

**CHAPTER 26****Critical Thinking Activity****The Indian Perimeter****A Difficult Birth:  
The Creation of Pakistan and Bangladesh**

*The movement for independence from Great Britain that developed in India after World War I transformed into strong demands by Indian nationalists for immediate independence during World War II. The British Labour Party government, elected in 1945, finally agreed that India would gain its independence no later than 1948.*

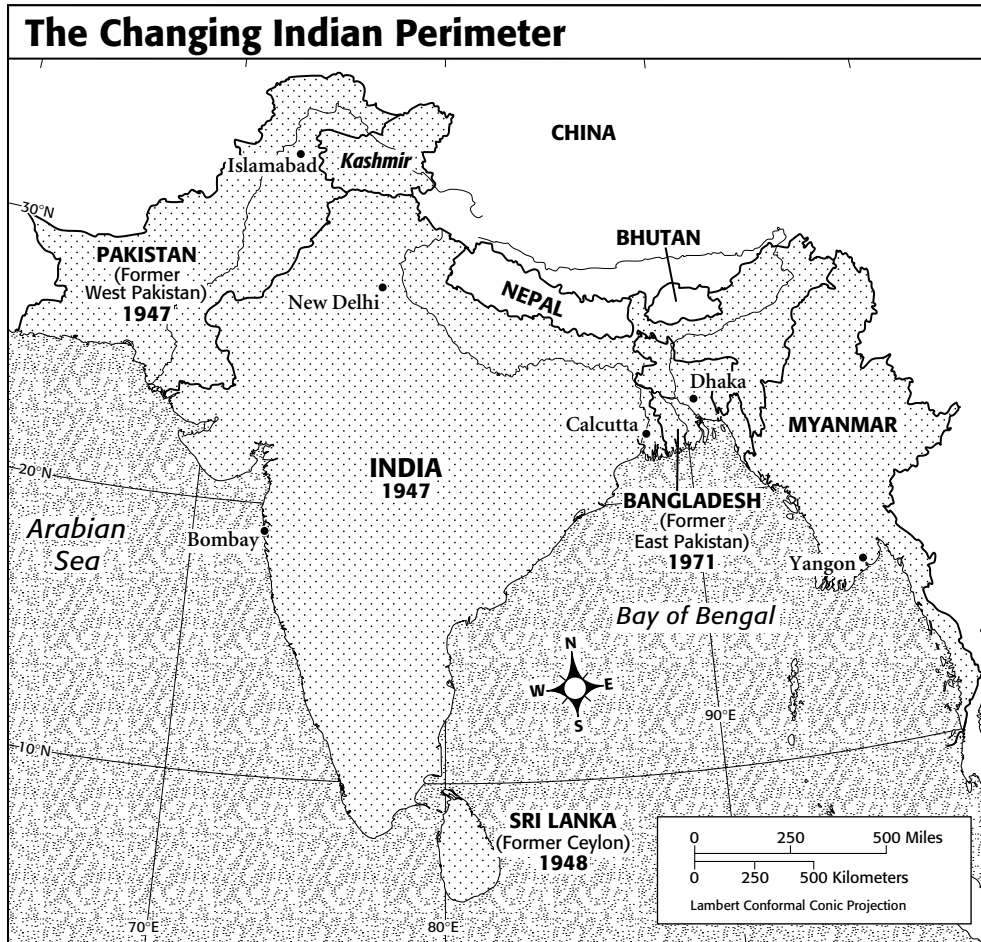
Before 1947, Pakistan was part of India. The Indian population was eager to see India rid itself of British control. Although the majority of Indians were Hindu, there was a significant Muslim population, concentrated in the northeast and northwest sections of the Indian subcontinent. These Muslim groups feared the Hindu majority would not let them have a say in the government when India became independent. The British agreed that it would be best to partition the country into two or more separate political units. Two widely separated areas in the northwest and northeast of India, inhabited mostly by Muslims, was to become independent Pakistan. The rest of the Indian subcontinent was designated as India.

Partition left India and Pakistan with a difficult problem in the northern state of Kashmir. India claimed Kashmir because the ruling prince, a Hindu, chose to join India. Pakistan claimed Kashmir because 85 percent of its people were Muslim. Border fighting was uneasily settled in 1949 by a United Nations ceasefire line. Fighting between Hindus and Muslims, however, did not end. In fact, the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 was followed by more than 25 years of conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Conflicts with India over Kashmir caused the Pakistani government to spend large sums for defense. Heavy military spending hurt the economies of both Pakistan and India.

As well as conflict with India, Pakistan had civil conflicts. Since the Muslim population was concentrated on two different sides of India, Pakistan itself consisted of two states. The government was based in West Pakistan and consequently was dominated by West Pakistanis. East Pakistan was located almost a thousand miles to the East. Although it contained more than half the nation's population it received less economic support than West Pakistan.

By the late 1960s, Pakistan was being torn apart by unrest and rioting. In 1971, a civil war broke out. The East Pakistanis were helpless against a much stronger West Pakistani military. Thousands were killed, and millions fled to India. This influx of refugees brought India into the war and ultimately led to the defeat of West Pakistan. By the end of 1971, East Pakistan had become the independent country of Bangladesh. With a large population and few resources, Bangladesh today is one of the world's poorest nations.

**Chapter 26, Critical Thinking Activity, continued**



**1.** How did partitioning of India cause problems between India and Pakistan?

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**2.** Which state was bigger: East or West Pakistan? Which state had the most population? How might the distance between the two areas have added to the problem of governing them fairly?

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**3.** When did Bangladesh break away from the rest of Pakistan and become a separate nation? Why was this necessary?

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