

Why do the British leave India in 1947?



You are the Foreign Minister

The year is 1947 and you are a member of the British government. You are the director of the colonial office. This is one of the most prestigious jobs in the entire British government. Some of the most influential Britons have held this post over the centuries as they have governed the lives of millions of British subject living in the colonies that make up the British Empire. Unfortunately for you, life as the director of the colonial office is not as easy as it once was. Great Britain is facing some very difficult decisions and the Prime Minister wants you to make them.

For over a hundred years India has been called the “jewel” of the British Empire. England has grown rich off of the resources of India (gemstones, cotton, spices, tea etc.). However, Indian nationalists have been pressing for India’s independence from the Empire since the late 1800’s. The Indians feel that the soldiers they contributed to fight against the Axis in World War II have earned them the right of independence. This is the decision you must make. Should India receive its independence from the British Empire? Use the documents and complete the worksheet below to aid you and your group in making this decision.

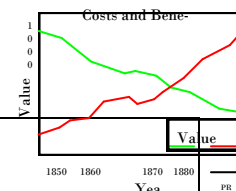


Chart #1 Trade balance between Britain and India:

This chart shows the value of goods being traded between Great Britain and India. The higher the number, the greater the amount of wealth being produced by India for England.

1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1947
27.4	24.3	32.8	40.3	44.4	62.5	70.8	80.3	83.3	39.2	30.2	29.1

Numbers in Millions

Questions:

In what year did India generate the most wealth for England?

How would you describe the overall trend displayed by the graph above?

What projections would you make for the value of keeping India in the British Empire?

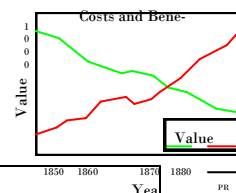


Chart #2 Cost for maintaining British troops in India:

1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1947
7.4	14.3	9.8	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.8	15.3	15.3	20.2	27.2	29.9

Numbers in Millions

Questions

1) What trend is shown on the chart regarding the cost of keeping troops in India?

2) Using charts one and two in what year did Britain profit the most by having India as part of the Empire? In which year did Britain profit the least? (show the \$\$\$ amounts as well)



Table #1 Number of Indians that served in or aided the British military during World War II:

13,000,000



Table #2 British contributions to Indian modernization:

- Democratic Government
- Political Parties
- System of Laws
- Thousands of miles of railroad transportation
- Stable economy
- An end to the caste system
- Access to and knowledge of the English Bill of Rights
- Modern cities
- Modern technology
- Creation of public schools
- Modern health care system



Questions:

Based on the information in these two tables, do you think India has the ability to govern itself? Why?

Chart #3 Other Colonies in the Empire:

This chart attempts to examine the effect of independence for India on the rest of the British Empire by looking at 5 other colonies currently in the Empire.

	Year colonized	level of modernization	profit/loss to the empire
India	1806	63%	-12 Million pounds
Ghana	1880	32%	-3 Million pounds
Sudan	1884	12%	3 Million pounds
Jamaica	1620	52%	8 Million pounds
Hong Kong	1847	55%	110 Million Pounds
Rhodesia	1857	18%	90 Million Pounds

(Level of modernization is compared with that of England in 1947. A score of 100% would = as modern as England. Factors considered in creating this rating were political development, literacy rates and education, health conditions and life expectancy, industrialization and standard of living.)

Questions:

Based upon the chart above do you think other colonies will demand independence if India is granted it?

What criteria should be used to decide if a colony deserves independence?

QUESTION:

What will your recommendation be? Should India receive independence from England? Why or why not? (please list at least 3 reasons for your answer.)

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

What do the British do? Why?:

