

# Partition History of India Before Independence

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## **Abstract**

British India was divided into two independent Dominions in 1947: India and Pakistan. In 1947, the Dominion of India was renamed the Republic of India, and in 1971, the Dominion of Pakistan was renamed the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The plan, which included the partition of the Muslim-majority provinces of Bengal and Punjab, resulted in the partition of British India into two distinct dominions, India and Pakistan. Areas dominated by Hindus and Sikhs were assigned to the new state of India, while Muslim areas were assigned to the new state of Pakistan.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

British India[c] was partitioned into two independent Dominions, India and Pakistan, in 1947. In 1947, the Dominion of India was renamed the Republic of India, and in 1971, the Dominion of Pakistan was renamed the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The partition resulted in the division of Bengal and Punjab into two provinces based on district-level non-Muslim or Muslim majorities. During the partition, the British Indian Army, Royal Indian Navy, Indian Civil Service, railways, and the central treasury were also divided. The Indian Independence Act 1947 outlined the partition, which resulted in the end of the British Raj, or Crown rule in India. The two self-governing independent Dominions of India and Pakistan came into existence legally on August 15, 1947, at 12 midnight.

During the partition, between ten and twenty million people were displaced along religious lines, resulting in massive refugee crises in newly formed dominions. There was widespread violence, with estimates varying from several hundred thousand to two million deaths during or preceding the partition. The violent nature of the partition fostered a climate of hostility and suspicion between India and Pakistan, which continues to influence their relationship to this day.

The term "Indian partition" does not include Bangladesh's 1971 secession from Pakistan, nor the earlier separations of Burma (now Myanmar) and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) from the administration of British India.<sup>[d]</sup> Furthermore, the term excludes political integration of princely states into the two new dominions, as well as annexation or division disputes in the princely states of Hyderabad, Junagadh, and Jammu and Kashmir,

despite the fact that religious-based violence erupted in some princely states during the partition process. It excludes the annexation of Goa and other districts of Portuguese India by India in 1961, as well as the incorporation of French India's enclaves into India between 1947 and 1954. Other contemporaneous political entities in the region in 1947—the Kingdoms of Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, and the Maldives—were unaffected by the partition.

Violence was frequently highly organised in princely states, with the rulers' involvement or complicity. The Maharajas of the Sikh states (with the exception of Jind and Kapurthala) are thought to have been complicit in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims, while the Maharajas of Patiala, Faridkot, and Bharatpur were heavily involved in ordering it. The ruler of Bharatpur, in particular, is said to have witnessed ethnic cleansing of his subjects, especially in places like Deeg.

## **2. Background (Pre World war II / (1905-1938)**

During his second term as Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon divided the Bengal Presidency—the largest administrative subdivision in British India—into the Muslim-majority provinces of Eastern Bengal and Assam and the Hindu-majority province of Bengal (present-day Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha). Curzon's act, the partition of Bengal, which had been contemplated but never implemented by various colonial administrations since Lord William Bentinck's time, was to transform nationalist politics in ways that no other act had.

### **World War I, Lucknow Pact: 1914–1918**

World War I would prove to be a watershed moment in Britain's imperial relationship with India. The war would take 1.4 million Indian and British soldiers, and their participation would have a wider cultural impact: news of Indian soldiers fighting and dying alongside British soldiers, Soldiers from dominions such as Canada and Australia, as well as newsprint and the newly developed medium of radio, would travel to far-flung corners of the globe. As a result, India's international profile rose and rose throughout the 1920s.

### **Introduction of the two-nation theory: 1924**

The two-nation theory is an ideology that asserts that the primary identity and unifying factor for Muslims on the Indian subcontinent is their religion, rather than their language or ethnic origin, and that Hindus and Muslims in India are thus two distinct nations despite their shared interests. The two-nation theory guided both the Pakistan Movement (Pakistan's ideology as a Muslim nation-state in South Asia) and India's partition in 1947.



**Figure 1 The Two-Nation Theory**

Muhammad Ali Jinnah promoted the ideology that religion is the defining factor in defining Indian Muslims' nationality, referring to it as the awakening of Muslims in preparation for the establishment of Pakistan.<sup>[28]</sup> It also serves as a source of inspiration for a number of Hindu nationalist organisations, with causes ranging from the reclassification of Indian Muslims as non-Indian foreigners and second-class citizens in India to the expulsion of all Muslims from the country, the establishment of a legally Hindu state in India, the prohibition of conversions to Islam, and the promotion of conversions or reconversions of Indian Muslims to Hinduism

#### **Muslim homeland, provincial elections: 1930–1938**

In 1933, Choudhry Rahmat Ali published *Now or Never*, a pamphlet in which the phrase "land of the pure" was coined for the first time. It included the Punjab, Afghanistan's North West Frontier Province, Kashmir, Sindh, and Balochistan. The pamphlet, however, received little political attention, and a few years later, a Muslim delegation to the Parliamentary Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms dismissed the idea of Pakistan as "chimerical and impracticable." In 1932, British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald agreed to Dr. Ambedkar's demand for separate representation in national and provincial legislatures for the "Depressed Classes." The Muslim League backed the award because it threatened Hindu caste leadership. However, in order to persuade the British to repeal the award, Mahatma Gandhi, widely regarded as a leading advocate for Dalit rights, went on a fast. When it appeared that Gandhi's life was in danger, Ambedkar was threatened with exile.

#### **Background (Post world war II (1939-1947))**

When World War II broke out in 1939, India's Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, declared war without consulting Indian leaders, prompting the Congress provincial governments to resign in protest. In contrast, the state-sponsored Muslim League organised "Deliverance Day" celebrations (under the auspices of Congress) and supported Britain's war effort. When Linlithgow met with nationalist leaders, he accorded Jinnah the same status as Gandhi, and a month later referred to the Congress as a "Hindu organisation." In March 1940, during the League's annual three-day session in Lahore, Jinnah delivered a two-hour English speech outlining the arguments for the Two-nation theory, stating, in the words of historians Talbot and Singh, that "Muslims and Hindus...were irreconcilably opposed monolithic religious communities, and as such, no settlement could be

imposed that did not satisfy the aspirations of the former." On the final day of its session, the League passed the Lahore Resolution, also known as the "Pakistan Resolution," which demanded that "the areas in which Muslims are numerically dominant, such as the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, be grouped to form independent states with autonomous and sovereign constituent units." Despite being founded more than three decades before, the League did not gain support from South Asian Muslims until World War II.

August Offer, Churchill proposal: 1940–1942

Quit India Resolution

1946 Election

Cabinet Mission: July 1946

Direct Action Day: August 1946

### **Plan for partition: 1946–1947**

Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed India's final viceroy by British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, with the task of overseeing British India's independence by June 1948, with the instruction to avoid partition and preserve a United India, but with adaptable authority to ensure a British withdrawal with minimal setbacks. Mountbatten hoped to revive the Cabinet Mission proposal for a federal India. Despite his initial enthusiasm for preserving the centre, he concluded that partition was necessary due to the tense communal situation for a more rapid transfer of power.

Vallabhbhai Patel was among the first Congress leaders to accept partition as a solution to the rising Muslim separatist movement in India. He was outraged by Jinnah's Direct Action campaign, which sparked communal violence throughout India, as well as the viceroy's constitutional vetoes of his home department's plans to end the violence. Patel was outspoken in his criticism of the viceroy's induction of League ministers into the government, as well as the British's revalidation of the grouping scheme without Congress's approval. While he was outraged by the League's boycott of the assembly and refusal to accept the 16 May plan despite entering government, he was also aware that Jinnah had popular Muslim support and that an open conflict with the nationalists could devolve into a Hindu-Muslim civil war. Persisting with a divided and weak central government, Patel reasoned, would result more than 600 princely states to declare independence, further fragmenting India.

## Geographic Partition --1947

The actual division of British India between the two new dominions took place under the auspices of what became known as the "3 June Plan" or "Mountbatten Plan." Mountbatten announced it at a press conference on June 3, 1947, along with the date of independence – August 15, 1947. The plan's main points were:

- Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims in Punjab and Bengal legislative assemblies would meet and vote for partition. If a simple majority of either group wanted partition, then these provinces would be divided.
- Sind and Baluchistan were to make their own decision.
- The fate of North-West Frontier Province and Sylhet district of Assam was to be decided by a referendum.
- India would be independent by 15 August 1947.
- The separate independence of Bengal was ruled out.
- A boundary commission to be set up in case of partition.

### 3. Regions affected by Partition

#### Chittagong Hill Tracts

The overwhelming majority of Buddhists Despite the fact that neither the British Parliament nor the Indian Independence Act 1947 gave the Boundary Commission the mandate to separate the Chittagong Hill Tracts from India, the Chittagong Hill Tracts were ceded to Pakistan. In 1947, the Buddhist and Hindu majority in Chittagong Hill Tracts was 98.5 percent.<sup>[112]</sup> Under the 1947 Indian Independence Act, the Indian province of Bengal was divided into West Bengal and East Bengal on religious grounds. [113] The Chittagong Hill Tracts have been an excluded area and not a part of Bengal since 1900. Because it was not a part of Bengal, Chittagong Hill Tracts did not have a representative in Calcutta's Bengal Legislative Assembly.

#### Punjab

In 1947, British India was partitioned, and the former British province of Punjab was split into the Dominion of India and the Dominion of Pakistan. The province's western, Muslim-majority part became Pakistan's Punjab province; The eastern portion, which is primarily Hindu and Sikh, became the Indian state of East Punjab (later divided into the new states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh). Many Hindus and Sikhs lived in the west, while many Muslims lived in the east, and their fears were so intense that the Partition caused widespread displacement and intercommunal violence. Some argue that the violence in Punjab is a form of retributive genocide. The total migration across Punjab during partition is estimated to be around 12 million people; approximately 6.5 million Muslims moved from East to West Punjab, while 4.7 million Hindus and Sikhs moved from West to East Punjab.

Apart from this, other areas like Bengal was also affected.

#### 4. Literature Review

Kaul, Suvir (2001) What are the effects of large-scale, forced migrations and population exchanges on both sending and receiving communities? We investigate India's partition, which resulted in the movement of approximately 17 million people over a four-year period, resulting in one of the largest and rapid population exchanges in human history. We find that migration has a significant impact on a district's educational, occupational, and gender composition. Because migrants have higher education levels, districts with a 10% increase in inflows saw a 3% increase in literacy rates, while districts with a 10% increase in outflows saw a 1.2 percentage point decrease in literacy rates. Due to differences in the amount of land vacated by migrants, districts in India with a 10% increase in inflows saw an 11% decrease in agricultural occupations. [1]

Marston, D. P. (2009). In July 1947, the British government of India convened two boundary commissions with the purpose of partitioning the colony into two independent nation states: India and Pakistan. Despite the volume of scholarly work on partition, geographies of partition have paid little attention. This article addresses this gap in two ways: first, by incorporating a geographical account into broader historiographical narratives of partition through cartographic-visual analysis and the application of geographical literature; and second, by incorporating a geographical account into broader historiographical narratives of partition. Second, by highlighting the ways in which technical geographical terminology and boundary-making practises were used for the political purpose of claiming territory, some of the partition literature's themes and theoretical contributions are placed within a geographical context. [2]

P. Raghavan and colleagues (2013) The history of India's bilateral relations with Pakistan will be the focus of this dissertation. It investigates how the process of resolving issues that arose in the aftermath of partition shaped the two countries' relations. I focus on discussions about the immediate aftermath of partition, evacuee property disputes, border and water disputes, minorities and migration, and bilateral trade, all of which shaped the India-Pakistan relationship. To some extent, this is an institutional history, but I will argue that the foreign policy establishments in both countries responded to domestic political imperatives, and that the policies they advocated were shaped by domestic political positions of the day. Suggestions of a long-term adversarial relationship were already visible in the months and years following partition. This is evident not only in the escalation of the Kashmir conflict, but also in the frequent bitter wrangling over asset division, water, numerous border disputes, and accusations exchanged over minorities' migration. Much of the debate over Indo-Pakistan relations has been framed in adversarial and frequently vitriolic terms, both within government structures and in the press. Nonetheless, given the circumstances, there was substantial space for cooperation between the two governments, and closer scrutiny reveals that both sides explored this space. [3]

Partitioned States by Haimanti Roy et al. (2012) offers a new perspective on Partition and its aftermath by linking it to the long, drawn-out, and skewed formation of two new national entities: India and East Pakistan. The book focuses on the Bengal Partition and places its narrative at the intersection of long-term cross-border

migration, chronic small-scale violence, the emergence of a document regime, and biased national refugee policies, all of which contributed to the formation of national citizenships in India and East Pakistan.

This book contends that minorities – Hindus in East Pakistan and Muslims in eastern India – as well as the discourse surrounding their citizenship and national identity, were critical to the nation-building project. However, after 1947, Indian and Pakistani identities were created, often arbitrarily, through the discretionary powers of low-level officials as well as legislation enacted by parliaments over the next two decades. [4]

Suzuki, A. et. al. (2011) This article contends that partition, as a peacebuilding strategy in a post-conflict society, can result in the transformation of intrastate conflict into interstate conflict, providing a useful comparison of partition to other multi-ethnic settlements such as federalism/power sharing and reconciliation. While proponents of partition argue that only partition can resolve intrastate conflict caused by a security dilemma between ethnic groups, this article contends that partition may transform conflict rather than resolve it. The empirical evidence comes from the India-Pakistan and Cyprus cases. India and Pakistan's partition transformed intrastate conflict within India into interstate conflict between India and Pakistan, including nuclear competition. [5].

## 5. Conclusion

Partition did not leave a particularly benevolent legacy, to say the least. The 1965 and 1971 wars between India and Pakistan on the Indian subcontinent showed that pre-partition communal tensions had been translated to the international level. Pakistan's disintegration in 1971 called Iqbal's Two Nation Theory into question, as his Muslim nation clearly failed to hold together. Neither Pakistan's nor Bangladesh's fates since 1971 have been entirely reassuring, with the latter dealing with deep-seated economic problems and the former dealing with separatist challenges from Pathan and Baluchi. In contrast, despite occasional outbreaks of communal tension and allegations of discrimination, the Republic of India appears to have accommodated its substantial Muslim minority.

The Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973, as well as the more recent prolonged conflict in Lebanon, demonstrate that the struggle for Palestine's partition has simply taken on a new dimension. Although the international dimension has been less visible in the case of Ireland, the prevalence of unrest since partition has highlighted the ongoing nature of the underlying conflict. Strife has rarely been absent from Northern Ireland's affairs for an extended period of time: the 1935 Belfast riots, the IRA campaign of 19(H)2, the late 1960s Civil Rights campaign and recurrence of communal rioting, as well as the emergence of the Provisional IRA and Loyalist paramilitary groups, have all underlined a continuing struggle over the partition legacy. If partition was viewed as a means of resolving conflict, as this book contends, it was a failure.

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