- 2) (*Close reading*) Why does Jinnah support the creation of a separate state for Muslims?

Document B: Nehru

- 1) (*Sourcing*) Who wrote this document? What do you suppose his purpose was in writing a book about India at this time?
- 2) (*Close reading*) What are two reasons the speaker opposes the creation of a separate state for Muslims?
- 3) (*Close reading*) What does Nehru mean when he accuses the supporters of a separate Pakistan of moving on the “emotional plane”?
- 4) (*Contextualization*) Both Jinnah and Nehru are writing before Great Britain has granted India independence. In other words, the argument over whether India should be split is occurring against the backdrop of the fight for Indian independence. How might this context have affected what Jinnah and Nehru are saying in these documents?

Was India's Partition Plan a good decision given what people knew at the time?

ROUND 1

Document	Based on this document, was India's Partition Plan a good decision?	Evidence from document to support these reasons
A: Jinnah		
B: Nehru		

Claim: Was India's Partition Plan a good decision given what people knew at the time?

Document C: Mountbatten

1) (*Sourcing*) Who is speaking in this document?

2) (*Sourcing*) What type of document is this?

3) (*Sourcing*) When was this document written? Why is this important?

4) (*Close reading*) According to Mountbatten, what role did Jinnah play in the decision to split India rather than keep it unified?

3) (*Close reading*) According to Mountbatten, why was it “almost criminal” that he didn’t know that Jinnah was dying?

Document D: Wolpert

1) (*Sourcing*) What type of document is this?

2) (*Sourcing*) How does this source differ from all the others? Do you think it’s more or less reliable? Explain.

3) (*Close reading*) According to Wolpert, who was responsible for the failure of partition? Explain.

Was India's Partition Plan a good decision given what people knew at the time?

ROUND 2

Document	Based on this document, was India's Partition Plan a good decision?	Evidence from document to support these reasons
C: Mountbatten		
D: Wolpert		

Final Claim: Was India's Partition Plan a good decision given what people knew at the time?

India Partition Guiding Questions

Timeline

1) When was the idea of a separate homeland for Muslims first introduced?

The idea of separate homeland is first introduced in the 1930s, many years after the movement began.

2) Who was one of the biggest proponents of a separate Muslim state?

Muhammad Ali Jinnah

3) Why did some Muslim leaders want a separate Muslim state? What worried them about a united India?

Muslims were worried about being a minority in a Hindu majority state.

4) Why might some blame the British for the violence that resulted from Partition?

It seems that the British pushed the partition plan and then quickened the transition of power.

Document A: Jinnah

1) (*Sourcing*) Who gave this speech and who was his audience?

Jinnah gives the speech to members of the Muslim League.

2) (*Close reading*) Why does Jinnah support the creation of a separate state for Muslims?

Jinnah believes that Hindus and Muslims represent civilizations that are incompatible. Any attempt to create a unified state would ultimately fail because the minority would be discontent.

Document B: Nehru

1) (*Sourcing*) Who wrote this document? What do you suppose his purpose was in writing a book about India at this time?

Jawaharlal Nehru probably wrote this book to explain his vision for India as part of the independence movement.

2) (*Close reading*) What are two reasons the speaker opposes the creation of a separate state for Muslims?

He opposes the creation of a Muslim state because Hindu and Muslims are not located in any specific place but spread throughout India. Also he argues there are many religious minorities not just Muslims. Second he argues that it will hurt the Muslim minority the most.

3) (*Close reading*) What does Nehru mean when he accuses the supporters of a separate Pakistan of moving on the "emotional plane"?

Because of these contradictions, Nehru argues that the drive for a Muslim state stems from emotions of fear and insecurity. The failure to address problems regarding the creation of a 'Pakistan' would only produce bigger problems.

4) (*Contextualization*) Both Jinnah and Nehru are writing before Great Britain has granted India independence. In other words, the argument over whether India should be split is occurring against the backdrop of the fight for Indian independence. How might this context have affected what Jinnah and Nehru are saying in these documents?

It would have been a situation of high tension and frustration on the part of these leaders. It was also a time when the British would want to take advantage of divisions within the movement.

Was India's Partition Plan a good decision given what people knew at the time?

ROUND 1

Document	Based on this document, was India's Partition Plan a good decision?	Evidence from document to support these reasons
A: Jinnah	Yes	<p>"they neither intermarry, nor inter-dine together, and indeed they belong to two different civilizations, which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions"</p> <p>"Muslim India cannot accept any Constitution that will lead to a Hindu majority Government."</p>
B: Nehru	No	<p>"Huge minorities belonging to the other group remain in each area."</p> <p>"Other religious groups, like Sikhs, are split up unfairly against their will."</p> <p>"the odd fact emerges that those who today demand separation will suffer the most from it."</p>

Claim: Was India's Partition Plan a good decision given what people knew at the time?

At the time, it appears that it may have been the best option, especially if Jinnah was a dominating voice. Jinnah seems to have an inflexible view about the future of India and that rigid view seems to have won the day. Nehru, on the other hand does not think about the issue in black and white terms. He is thinking about the consequences for multiple stakeholders. It is unclear how much dialogue occurred between these figures.

Document C: Mountbatten

1) (*Sourcing*) Who is speaking in this document?

Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last British leader of India

2) (*Sourcing*) What type of document is this?

An excerpt from an interview

3) (*Sourcing*) When was this document written? Why is this important?

The interview took place after Indian independence and the death of Jinnah. It provides some hindsight regarding how the events progressed. Also Jinnah's death means he can speak more frankly about him.

4) (*Close reading*) According to Mountbatten, what role did Jinnah play in the decision to split India rather than keep it unified?

He suggests that Jinnah was the singular figure in promoting a Muslim state.

3) (*Close reading*) According to Mountbatten, why was it "almost criminal" that he didn't know that Jinnah was dying?

He believes that he could have negotiated Indian independence differently.

Document D: Wolpert

1) (*Sourcing*) What type of document is this?

A history book.

2) (*Sourcing*) How does this source differ from all the others? Do you think it's more or less reliable? Explain.

It is a secondary document. It is reliable because it has access to many documents and able to evaluate different perspectives on the issue.

3) (*Close reading*) According to Wolpert, who was responsible for the failure of partition? Explain.

Wolpert argues that Mountbatten messed up the process by hastily deciding to split India and drawing the line without care. He should have used the time better to create more dialogue and negotiate a better settlement.

Was India's Partition Plan a good decision given what people knew at the time?

ROUND 2

Document	Based on this document, was India's Partition Plan a good decision?	Evidence from document to support these reasons
C: Mountbatten	Probably not, but the best for the time.	"I don't think we could have waited for him to die" "I believe the [Indian] Congress would have been so relieved that their arch enemy was dead"
D: Wolpert	No	"adrenaline-charged Mountbatten scuttled that last best hope of the British Imperial Raj."

Final Claim: Was India's Partition Plan a good decision given what people knew at the time?

It seems like Jinnah was the major proponent of the partition, while other significant leaders wanted a unified India. It would seem then that rushing the process and making a partition was not in the best interest of the majority. Greater time should have been given for the various leaders to find a stronger resolution. The decision for partition was a too simple a resolution to a more complex problem as Nehru describes.