

Mountbatten Plan, Background, Provisions, Response

August 10, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



The Mountbatten Plan, announced on June 3, 1947, was a historic proposal that led to the partition of British India into two independent dominions—India and Pakistan. It was formulated by Viceroy **Lord Louis Mountbatten**, to address the growing communal tensions and the urgent demand for independence. The plan aimed to provide a swift and peaceful transfer of power while minimizing unrest.

Key provisions of the plan included the partition of Punjab and Bengal, referendums in the North-West Frontier Province and Sylhet, and the establishment of boundary commissions. The plan was crucial in determining the political landscape of South Asia, with its implementation on August 15, 1947, marking the end of British rule in India.

Mountbatten Plan Background

By the mid-20th century, British colonial rule in India deteriorated due to various factors, including the impact of **World War 2** and the subsequent economic strain on Britain. The failure of **Cripps Mission** and the **Quit India Movement** illustrated the urgency for a clear plan towards independence.

- In response to the growing unrest in India, British Prime Minister **Clement Attlee** announced on February 20, 1947, the British intention to leave the Indian subcontinent.
- He appointed **Lord Louis Mountbatten** to succeed **Lord Wavell** as Viceroy, empowering him with the authority to make quick decisions on transferring power.

Key Provisions of Mountbatten Plan

The **3rd June 1947 Plan**, commonly known as the Mountbatten Plan, outlined the framework for the partition and transfer of power in India. The British government proposed several key principles aimed at addressing communal divisions and ensuring a smooth transition. These provisions laid the foundation for the creation of two independent dominions, India and Pakistan.

Key Provisions include:

- **Partition of India:** The plan proposed the division of British India into two dominions, India and Pakistan. However, Independence for Bengal was denied. Accession of Hyderabad to Pakistan was also rejected.
- **Autonomy and Sovereignty:** Both new dominions were to be granted full autonomy and sovereignty, allowing them to draft their own constitutions.
- **Princely States:** The princely states were given the option to join either India or Pakistan, based on geographical contiguity and the wishes of their people.
- **Constituent Assemblies:** Separate constituent assemblies were to be established for India and Pakistan to frame their respective constitutions.
- **Boundary Commissions:** Boundary commissions were set up to demarcate the borders between India and Pakistan, particularly in the provinces of Punjab and Bengal.
- **Punjab and Bengal Legislative Assemblies:** These assemblies would vote in separate groups (Hindus and Muslims) on partition, with a simple majority determining if these provinces would be partitioned.
- **Sindh:** Sindh would decide its own course through a legislative decision.
- **Referendums:** Referendums would be held in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Sylhet district to determine their future.
- **Independence Date:** Independence was set for August 15, 1947.

Mountbatten Plan Response

The Mountbatten Plan received mixed reactions from various political groups. Initially, the Congress was opposed to the idea of **dominion status**, advocating instead for full sovereignty. However, they accepted it under the Mountbatten Plan (despite it being against the **Poorna Swaraj Resolution of 1929**), recognizing that it would ensure a peaceful and quick transfer of power. Additionally, Congress prioritized gaining authority to control the volatile situation in the country. On the other hand, the Muslim League welcomed the plan, as it fulfilled their demand for a separate nation, Pakistan.

- However, **Gandhi** reacted against the partition if India envisaged in the Mountbatten Plan. He advised people not to accept the partition by heart.

Mountbatten Plan Aftermath

The Mountbatten Plan culminated in the passage of the **Indian Independence Act** by the British Parliament on July 5, 1947. This Act, based on the principles outlined in the Mountbatten Plan, received royal assent on July 18, 1947, and was implemented on **August 15, 1947**. It formalized the creation of two independent dominions—India and Pakistan—effective from the same date, marking the end of British colonial rule in the subcontinent.

The aftermath of partition, however, was marred by widespread communal violence, mass migrations, and the deepening divide between the newly formed nations. The humanitarian crisis that followed left lasting scars on both India and Pakistan.

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