

Independence and Partition of India

1. Background

- By the end of **World War II**, India's freedom struggle entered a critical phase.
 - **Indian National Army (INA)** had collapsed, and memories of the **Quit India Movement** were fresh.
 - The **Muslim League** intensified its demand for **Pakistan**.
 - **Wavell Plan** was introduced, proposing **dominion status** for India and a **Constituent Assembly** to draft a Constitution.
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2. Events Leading to the Cabinet Mission Plan

Changes in Britain

- After WWII, **USA and USSR** emerged as superpowers and supported India's independence.
- **Labour Party** replaced the **Conservative Party** in Britain, and it supported Congress.
- **British soldiers**, tired of war, were unwilling to suppress the Indian freedom movement.

Revolts in Administrative Agencies

- Britain could no longer rely on Indian administrators to control the nationalist movement.
- **Indian National Army (INA)** showed nationalist influence in the military.
- **1946 Naval Mutiny in Mumbai** and strikes by **Royal Indian Air Force** revealed widespread discontent.
- Patriotic sentiments spread among **police and civil services**.

Labour Unrest

- **July 1946**: Postal and telegraph workers went on strike.
 - **August 1946**: Railway workers' strike took place.
 - **Tebhaga Movement** in Bengal: Peasants reduced landlords' share from half to one-third.
 - Anti-rent movements occurred in **Hyderabad, Malabar, Bengal, UP, Bihar, and Maharashtra**.
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3. Cabinet Mission Plan (1946)

Objectives

- Sent by **British Prime Minister Clement Attlee** to negotiate India's independence.
- Proposed a **federal union** with a **strong central government** for defense, foreign affairs, and communications.

Key Clauses

- **Autonomy to Provinces:** Provinces were free to manage all subjects except union matters.
- **Grouping of Provinces:** Provinces were divided into three groups with an option to change groups later.
- **Constituent Assembly:** A **389-member** assembly to draft the Indian Constitution.
- **Separate Representation:** Given to **Muslims and Sikhs**.
- **Interim Government:** To be formed with **14 members**.
- **Choice of British Commonwealth Membership:** India could choose to stay or leave.
- **Rejection of Pakistan:**
 - Muslim population in NW Pakistan was **only 37.93%**.
 - Non-Muslim regions of Punjab, Bengal, and Assam couldn't be included in Pakistan.
 - Difficulties in **dividing military, postal, and communication systems**.

Reactions

- **Congress:** Accepted **Constituent Assembly**, but opposed **limited powers** of the interim government.
- **Muslim League:** Accepted the plan, believing it would lead to **Pakistan**.

4. Growing Conflicts Between Congress and Muslim League

- **July 1946:** Elections to the **Constituent Assembly**—Congress won a **two-thirds majority**, while League won **73 of 78 Muslim seats**.
- The League feared being outnumbered and opposed Nehru's leadership.
- **2 September 1946:** Congress formed an **interim government**; League did not participate.
- The League observed the day as "**Day of Mourning**" and displayed **black flags**.
- **After negotiations, Jinnah's League joined the interim government** but refused to cooperate.

- **9 December 1946:** The **Constituent Assembly** met **without the Muslim League** and declared India would be a **sovereign republic**.
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5. Attlee's Announcement & The Mountbatten Plan (1947)

- British Prime Minister **Attlee** decided to transfer power **earlier than June 1948** due to increasing conflicts.
- **Lord Mountbatten** was appointed **Viceroy** to oversee the transition.

Key Provisions of the Mountbatten Plan

- **Partition of India into India and Pakistan.**
- India and Pakistan could decide their relationship with **British Commonwealth**.
- **Princely states** could choose to join India or Pakistan.
- **Partition of Punjab and Bengal**, based on legislative voting.
- **Plebiscite in Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP)** to decide its status.
- **Referendum in Sylhet (East Bengal)** on whether to join Assam or East Pakistan.
- A separate **Constituent Assembly for Pakistan**.
- **Transfer of power before August 15, 1947.**

Reactions

- **Congress and the Muslim League accepted the plan.**
 - Many nationalists were unhappy, but communal violence **forced acceptance**.
 - **Partition was seen as the price for immediate independence.**
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6. Indian Independence Act (1947)

- **Passed by British Parliament in July 1947** to formalize independence.

Main Provisions

- **Creation of two dominions: India and Pakistan.**
- **Pakistan included: NWFP, Sind, Baluchistan, West Punjab, and East Bengal.**
- **Boundary Commission** set up to demarcate borders.
- **Bengal and Punjab divided** based on legislative voting.
- **Plebiscite in NWFP and Sylhet** decided their inclusion in Pakistan.
- **Governor General for each dominion** until Constitutions were framed.

- **British legislative authority ended on 15 August 1947.**
 - **Indian and Pakistani armies, assets, and resources were divided.**
 - **Princely states became independent** and could join either India or Pakistan.
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7. India's Independence and Partition (15 August 1947)

- **Jawaharlal Nehru** became the **first Prime Minister of India.**
- **Muhammad Ali Jinnah** became **Pakistan's first Governor-General.**
- **Partition led to massive communal violence and displacement.**
- **Over 1 million deaths and 15 million displaced.**

Immediate Challenges for India

- **Economic challenges:** Low industrial and agricultural development.
- **Social disruption:** Refugee crisis due to partition.
- **Political stability:** Unifying princely states into India.

Long-Term Impact

- **India launched economic planning** to improve industry and agriculture.
 - **Strengthened democracy** and became a major industrial nation.
 - **Partition fueled Indo-Pakistani conflicts**, affecting regional stability.
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Conclusion

The **Independence and Partition of India (1947)** were major turning points in history. While India achieved long-awaited freedom, the process was marred by **communal violence, displacement, and economic struggles**. The efforts of nationalist leaders and the impact of WWII forced the British to leave India, but the creation of Pakistan left a legacy of division and conflict. Despite the challenges, **India emerged as a strong and democratic nation** with significant progress in various sectors.