



# Historical Crisis: Partition of India

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Veerawit Sirikantraporn, and I will be your chair for the Partition of India Committee at CAMUN this year. I've been involved in Model UN since 2023 when I joined CAMUN my freshman year as a page. Seeing the delegates debate and discuss the issue at hand, each of them having their own goals for what they hope to achieve, I knew Model UN was the right place for me. At CAMUN this year, I am excited to once again see the intellect and debate delegates bring to the floor and I can't wait to get started in April.

As you prepare for the discussion, we challenge you to think about your role and stance in incorporating religion, political power, and national unity when approaching Partition. Historically, this Partition led to one of the deadliest migrations historically, resulting in over 2 million deaths, and is ultimately, an excellent case study to revisit on a nation's transition in power. In writing your position papers, we encourage you all to use your agency for this to not result in another catastrophic event.

Please let us know if you have questions—feel free to email us. See you in April!

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## **Background**

### **The “British Raj”**

Beginning roughly after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the British East India Company established dominance in the country of India and expanded control over the next century. Following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the British government took direct control of India transferring power from the British East India Company to the British Crown. This colonial dominance ruled the country for the following century before political and religious tensions, British economic strain, and violence plagued the country ultimately leading to the Partition of India in 1947, dividing British India into two independent states, India and Pakistan.

### **Lead-up to Partition**

India has always been a nation filled with centuries of culture and religion, but this diversity ultimately became the backbone behind the revolution which split the nation in two. Spearheading this divide are the two parties: Indian National Congress (INC) and the All-India Muslim League. By the 1930s, the nation ended up in a constitutional deadlock. The INC, for the longest time, has been pushing for a strong, united India with a centralized government while the All-India Muslim League increasingly argued that minority Muslims would become politically vulnerable in a Congress-dominated democracy led by a majority Hindus.

It is also important to note the “Two-Nation” theory which argues that historically and culturally, Indian Hindus and Muslims are two distinct nations. It is argued that religion is the root to social and cultural difference between Muslims and Hindus, and that a united Congress with majority rule would be disadvantageous for the Muslims. This theory is ultimately the founding principle the All-India Muslim League pushes for, hoping to create two separate nation-states of India and Pakistan.

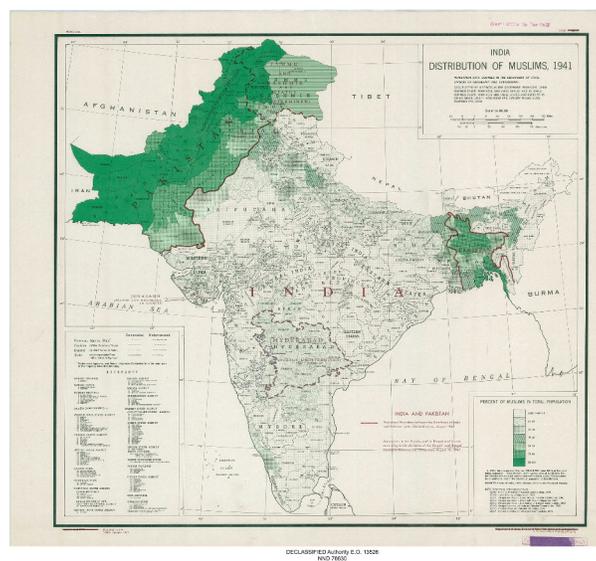
With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, India was declared war on behalf of the British which ultimately led to Indian Congress either resigning or protesting, resulting in Congress leaders being jailed. Whereas, the Muslim League took this opportunity to support the British war effort and, thus, gaining the chance to expand their political power, control, and ideology.

In 1945, the United Kingdom general election was won by the Labour Party headed by Clement Attlee. In the new government, Attlee and his supporters were in support of the decolonization of India. In late 1945, the British government decided to end the British Raj in India, and in early 1947

Britain announced its intention of transferring power no later than June 1948. In 1946, Prime Minister Attlee appointed Lord Louis Mountbatten as India's last viceroy, giving him the task to oversee British India's independence with initial instructions to avoid partition and preserve a united India.

## Divided by Religion

In thinking of either a resolution for a united India, Partition, or other possible outcomes, it is most important to take note of the religious divide in the different regions of the nation.



Muslim dominated region, 1941 census

To the top left of the map, Punjab (in green, now modern day Pakistan) is a region with strong religious diversity of Muslim majority, with a strong mix of Sikhs, and a minority Hindus. With this dynamic in mind when thinking about Partition, the Sikhs fear being trapped in a Muslim-majority nation and the Hindus fear becoming a target of violence and expulsion. To the right, Bengal (also in green, now modern day Bangladesh) is another region with a strong Muslim majority, with Hindus in this region also fearing becoming a target of violence. It is also important to note the princely states such as Hyderabad (red outlined in the center of India) with a Hindu-majority population but a Muslim Leader, and Kashmir (red outline to the right of Punjab) with a Muslim-majority population but a Hindu ruler, where both seek autonomy as their own states. Of course, it is with utmost importance to note the majority of the India region with a large population consisting of majority Hindu, a minority of Muslim, and a large diversity of many other religions.

## **Committee Positions**

### **Mahatma Gandhi:**

A prominent force being the leader of the Indian independence movement and a moral force within Congress, Gandhi's work focused on preventing communal violence and preserving Hindu-Muslim unity. He had a strong opposition to Partition, which divides the nation, but instead pushed for a united India ending British rule without a civil war.

### **Muhammad Ali Jinnah:**

Leader of the All-India Muslim League and is the central voice for Muslim political security. Jinnah pushes for the security of Muslims and fears that Muslims would be dominated in a united India, making a separate state necessary through the creation of Pakistan.

### **Liaquat Ali Khan:**

The right-hand man to Jinnah, Ali Khan also pushes for the idea of Partition. Similar to Jinnah, his goal is to protect Muslim political interest during the transfer of power and create Pakistan giving a space for a Muslim independent state.

### **Jawaharlal Nehru:**

Senior Congress Leader of the Indian National Congress and advocates for a centralized secular state. Nehru hoped for a strong united government that has minimal communal veto. Historically, he ultimately settled on Partition due to spreading violence which would lead to a weak government.

### **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel:**

Administrator and Chief of the Indian National Congress who prioritized law, order, and national unity. Regarding partition, Patel was pragmatic about the result if it prevented wider chaos and violence. His goal is to consolidate India as a united governable state.

**Maulana Abul Kalam Azad:**

A prominent Muslim Congress Leader who argued that Muslims can thrive in a united, secular India. He warned that Partition would create difference and destroy communal identities leading to creating permanent hostility between Hindus and Muslims.

**Subhas Chandra Bose:**

A radical nationalist and war hero who rejected gradual negotiation and became famous for militant anti-British strategies. His legacy and reputation had a prominent sway towards leaders when thinking about creating an independent India. Bose hopes to complete liberation from British rule and preserve a strong, united India, whatever that may be.

**Osman Ali Khan:**

Ruler of Hyderabad, one of the princely states. Ali Khan sought to maximize autonomy and hoped to explore independence rather than joining India or Pakistan. He fears the loss of dynastic power in his state which would lead to internal unrest.

**Hari Singh:**

Ruler of Jammu & Kashmir, one of the princely states. Hari Singh hopes to delay accession and preserve princely state independence and autonomy. His aim is to maintain Kashmir's autonomy and avoid being forced into dominion without favorable terms.

**Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy:**

A major Bengal politician navigating a province split by religious demographics and economic interdependence. Suhrawardy hopes to engage with proposals that would help avoid division in Bengal and maintain unity and independence in Bengal.

**Sarat Chandra Bose:**

A nationalist leader and influential voice in Bengal who opposed rushed solutions that would produce long-term conflict. Bose's aim is to prevent or soften Partition to protect regional stability and avoid a settlement that would ultimately later cause displacement and war.

**Tara Singh:**

A Leading Sikh political figure in Punjab. Tara Singh fears that Sikhs would become split and endangered by a Muslim-majority Pakistan or by borders that cut through Sikh states. His hope is to secure safety for Sikhs and political representation in resolution.

**Dr. B. R. Ambedkar:**

A leading advocate for Dalit representation. Ambedkar emphasized constitutional safeguards supporting minority representation. His hope is to create a social reform that had legal mechanisms preventing domination by majorities.

**Clement Attlee:**

The British Prime Minister who oversaw the decision to end British Raj over India. Attlee hopes to retreat quickly with minimal British entangle while preventing major violence and catastrophe. He aims to exit India with a functioning successor agreement.

**Louis Mountbatten:**

The Last Viceroy tasked with implementing transfer power and decolonizing India. Mountbatten brokered negotiations between Congress and the League and prioritized a plan that can be executed. He hopes to complete a quick resolution while minimizing total administrative collapse and conflict.

**The Hindu Mahasabha:**

A Right-wing Hindu nationalist organization that pushed for Hindu political primacy and opposed concession to the Muslim League. They aim to resist power-sharing that strengthens Hindu dominance and hopes to ensure settlements that protect Hindu interest.

**Communist Party of India:**

A leftist party focused on worker and peasant organizations pushing for anti-imperialism. They hope to prevent communal division from overriding class solidarity, pushing for reforming the ruling class and transferring power to the working and peasant class of India.

**Questions to Consider**

1. Given the multitude of parties involved, how might that affect a committee's ability to reach a consensus?
2. How would you leverage your position and power in guiding the committee to spark meaningful change?
3. In the case that the resolution results in Partition, what would be the best method in making transition as smooth and orderly as possible?
4. Similarly, in other forms of resolution, how would you approach a smooth and orderly transition?

## Resources for Further Research

1. [UK National Archives](#)
2. [Constitution of India](#)
3. [1947 Archive](#)
4. [BC Library Archive](#)
5. [Stanford Spotlight Exhibit](#)
6. [Britannica](#)