

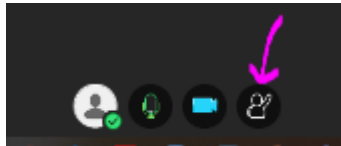
History Virtual Taster Series

Tuesdays, November 2020–January 2021, 5.00–5.30pm

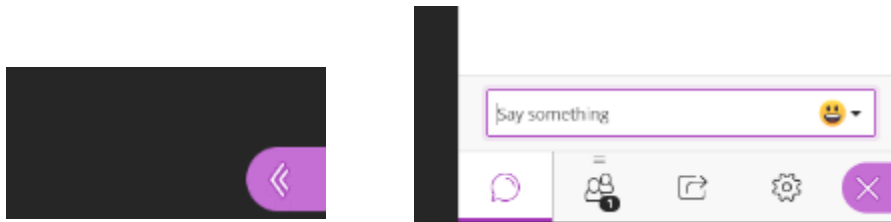
Dates	Title	Speaker
24 Nov. 2020	Did Germany deliberately cause the First World War?	Dr Paddy McNally
1 Dec. 2020	Why do we like the Devil?	Professor Darren Oldridge
8 Dec. 2020	Why did the British leave India?	Dr Neil Fleming
15 Dec. 2020	What is Propaganda?	Dr Wendy Toon
5 Jan. 2021	Were Germans afraid of the Gestapo?	Dr Paddy McNally
12 Jan. 2021	How extensive was Britain's role in the slave trade?	Professor Suzanne Schwarz

Virtual Housekeeping

- Please mute your microphones and turn off your cameras whilst we are all in the 'main room'
- If your internet cuts out you will probably 'leave' the session so just go back to the link and join us again
- If you would like to ask a question please raise your hand!



- Or post a question in the 'Chat to Everyone' area:



- We will be recording the session

POLITICAL DIVISIONS
OF THE
INDIAN EMPIRE

English Miles

0 100 200 300 400

Why did Britain Leave India?

Dr Neil Fleming

REFERENCE NOTE

BRITISH INDIA COLOURED	RED
TERRITORIES PERMANENTLY ADMINISTERED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA	PINK
NATIVE STATES AND TERRITORIES	YELLOW
RAILWAYS SHOWN THUS	



2 views existed on 15 August 1947

Indian: culmination of a long and difficult struggle to take power from the British

British: culmination of having guided India towards responsible government

Both **continue** to shape opinion in India and the UK



Significance of Indian view in India



- identity of independent India
- Indian National Congress
 - main nationalist movement under British rule
 - dominant political party after independence
 - self-portrayal as deliverers of nation's freedom
- model for other anti-colonial movements
 - also portrayed themselves as nation's deliverers
 - also used at elections to remain dominant party

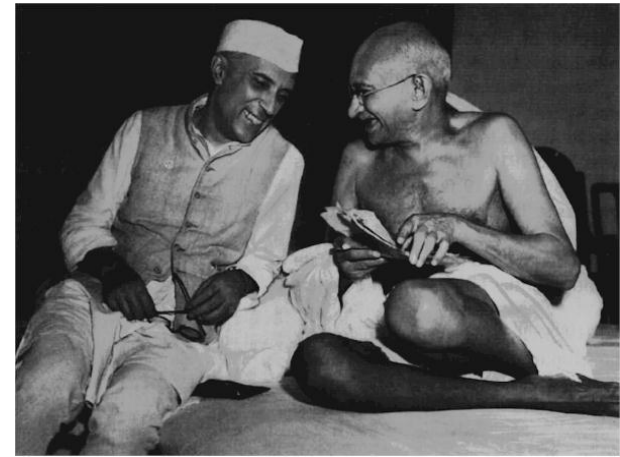
Significance of British view in UK



- assumption that British empire was 'good'
 - modernised other countries
 - granted them independence when ready
 - deny responsibility for post-independence 'problems'
- 'imperial amnesia'
 - regret / embarrassment / lack of interest?

Scholarship sceptical of both views

- Britain did not 'guide' India towards self-government
- limited concessions to prolong imperial control
 - 1909 Morely Minto reforms
 - 1919 Government of India Act
 - 1935 Government of India Act
- reforms accompanied by coercion
- Indian National Congress:
 - struggled to create unifying Indian identity
 - only commanded political scene by 1930s
 - vision of 'independence' differed between Nehru and Gandhi



Significance of nationalism

- Indian National Congress gave Indians:
 - platform to co-operate
 - developed *Indian* politics
 - challenged abuses and racism
 - Gandhi's charisma brought worldwide attention
 - peaceful non-cooperation exposed British violence and coercion
 - rewarded by electorate by 1930s
- but Congress had problems:
 - idea of single 'Indian nation' contested
 - Muslim League - Pakistan
 - perceived as socially conservative by labour, women and minorities
- yet, INC one of several key reasons the British left India in 1947
 - it endangered the co-operation necessary to govern



Additional reasons for the *British* decision to leave India in 1947:

Financial

Strategic

Domestic



Financial

- interwar decline in trade with India
- UK indebted to India
 - managing its economy unnecessary
 - better off as a trading partner
- fewer work opportunities for Britons
 - ‘Indianisation’ of administration



India's trade with the British Empire,
from B.R. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics*
(Cambridge, 1988).

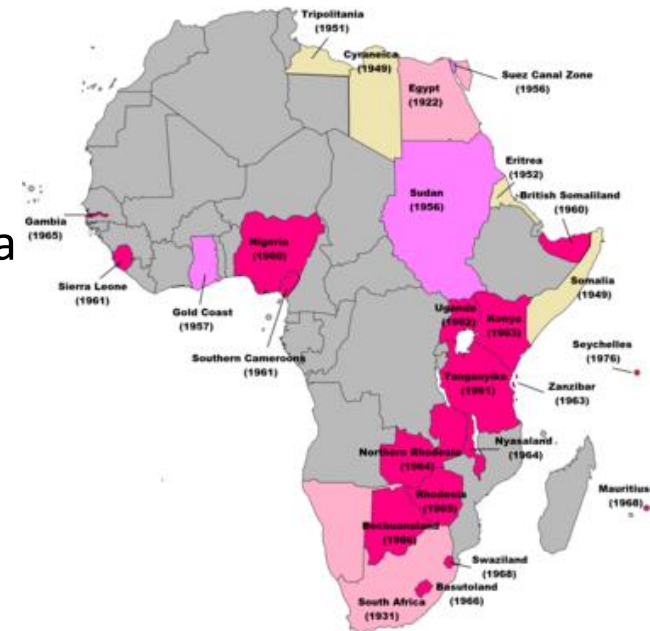
Strategic

- limited field of deployment
 - increasing difficulty using Indian troops outside Asia
- Who paid for Indian armed forces?
 - Indian taxpayers normally
 - but British met costs during Second World War (2.5 million men)
- Cold War
 - needed India as a Western ally



Domestic politics

- Labour party in government
 - Labour party long sympathetic to Indian nationalism
- Labour domestic priority
 - reconstruction of UK economy
 - ‘Welfare State’
- Labour’s imperial priorities
 - prepared only to reinvigorate the empire in Africa
- confident of India’s friendship



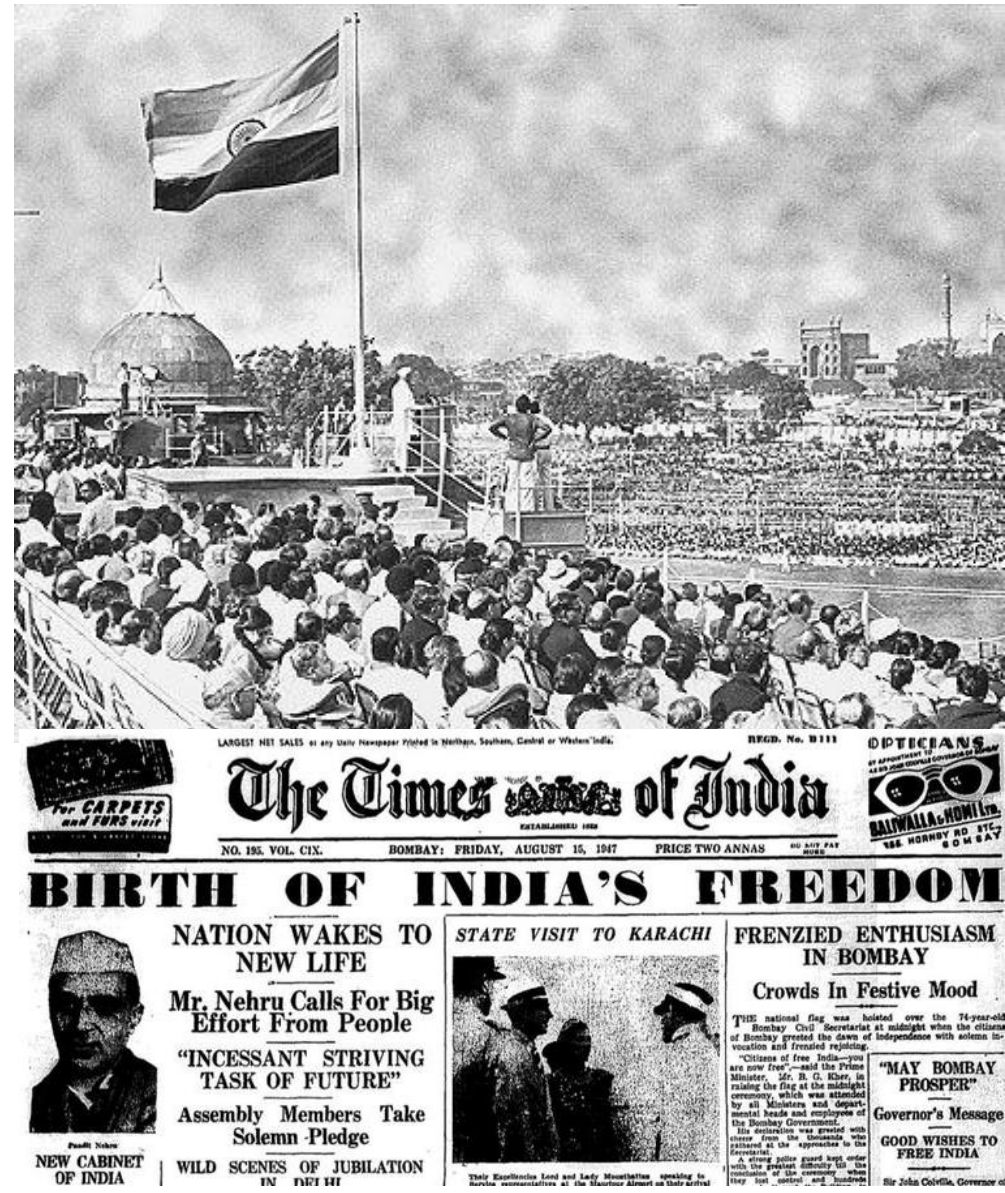
Britain's reasons for quitting India:

Nationalism

Financial

Strategic

Domestic



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