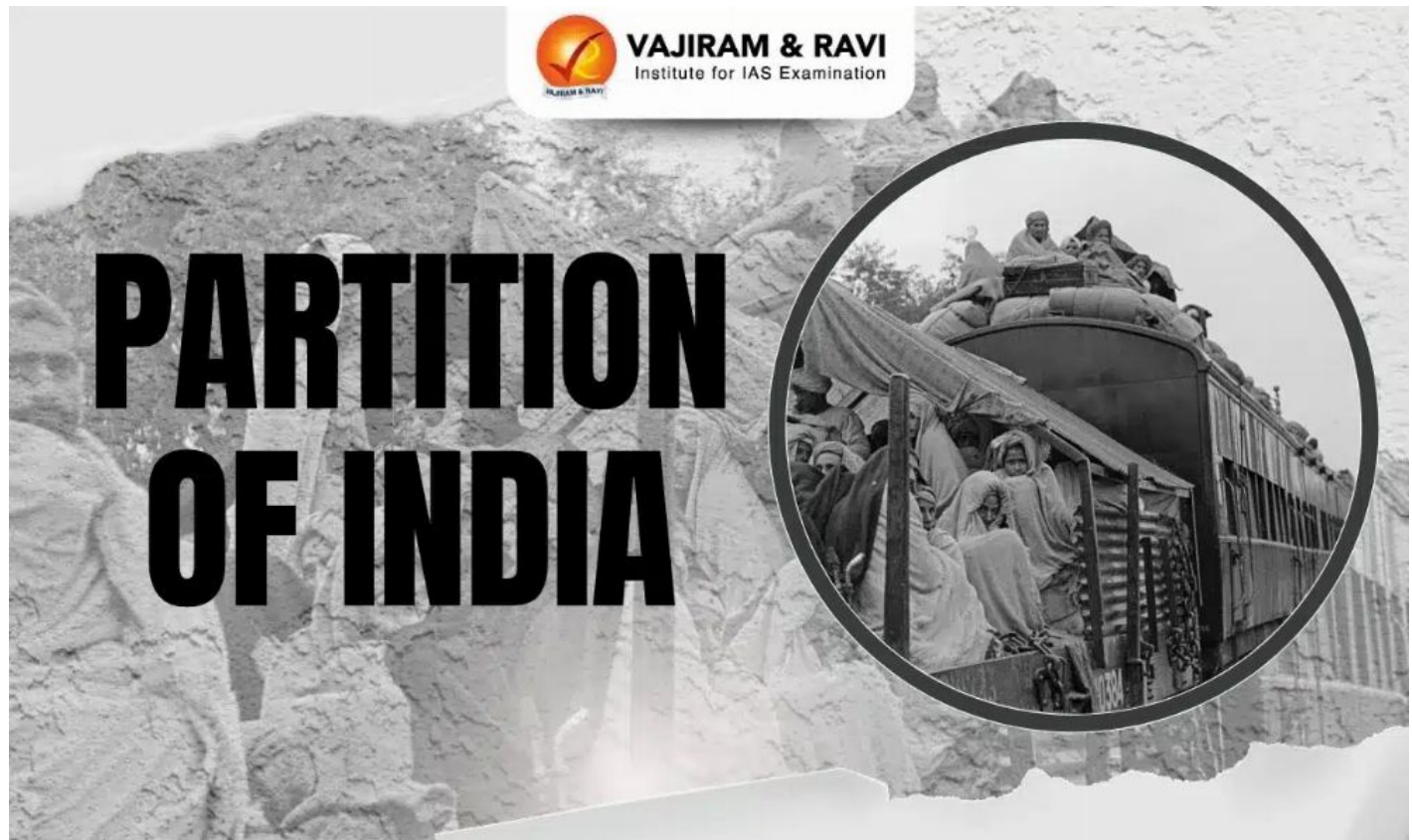


Partition of India, Causes, History, Impact, UPSC Notes

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The **Partition of India in 1947**, which led to the creation of two independent states, was a culmination of a number of events during the Indian national movement. British “Divide and Rule’ policy evolved from creating tension amongst the erstwhile Indian kings in its early phase to the level of the Indian social structure in the 20th century. This strategy seeded the root of communalism in India, later cultivated by Jinnah and the League in the 1940s in the form of Pakistan, a separate homeland for Muslims.

Amongst the various consequences borne out of the Partition of India, the attack on the heart of India’s secular fabric is the most devastating and profound.

Partition of India Causes

The reasons for the Partition of India on the religious line were communalism and two-nation theory and the various events during World War II but the most basic cause was the socio-economic factors.

British Divide-and-Rule policy

The British used this policy to weaken the nationalist movement in India. Following are some of the examples, under this strategy:

- Its sponsorship in the **establishment of the Muslim League**.
- Introduction of **separate electorate** in 1909, 1919, and Communal award in 1932.
- Its granting of **implicit veto to the League** during World War II.
- Its idea and criteria of **grouping in the Cabinet Mission Plan**, etc.

Growth of Communalism in India

India saw the rise of communalism at the end of the 19th century, and it grew due to many factors. Unfortunately, it culminated in the partition of India on religious lines.

Reasons:

- Socio-economic backwardness of Muslims.
- The revivalist nature of Socio-cultural reform movements.
- Germination of the ideas such that, Hindus and Muslims had different self-interests.
- British Policy of “Divide and Rule”, throughout its tenure.
- Role of personalities like Iqbal, Jinnah, and some Hindu nationalists.
- Focus of League and Jinnah after the defeat of the 1937 elections and Pakistan Resolution, 1940.
- Landsliding victory of the Muslim League in the elections of 1946.

Key Events:

- **Partition of Bengal (1905):** It began as an administrative measure, but it quickly evolved into a huge political benefit for the government since it intended to divide Bengal into Hindu and Muslim-majority provinces.
- **Formation of the Muslim League (1906):** The formation of the All India Muslim League consisted of upper-class Muslim elites like Aga Khan, Nawab of Dacca and Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk.
- **Separate Electorates (1909):** The Morley-Minto reforms introduced separate electorates in the legislative bodies, marking a significant event in the history of communalism.
- **Lucknow Pact (1916):** Congress agreed to separate electorates as a temporary measure to secure the support of the Muslim League in the national movement.
- **Formation of Hindu Mahasabha (1915) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (1925):** These Hindu-nationalist organisations appeared as a pressure group in the number of deliberations between INC and the Muslim League.
- **Simon Commission and Nehru Report:** The Nehru Report tried to accommodate Jinnah's demands, but it failed in the All-Party Conference of 1928. Jinnah came out with his Fourteen Points.
- **Communal riots in 1946:** The riots of 1946, due to the appeal of Jinnah, were the immediate reason for the acceptance of partition.

Role of Muslim League and Muhammad Ali Jinnah

Jinnah played an important role in the partition of India, though he was initially an ambassador of secularism and opposed communal politics.

- **Jinnah's role:**

- Although some scholars (particularly, Ayesha Jalal of Pakistan and her supporters) say that the demand of Jinnah for a separate state was merely a bargaining chip with the Congress. As per this belief, he wanted a separate state for Muslims, but not a separate nation.
- But, it seems hard to swallow this idea because of many reasons.
- Muslim landlords (in Sindh and other areas of Pakistan) and elites who were against the Congress' emphasis on socialist democracy, were in favour of a separate nation.
- Jinnah vetoed each and every talk between the British officials and Indians. He and the league wanted to be the sole representatives of Muslims in India, to which Congress or any secular party could not have conceded.
- Further, his call for the **Direct Action Day** was brutal and severed the belief that he was a liberal Muslim.
- **Towards Mass Communalism:** The defeat in the 1937 election result was a lesson to Jinnah and the League. After 1937, the priority of Jinnah was now to maximise the league's membership, communalise the masses further and elevate the demands of Pakistan.
- **Two Nation theory:** He was a strict supporter of the Two Nation Theory, that two communities could not co-exist together.
 - This idea in India was germinated by the Aligarh school of thought, seconded by Iqbal and a few Hindu Nationalists in the 1930s, and ultimately utilised by Jinnah.
 - Citing the socio-economic conditions of the Muslims and instilling the fear of the so-called Hindu domination after the independence, Jinnah excelled in his communal propaganda.
 - And this is evident in the victory of the Muslim League on the Muslim seats in the 1946 elections.

Socio-economic factors

Various socio-economic factors in the 19th and 20th centuries contributed to the demand for a separate Muslim homeland and ultimately the Partition of India.

- **Muslim economic backwardness:** Muslims had lower literacy and inadequate representation in industry/commerce, leading to economic backwardness. Pakistan was seen as a way to boost Muslim economic status, exclusively.
- **Fear of Hindu economic dominance:** Muslims worried their economic interests would not be safeguarded in Hindu-majority India. Wanted Pakistan for greater control over resources and opportunities.
- **Desire of landed elites for dominance:** Landed Muslim elites in Punjab/Bengal saw Pakistan as an opportunity for greater economic dominance. Partition motivated by ambition for power.
- **Urdu-Hindi divide:** Debates over national language exacerbated differences. Proposals for Hindi alienated many Muslims who favoured Urdu. This linguistic divide worsened communal tensions.

Events Leading to the Partition of India

The partition of India was the outcome of complex processes and various factors, including the role of the British during the 1940s, especially during the Second World War.

British Stance in the 1940s

The effects of the Second World War, especially due to Japan's victories in Southeast Asia, were the main reason for the change in British stance.

- They now needed Indian support for the War, but at the same time, did not hesitate to support Jinnah's demand of Pakistan.
- Linlithgow and other Viceroys implicitly gave the veto power to the Muslim League in every round of talks for the constitutional reforms as well as the transfer of power.
- The acceptance of the demand of Pakistan was first used to counter the demand for complete independence by Congress, and later to make these two erstwhile colonies weak and vulnerable as much as possible.

Lahore Resolution

In 1940, at Lahore, Jinnah argued in favour of the two-nation theory. A. K. Fazl-ul-Huq moved the resolution in the general session, known as the 'Lahore Resolution.' It was a formal statement that sought the creation of a separate Muslim state.

- The term "Pak-Stan" was coined by **Choudhry Rahmat Ali** in the **1930s** while he was studying at Cambridge University.

Cripps Mission (1942)

Against the backdrop of the failure of the August Offer and the need to secure Indian support during World War II, a Mission consisting of three British cabinet members - Pethick Lawrence, Stafford Cripps, and A.V. Alexander was dispatched to India.

• Proposals:

- Granting of **Dominion Status** to India which would be free to decide its relations with the Commonwealth and the United Nations.
- Post the Second World War, a **constituent assembly**, consisting of only Indians, would be set up to draft a new constitution. The members would be partly elected (provinces) and partly nominated (princely states).
- A province not willing to join the Dominion could have a separate union with its own constitution.
- The Constituent Assembly as well as the British government would safeguard the rights of minorities.
- Until the constitution would be drafted, the British monopoly on India's defence and the Governor-General's powers would be unfettered.

• Failure:

- Congress rejected the offer of Dominion status and independence of provinces (which would have resulted in the balkanisation of India).
- The League rejected it as it did not offer a clear concession for Pakistan.

Rajagopalachari Formula (1944)

The main points in the Rajagopalachari Formula were:

- Muslim League to support the Congress's demand for independence and work together to form a provisional government in the centre.
- After the war, a commission would be appointed to demarcate the districts with an absolute Muslim majority, and elections would be held in those areas (including non-Muslims) regarding the desire for a separate state.
- A joint management of defence, commerce, communications, etc., if the partition would be accepted.
- **Gandhi-Jinnah Talks:**
 - In September 1944, Gandhi met with **Jinnah** to present the proposals but the talk was declared a failure.

Desai-Liaquat Pact (1945)

It was an attempt to appease the League and find a way out of the political deadlocks. Neither the Congress nor the League formally endorsed the proposal.

- **Nomination of an equal number** of people in the Central legislature by both parties.
- **20% reserved seats** for minorities in the central legislature.

Wavell Plan (1945)

In 1945, Viceroy Lord Wavell invited all to join in the **Shimla Conference**.

Proposals:

- All members of the executive council, with the exception of the governor-general and the commander-in-chief, were to be Indians.
- All portfolios **except Defence** were to be under the control of Indian members.
- In the proposed 14-member Executive Council, Muslims were given the 6 posts despite constituting only about 25% of the total population.
- **Failure:**
 - Jinnah stated that only the Muslim League has the authority to represent Indian Muslims.
 - Congress stated that the Muslim League had no authority to appoint any Muslim to the Executive Council.

Elections (1945-1946)

Amidst the conflict between Congress and the League, the elections were held in 1945.

Huge win for the League:

- The League attained remarkable successes by getting **86.6 percent of the Muslim votes**, winning all 30 Muslim seats in the Central Legislative Assembly, and grabbing **442 out of 509 Muslim seats** in the provinces.
- But it lost **NWFP** and **Assam** to the **Congress** and failed to dislodge the Unionists from **Punjab**.
- **Congress's performance:**
 - Congress won overwhelmingly in the General (non-Muslim) constituencies, securing **91.3 per cent** votes, winning 57 out of 102 seats in the Central Legislative Assembly, and obtaining majorities in all the provinces

except **Sind, Punjab, and Bengal**.

Cabinet Mission (1946) and the aftermath

In 1946, the Cabinet Mission arrived in India and held talks with the leaders of all prominent political parties and then proposed its plan of establishing a **Federal Government** in **India**.

- It rejected the demand of Pakistan and instead, proposed an Indian Union consisting of British provinces as well as Princely States.
 - While rejecting Pakistan, it introduced the **concept of grouping**, where provinces and princely states were free to form groups under the Union, with significant autonomy.
- Initially refused, the Congress formed the government in September 1946 at the Centre, but the League refused to be a part of it.
- Jinnah on August 16, 1946, called for the '**Direct Action Day**' regarding the demand of Pakistan
- The call led to widespread communal riots across the country, resulting in around 5,000 deaths on the first day in **Calcutta** alone. Riots erupted in other areas like **Noakhali** and **Bihar**.

Mountbatten Plan and the Freedom with Partition of India

Lord Mountbatten was appointed Viceroy of India. He proposed the Mountbatten Plan (Dickie Bird Plan) on June 3 1947. Despite Gandhi's strong opposition, all parties consented to the partition, leading to the passing of the **Indian Independence Act of 1947** in the British Parliament.

Freedom with Partition:

- It created two independent states - the Indian Union and Pakistan.
- It abolished the post of viceroy and secretary of state of India.
- It provided governor-general for each dominion - **Mountbatten** as the first **Governor-General** of independent India, and **Jinnah** as that of Pakistan.
- Princely states were free to join any of the dominions or even remain independent.
- The Constituent Assembly's draft constitution would not apply to Muslim-majority areas (as these would become Pakistan), which would decide their separate constituent assembly.
- The legislative assemblies of **Bengal and Punjab** voted in favour of partition, leading to the decision to divide these two provinces along religious lines.
- **Sind's** legislative assembly ultimately chose to join Pakistan.
- The **North-Western Frontier Province** (NWFP) was scheduled to conduct a referendum to go with either of the dominions. Despite **Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's** rejection and boycott, it opted to join Pakistan.
- **Boundary Commission**: Headed by **Sir Cyril Radcliffe**, it was established to demarcate the international boundaries between the two countries and to partition Bengal and Punjab into two separate nations.

Congress and Partition

The Congress tried to bring all sections of society together, but **separate electorates**, the intransigence of Jinnah and the communal and reactionary grip over the League led to the partition of the subcontinent.

- Congress failed in persuading either Jinnah to give up his **separatist dream** or in convincing the British to not help Jinnah take that path.
- Congress first tried to accommodate the Muslim League through the Lucknow Pact, convergence of NCM-Khilafat, etc. but failed to accommodate later, especially during the Second World War.
- The Congress was unable to reach out to the Muslim masses and therefore reluctantly accepted the wishes of the majority of the Indian Muslims to carve a nation for themselves, however irrational and communal the demand was.
- **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, followed by Nehru and many Congress leaders acknowledged the inevitability of partition as a way to end the brutal violence, due to Jinnah's call for the Direct Action Day.
- Gandhi opposed the Partition of India until the very end but eventually, had to accept the inevitable.
- Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Maulana Azad were the two dissenters when the CWC accepted the **June 3rd Plan** (Mountbatten Plan).
- Congress and Gandhi accepted the Partition of India, without conceding to the Two Nation theory. This is evident that the nature of Indian polity after the independence has been secular, implicit or explicit.

Partition of India Consequences

The partition created the independent nations of Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority secular India, separating the provinces of Bengal and Punjab along religious lines. It triggered riots, mass casualties, and a colossal wave of migration.

- **Mass Migration:** About 15 million people relocated to what they believed to be a safer territory. Muslims headed towards Pakistan, while Hindus and Sikhs headed towards India.
- **Mass Killings and atrocities on both sides:** Approximately 1-2 million people were killed, many were killed by members of other communities and sometimes their own families, as well as by the contagious diseases that swept through refugee camps.
- **Violence against women:** Women were kidnapped, raped, publicly humiliated, and many were forced to die by suicide in an attempt to protect their chastity.
- **Impact in terms of economic resources:** India was deprived of jute and cotton and Pakistan of fuel.
- **Problem of Refugees:** Both states subsequently faced huge problems accommodating and rehabilitating post-Partition refugees, whose numbers swelled when Pakistan illegally tried to occupy Jammu and Kashmir in 1947-48.
- **Hostility and Suspicion:** The legacy of violence caused by partition has created an atmosphere of hostility and suspicion between the two countries that impacts the relationship even to this day.

The partition of India has proved to be a watershed moment in India, a country which has been built upon the cultural ethos, mutual coexistence and religious tolerance throughout history. The immediate effect of the partition was the widespread communal violence and mass migration but the most profound effect was on the secular character of India as a nation, which can be felt even today.

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