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Introductory Remarks

It is an honour and a privilege to welcome you to the body discussing the “Indian Independence Movement at the Summit on War and Politics 2016. As your Moderators, we shall not attempt to insult your intelligence by lecturing, or patronizing you and get right down to the nuts and bolts of the matter.

Remarks about this Guide

Given the nature and complexity of the committee, it is impossible to deliver an authoritative document on the subject. The Indian independence movement for some started back in the 1800’s, the first milestone of which was the revolt of 1857. This revolt solidified in the minds of the Indian masses the fact that Independence from the Raj was now the only means of salvation, it cemented the feeling of nationalism within the “natives” and for the first time the subcontinent turned from a group of kingdoms and empires into a “Nation”. Others however contest that the process of gaining Independence only gained momentum after the return of Gandhi from South Africa, it is impossible to refute in totality one view and accept the other. The substance of this guide is therefore intended only to help you in developing basic background, context, vocabulary and familiarity with the subject area of substantive discussion in this simulation. Most of the information disseminated in this guide is freely available on the internet with a simple web search. Therefore, please use this guide only as a basic refresher and not as a substitute for actual research and policy parsing, understanding and construction.

Since it is impossible to cover more than two centuries of Colonial rule in India in a background document such as this without summarising information to the extent of redundancy, this guide will cover events from 1915 onwards, the period around which the freedom movement was assuming an increasingly political character.

Remarks about Procedure

Parliamentary procedure lays the foundation on which negotiation can take place and solutions be deliberated. Without the benefit of civility that procedure affords, it would be impossible to steer a simulation of a body such as this. However, it is also true that a pedantic and tunnel-lensed view of procedure often hinders debate instead of facilitating it. It is these facts that form the basis of the Moderator’s view about procedure – procedure shall be enforced to the degree that it is conducive to deliberations. We shall not enforce procedure for the sake of procedure and procedure will be recognised for what it is – a means to an end and not an end in itself.

Therefore procedure will remain as a means to ensure smooth debate, in a body discussing the Independence and future of India and the Indian freedom struggle, one simply cannot afford mindless cacophony. The body will discuss substance, founded on research, knowledge, logic and a sense of patriotism (or the absolute lack of it).

Timeline for operation of the Committee

For the purpose of giving the broad theme of this committee a defined arena to unfold in, it is important to set its scope within certain temporal constraints. The starting point of this Committee shall be 1925 and it will culminate in 1947 or as soon as the members deem it fit to dissolve this body.

Developments through the last century

In January 1915, M.K Gandhi returned to India from South Africa after nearly 2 decades of residence abroad. India around this period, though still a colony of the British empire was more active in the political sense. The Indian National Congress now had branches in most major cities and towns.

The Swadeshi Movement had solidified its presence among the middle class. The movement also threw up towering leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak from Maharashtra, Bipin Chandra Pal from Bengal and Lala Lajpat Rai from Punjab. The Swadeshi Movement, now known as 'Make in India' campaign was officially proclaimed on August 7, 1905 at the Calcutta Town Hall, in Bengal. Boycott movement was also launched along with the Swadeshi movement. The movements included using goods produced in India and burning British-made goods. Bal Gandadhar Tilak encouraged Swadeshi and Boycott movement after the British government decided the partition of Bengal.

Timeline of the Swadeshi Movement

- In 1900, Bengal was the major province in British India. The Indian national movement began in Bengal and thus, Britishers decided to part Bengal.
- When Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, announced the partition of Bengal in July 1905, Indian National Congress, initiated Swadeshi movement in Bengal. Swadeshi movement was launched as a protest movement which also gave a lead to the Boycott movement in the country.
- In 1909, the movement had spread across the country and people had started anti-partition and anti-colonial movements. In Andhra Pradesh, the Swadeshi movement was also known as Vandemataram movement
- In 1910, there were many secret associations that had been set up and there were many revolutionary movements, which were synonymous to Swadeshi movement
- Later movements by Mahatma Gandhi from 1915, such as Satyagraha movement, Non-Cooperation movement etc. were based on Swadeshi movement.

Around this time, the political leadership was mainly divided into two ideological factions, the first of which included the Radicals, such as "Lal, Bal and Pal" who promoted militant opposition against the Raj. The opposition to this ideology came from a group known as the Moderates, this included, apart from Gandhi, leaders such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Mohammad Ali Jinnah who were both lawyers of Gujarati origin, trained in London.

The independence movement during this period, as pointed out by Gandhi in his speech at the inauguration of Banaras Hindu University was an elitist affair. It was driven mostly by doctors, lawyers, landlords and other members of the moneyed educated class. Then came a movement which started bringing with the folds of this movement the common class, this was the Champaran Movement. The Champaran peasant movement was also a part of the wider struggle for independence. When Gandhi returned from South Africa, he made the experiment of non-cooperation in a smaller way by giving leadership to the peasant struggles in Champaran (Bihar) and later on in Kheda (Gujarat). These struggles were taken up as a reformist movement but the idea was to mobilise the peasants for their demands.

The Champaran peasant movement was launched in 1917-18. Its objective was to create awakening among the peasants against the European planters. These planters resorted to illegal and inhuman methods of indigo cultivation at a cost which by no canons of justice could be called an adequate remuneration for the labour done by the peasants. Gandhi studied the grievances of the Champaran peasantry. The peasants opposed not only the European planters but also the zamindars.

Causes of the Champaran Movement.

- (1) In Champaran and as a matter of fact in the whole of Bihar, there was an enormous personal increase in the land rent.
- (2) The peasants were obliged to grow indigo and this curtailed their freedom of cultivation.
- (3) The peasants were compelled to devote the best part of their land for growing particular crops as desired by the landlord. They were also required to give their best time and energy to the crops decided by the landlord.
- (4) The peasants were paid very poor wages. These were so meagre that it was very difficult for them to earn their livelihood. Briefing the situation of peasants in Champaran D.G. Tendulkar writes: The tale of woes of Indian ryots, forced to plant indigo by the British planters, forms one of the blackest in the annals of colonial exploitation. Not a chest of Indigo reached England without being stained with human blood.
- (5) One very important reason for the Champaran unrest was the sub-human life led by the people. Gandhiji when visited Champaran was very much displeased by the abject poverty of the peasants. He expressed his feelings in the following words: “The peasants in Champaran are leading their lives like animals, suffering from all kinds of miseries.”

The Champaran peasantry suffered terribly at the hands of European planters. The landlords and the government officials combined together also oppressed the peasantry. Gandhiji, who had returned from South Africa, wanted to experience his non-cooperation movement and satyagraha in India. Champaran seemed to be a suitable place for making such an experiment.

The people were also ready to accept the leadership of Gandhiji, though in the end the incidence of Chauri-Chaura turned the movement to violence. Gandhiji was not happy with all this.

Features of the movement

(1) One very important feature of Champaran movement was that it was led by intelligentsia, but incorporated the masses. Some of the prominent leaders of the country, namely, Gandhiji, Rajendra Prasad, Brijkishore Prasad and Muzharul Haq participated in the movement. This provided strength and direction to the movement.

(2) On 10th April, 1914 the sufferings of the Champaran peasants were discussed thoroughly at the annual conference of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee, which found that the Champaran peasants were in a serious situation.

(3) Next year, in 1915, the Provincial Congress Committee recommended for the constitution of an inquiry committee to take stock of the Champaran peasantry.

(4) It was in 1916 that the Indian National Congress, in its Lucknow session, discussed the peasant situation of Champaran. It was decided that something had to be done to give immediate relief to the Champaran peasants.

(5) On 14th May, 1917 Gandhiji wrote a letter to the District Magistrate of Champaran, W.B. Heycock, wherein he showed his concern to give the peasants freedom from landlords and government. Gandhiji wanted to improve the relations between the zamindars and tenants.

(6) Rajendra Prasad was very much unhappy with the inhuman life led by the Champaran peasants. He himself was an eye-witness to the poor and miserable condition of the peasants.

(7) It was in 1908 that the peasants at the Sathi factory and other neighbouring factories stopped the cultivation of indigo and organised an agitation. To quell it, 19 persons were convicted in December 1908. Nearly 200 prisoners awaited trial at Motihari under different charges including assaulting planters and arson.

(8) The struggle of the Champaran peasants took place in April 1917. The British government adopted very serious methods to oppress the peasants. They were tortured for not paying the excessive revenues. "Among the methods adopted were setting Dhangars and Doms, the low caste people, on the high caste tenants decides the policemen tying them down and beating them, and putting logs of wood on their chest.

In another method of torture the hands were put underneath the leg and tied to the neck, the leg being raised. If the peasants did not pay even then, they were brought to the factories. They were forced to embrace a neem tree with both their hands tied together, and set upon by policemen.

On such occasions, the indigo planter used to be present on the scene. On the other hand, the red ants on the tree would bite the man tied to the tree, but he could do nothing as his hands were tied. The Champaran peasant movement had to undergo severe sufferings.

But the participation of the general peasantry and the ideology of non-violence gave strength to the peasants. It is interesting to look at the outcomes of this movement. The Champaran movement is described to be a success story in the history of peasant movements in India.

Outcomes of the movement.

(1) One very important outcome of the movement was the enactment of Champaran Agrarian Act assented by Governor General of India on 1st May, 1918.

(2) E.M.S. Namboodripad, the leader of the left movement in India, considered Champaran movement as a contribution to the development of nationalism. He observes:

...despite stiff opposition by the European planters and their protectors in the bureaucracy, Gandhiji and his comrades were able to bring the struggle to a successful conclusion

(3) There were few scholars who did not consider the Champaran movement as a success story. The movement did not succeed to strike against the exploitation and discrimination with which the peasants suffered. Ramesh Chandra Dutt, for instance, argued that the settlements made between the government and the peasants did not embrace the exploitation of our peasants by zamindars, so also this agitation led by the Mahatma in Champaran did not lead up to any fight against the main causes for the terrible poverty and sufferings of Champaran peasants, namely, the excessive rents and exorbitant incidence of debts... it does strike us rather significant that both he (Gandhiji) and Rajendra Prasad should have remained scrupulously silent upon the ravages of the zamindari system.

The movements mentioned above were relatively regional in their character, however in the year 1919, the British administration delivered to the leaders of the Indian National movement an issue from which a much wider movement could be woven, the issue was the unreasonable and harsh censorship that had been imposed under the Raj on the recommendation of a committee chaired by Sir Sydney Rowlatt.

The Rowlatt Acts and the Rowlatt Satyagraha

Rowlatt Acts, (February 1919) were the legislations passed by the Imperial Legislative Council, the legislature of British India. The acts allowed certain political cases to be tried without juries and permitted internment of suspects without trial. Their object was to replace the repressive provisions of the wartime Defence of India Act (1915) by a permanent law. They were based on the report of Justice S.A.T. Rowlatt's committee of 1918. The Rowlatt Acts were much resented by an aroused Indian public. All nonofficial Indian members of the council (i.e., those who were not officials in the colonial government) voted against the acts. ¹

The unpopular legislation provided for stricter control of the press, arrests without warrant, indefinite detention without trial, and juryless *in camera* trials for proscribed political acts. The accused were denied the right to know the accusers and the evidence used in the trial. Those convicted were required to deposit securities upon release, and were prohibited from taking part in any political, educational, or religious activities. On the report of the committee, headed by Justice Rowlatt, two bills were introduced in the central legislature in February 1919. These bills came to be known as "black bills". They gave enormous powers to the police to search a place and arrest any person they disapproved of without warrant. A well known description of the bills at that time was: No Dalil, No Vakil, No Appeal i.e., no pleas, no lawyer, no Appeal. Despite much opposition,

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Rowlatt-Acts>

the Rowlatt act was passed in March 1919. The purpose of the act was to curb the growing nationalist upsurge in the country.

Gandhi, among other Indian leaders, was extremely critical of the Act and argued that not everyone should get punishment in response to isolated political crimes. The Act annoyed many Indian leaders and the public, which caused the government to implement repressive measures. Gandhi and others found that constitutional opposition to the measure was fruitless, so on April 6, a "hartal" was organised where Indians would suspend all business and fast as a sign of their opposition and civil disobedience would be offered against specific law. This event is known as the Rowlatt Satyagraha.

The protests were particularly intense in Punjab where many men had served under the Britishers in World War 1 from 1914 to 1918 and were expecting to be rewarded but instead got the Rowlatt Act. The situation got more and more intense till it reached a bloody climax in Amritsar. This was the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.

The Massacre at Jallianwala Bagh

The 1919 Amritsar massacre, known alternatively as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre after the Jallianwala Bagh (Garden) in the northern Indian city of Amritsar, was ordered by General R.E.H. Dyer. On Sunday April 13, 1919, which happened to be 'Baisakhi', one of Punjab's largest religious festivals, fifty British Indian Army soldiers, commanded by Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, began shooting at an unarmed gathering of men, women, and children without warning. Dyer marched his fifty riflemen to a raised bank and ordered them to kneel and fire. Dyer ordered soldiers to reload their rifles several times and they were ordered to shoot to kill. Official British Raj sources estimated the fatalities at 379, and with 1,100 wounded. Civil Surgeon Dr Williams DeeMeddy indicated that there were 1,526 casualties. However, the casualty number quoted by the Indian National Congress was more than 1,500, with roughly 1,000 killed.

On April 13, the holiday of Baisakhi, thousands of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims gathered in the Jallianwala Bagh (garden) near the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar. Baisakhi is a Sikh festival, commemorating the day that Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa Panth in 1699, and also known as the 'Birth of Khalsa.' During this time people celebrate by congregating in religious and community fairs, and there may have been a large number who were unaware of the political meeting.

The Jallianwala Bagh during 1919, months after the massacre.

"The Martyrs' Well" at Jallianwala Bagh.

Cartoon in Punch 14 July 1920, on the occasion of Montagu labelling as "frightful" General Dyer for his role in the Amritsar massacre. An hour after the meeting began as scheduled at 4:30 pm, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer marched a group of sixty-five Gurkha and twenty-five Baluchi soldiers into the Bagh, fifty of whom were armed with rifles. Dyer had also brought two armoured cars armed with machine guns, however the vehicles were stationed outside the main gate as they were unable to enter the Bagh through the narrow entrance.

The Jallianwala Bagh was bounded on all sides by houses and buildings and had few narrow entrances, most of which were kept permanently locked. The main entrance was relatively wider, but was guarded by the troops backed by the armoured vehicles. General Dyer ordered troops to begin shooting without warning or any order to disperse, and to direct shooting towards the densest sections of the crowd. He continued the shooting, approximately 1,650 rounds in all, until ammunition was almost exhausted.

Apart from the many deaths directly from the shooting, a number of people died in stampedes at the narrow gates or by jumping into the solitary well on the compound to escape the shooting. A plaque in the monument at the site, set up after independence, says that 120 bodies were pulled out of the well.

The wounded could not be moved from where they had fallen, as a curfew had been declared - many more died during the night. According to a British inquiry, the shooting caused 379 deaths, however this figure is disputed and Indian scholars claim the number to be far higher.

Since the official figures were likely flawed considering the size of the crowd (15,000-20,000), number of rounds shot and period of shooting, the politically interested Indian National Congress instituted a separate inquiry of its own, with conclusions that differed considerably from the Government's. The casualty number quoted by the INC was more than 1,500, with approximately 1,000 killed.] Despite the Government's best efforts to suppress information of the massacre, news spread elsewhere in India and widespread outrage ensued; however, the details of the massacre did not become known in Britain until December 1919. ²

The success of the Rowlatt Satyagraha led to the “Non Cooperation” movement,

The Non Cooperation Movement

Non-cooperation movement was started by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 to drive the British out of the country. Non-cooperation movement was nothing but a declaration of peaceful; and non-violent war against the atrocities of the British government which had gone back on its words.

The Non-cooperation Movement meant active refusal to abide by the laws and regulations passed by the government.

- An appeal was made to all the Indians to surrender their titles and to boycott the law courts, the educational institutions and the election of the legislatures.
- It was thought in the beginning that this would be enough to emphasize upon the government the need for greater reforms and more amenities in the administration of the country.
- However, it was planned that, in case, it did not succeed in bringing down the Government; the payment of taxes would be refused.

² <http://www.jallianwalabagh.ca/pages.php?id=4>

The Congress also declared that it would not be satisfied with anything less than Swarajya. Thus, for the first time the Congress had taken a revolutionary step. An organization which was wedded to constitutional means had now adopted a revolutionary policy and was even ready to work for a self rule disconnecting all relations from the government of England in case it was not granted by them willingly.³

Non Cooperation and the Khilafat Movement

To broaden the Non-Cooperation movement, the Indian leadership joined hands with the “Khilafat” Movement that sought to restore to power the Caliphate, a symbol of pan-Islamism which had recently been abolished by the Turkish ruler Kemal Attaturk. The movement sought to express Muslim support for the Caliph of Turkey against the allied powers particularly Britain.

Muslims were especially upset about the future of the Islamic places of worship after the allied powers had partitioned the Turkish Empire. In India Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar and his brother Maulana Shaukat Ali along with some other Muslim leaders such as Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari, Raees-ul-Muhajireen Barrister Jan Muhammad Junejo, Hasrat Mohani, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Hakim Ajmal Khan joined hands and created an All India Khilafat Committee, at Lucknow.. It had two main demands, which were never accepted: Caliph Sultan must retain sufficient territories so that he is able to defend the Islamic Faith. The places which are called Jazirat-ul-arab, including the Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Palestine must remain under Muslim suzerainty. The Ali brothers were arrested during the course of the war only to be released from jail after the war was over. This movement reached a crescendo in Bengal, North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab. October 17, 1919 was observed as Khilafat Day. The Hindus also joined hands with the Muslims and a strike was called for. On November 23 1919, the All India Khilafat Conference was organized at New Delhi and later a Khilafat Manifesto was published which called upon the British to protect the Caliphate. The leaders of the Khilafat Movement joined hands with Indian National Congress for the upcoming Non-cooperation Movement. Again March 19 1920 was observed as Khilafat Day and following that there was an all party conference in June 1920 at Allahabad. The agenda of the Non-cooperation Movement was finalized. The agenda was: Boycott of the Titles conferred by the Government Boycott of civil services, army and police and all other Government offices. Non-payment of taxes to the government.⁴

An Empire Shaken to its Roots

Gandhi inaugurated the non-co-operation campaign on 1st August. The aged Lokamanya Tilak promised his help to the movement but before the midnight 31st July he breathed his last. Tilak's dead body was carried by Gandhi, Shaukat Ali and Saifuddin Kitchlew. The Non-Co-operation began with fasting and prayer.

³ <http://www.importantindia.com/16194/causes-and-importance-of-non-cooperation-movement/>

⁴ <http://www.gktoday.in/khilafat-movement-1919-20/>

Millions of the countrymen stopped their work on that day as a mark of their support to Gandhi and as antipathy towards the Government. Gandhi along with Ali-brothers made extensive tours to preach the message of national unity and non-cooperation with the government. After the beginning of the agitation, the Congress met at Calcutta in Sep. 1920 and approved the movement. Lala Lajpat Rai presided over the session of the Congress.

The programme of non-cooperation consisted of a surrender of British titles and honours, boycott of British Courts, Legislatures and educational institutions as well as the boycott of foreign-made goods. To the negative side of the boycott of foreign goods was added a constructive side that included the promotion of Swadeshi goods especially hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi cloth, the removal of untouchability, the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and abstention of alcoholic beverage. Charkha became a household article.

Against the resolution at Calcutta, Muhammad Ali Jinnah moved a motion with the apprehension of the movement being termed to a mass movement. But Gandhi wanted the movement should be the movement of the people with their direct involvement. Thus began the Non-Co-operation Movement of Gandhi to shake the British rule and its foundation. The nation stood behind Gandhi to fight as crusaders. Motilal Nehru, the father of Jawaharlal Nehru and C.R. Das gave up their legal profession. Many resigned from Government services.

Students in thousands left schools and colleges established by the Government. Students in large number joined the movement. Eminent persons like Rajgopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, Gopabandhu Das, Ajmal Khan, Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru joined the movement. Thousands courted arrest. It became a moral inspiration for Gandhi. The nation gained self-confidence to rise against the imperial power. Patriots made prisons as their house of pilgrimage. More than 30,000 people entered into the jails of India. The Government faced naturally embarrassing situations all over India.

The Non-Cooperation Movement programme was taken up enthusiastically. Bonfires of foreign cloth testified the people's resolve to escape from their dependence on imported goods. In Bombay, a mountain of clothing was set ablaze. The movement had impressive results in many other fields. Many universities' teachers sacrificed their jobs by leaving Colleges established by the Government. New educational institutions such as the Jamia Milia Islamia and Kashi Vidyapitha were established to provide education in the national lines. Congress fielded no candidates in the election.

Besides visits of members of the British royal family was decided to be boycotted. The Duke of Connaught, son of Queen Victoria came to inaugurate the Mountford Reforms. A complete hartal was observed in Madras on the day of his arrival. Similar Treatment was extended to him at Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay. The visit of the Prince of Wales was boycotted too. His day of arrival on 17th November 1921 was observed as the day of hartal. In Bombay town, the demonstration by the Congress became violent and anti-British riot continued for five days.

The police resorted to firing which took lives of 53 persons. Congress and Khilafat Volunteer Organizations were declared unlawful and illegal. Gradually jails of the country were filled with non-cooperation volunteers. Imprisonment remained no longer a badge of disgrace rather a sign of distinction.

Communal forces joined together to demonstrate anti-British feelings that in the long run went against the very ethics of British policy of 'divide and rule'. As directed by the Congress people of Bardoli in Gujarat did not pay Government revenue. Gandhiji sent a written ultimatum to the Viceroy threatening mass civil disobedience until the repressive measures are withdrawn. ⁵

As a consequence of this movement, the British Raj was shaken to its roots for the first time since the revolt of 1857.

End of the Movement

The movement ended due an unfortunate occurrence in a small hamlet called Chauri Chaura. The Chauri Chaura incident occurred at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district of the United Province, British India on 4 February 1922, when a large group of protesters participating in the Non-cooperation movement turned violent, leading to police opening fire. In retaliation the demonstrators attacked and set fire to a police station, killing all of its occupants. The incident led to the deaths of three civilians and 22 or 23 policemen. The Indian National Congress halted the Non-cooperation Movement on the national level as a direct result of this incident.

Following this, in 1928 there was a movement against the all white "Simon Commission" that was sent from England to India to inquire into the conditions in the colony.

"Simon Go Back"

Background: Indian nationalists had declared the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms reforms of 1919 as inadequate. They had been demanding for an early reconsideration of the constitutional question.

Formation of Simon Commission: So, the British government appointed the Simon Commission in 1927 for enquiry into the working of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms (Mont-Ford Reforms).

No Indian Member: The commission headed by Sir John Simon, had no Indian member. It was a shock to India.

The response in India was immediate and unanimous.

Congress decision to boycott Simon Commission: At the Madras session in 1927, the Congress decided to boycott the Commission. The ground was that it had been appointed without any Indian. Indians were not thought fit to be included in the Commission.

⁵ <http://www.historydiscussion.net/history-of-india/the-non-co-operation-movement-in-india/2591>

Call for boycott supported by other parties: Resentment and suspicion were not confined to the Congress circles alone. The call for boycott of the Commission was supported by the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. Muhammad Ali Jinnah said, 'Jalianwalabag was a physical butcher. The Simon Commission is the butchery of our soul'.

Boycott turned into popular movement: The action began as soon as Simon and other members of the Commission landed at Bombay on 3 February 1928. That day, complete strike was observed in all the major cities and towns. People participated in processing and black flag demonstration. The popular slogan 'Go back Simon' was raised everywhere.

Police action: The police dealt with the protesters severely. Lathi-charges were frequent. In Lahore, Lal Lajpat Rai was hit on the chest and ultimately died a few days after the incident. Jawaharlal Nehru and Govind Ballabh Pant were not spared. In Lucknow, they were beaten by the police.⁶

The call for "Purna Swaraj" and the Lahore Session of the Congress

The Purna Swaraj declaration, or Declaration of the Independence of India, was promulgated by the Indian National Congress on 19 December 1929, resolving the Congress and Indian nationalists to fight for Purna Swaraj, or *complete self-rule* independent of the British Empire (literally in Sanskrit, *purna*, "complete," *swa*, "self," *raj*, "rule," thus "complete self-rule").

The flag of India had been hoisted by Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru on 31 December 1929, in Lahore, modern-day Pakistan. The Congress asked the people of India to observe 26 January as Independence Day. The flag of India was hoisted publicly across India by Congress volunteers, nationalists and the public.

Background

Before 1930, few Indian political parties had openly embraced the goal of political independence from the United Kingdom. The All India Home Rule League had been advocating *Home Rule* for India: dominion status within the British Empire, as granted to Australia, Canada, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and South Africa. The All India Muslim League favoured dominion status as well, and opposed calls for outright Indian independence. The Indian Liberal Party, by far the most pro-British party, explicitly opposed India's independence and even dominion status if it weakened India's links with the British Empire. The Indian National Congress, the largest Indian political party of the time, was at the head of the national debate. Congress leader and famous poet Hasrat Mohani was the first activist to demand complete independence (Purna Swaraj) from the British in 1921 from an All-India Congress Forum. Veteran Congress leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal had also advocated explicit Indian independence from the Empire.

⁶ <http://www.importantindia.com/16181/brief-note-on-simon-commission/>

Following the 1919 Amritsar Massacre, there was considerable public outrage against British rule. Europeans, (civilians and officials) were targets and victims of violence across India. In 1920, Gandhi and the Congress committed themselves to *Swaraj*, described as political and spiritual independence. At the time, Gandhi described this as the basic demand of all Indians; he specifically said that the question of whether India would remain within the Empire or leave it completely would be answered by the behaviour and response of the British. Between 1920 and 1922, Mahatma Gandhi led the Non-Cooperation movement: nationwide civil disobedience to oppose the Rowlatt Acts and the exclusion of Indians from the government, and the denial of political and civil freedoms.

Simon Commission and the Nehru Report

In 1928, the British government further outraged people across India by appointing a seven-man committee led by Sir John Simon, it was an all - European commission Simon Commission to deliberate on constitutional and political reforms for India. Indian political parties were neither consulted nor asked to involve themselves in the process. Upon arrival in India, Chairman Sir John Simon and other commission members were met with angry public demonstrations, which followed them everywhere. The death of a prominent Indian leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, from severe beatings by British police officials further outraged the Indian public.

The Congress appointed an all-Indian commission to propose constitutional reforms for India. Members of other Indian political parties joined the commission led by Congress President Motilal Nehru. The Nehru Report demanded that India be granted self-government under the dominion status within the Empire. While most other Indian political parties supported the Nehru commission's work, it was opposed by the Indian Liberal Party and the All India Muslim League. The British ignored the commission, its report and refused to introduce political reform.

Dominion or Republic?

But the Nehru Report was also controversial within the Congress. Younger nationalist leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru (Motilal Nehru's son) demanded that the Congress resolve to make a complete and explicit break from all ties with the British. Jawaharlal Nehru had been influenced by the idea of Bhagat Singh ("total independence"), which Singh had introduced a resolution demanding in 1927, which was rejected because of Gandhi's opposition.⁷ Now Bose and Nehru opposed dominion status, which would retain the Monarch of the United Kingdom as the constitutional head of state of India (although in the separate capacity as King of India), and preserve political powers for the British Parliament in Indian constitutional affairs. They were supported in their stand by a large number of rank-and-file Congressmen.

In December 1928, Congress session was held in Calcutta and Mohandas Gandhi proposed a resolution that called for the British to grant dominion status to India within two years. If the British

⁷ Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel: A Life*, p. 171, ASIN: B0006EYQ0A

failed to meet the deadline, the Congress would call upon all Indians to fight for complete independence. Bose and Nehru objected to the time given to the British – they pressed Gandhi to demand immediate actions from the British. Gandhi brokered a further compromise by reducing the time given from two years to one. Jawaharlal Nehru voted for the new resolution, while Subhash Bose told his supporters that he would not oppose the resolution, and abstained from voting himself. The All India Congress Committee voted 118 to 45 in its favour (the 45 votes came from supporters of a complete break from the British). However, when Bose introduced an amendment during the open session of Congress that sought a complete break with the British, Gandhi admonished the move:

“You may take the name of independence on your lips but all your muttering will be an empty formula if there is no honour behind it. If you are not prepared to stand by your words, where will independence be?”⁸

The amendment was rejected, by 1350 to 973, and the resolution was fully adopted.

On 31 October 1929, the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin announced that the government would meet with Indian representatives in London for a Round Table Conference. To facilitate Indian participation, Irwin met with Mohandas Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and out-going Congress President Motilal Nehru to discuss the meeting. Gandhi asked Irwin if the conference would proceed on the basis of dominion status and Irwin said he could not assure that, resulting in the end of the meeting.⁹

The Declaration

As a result of the denial of reforms and political rights, and the persistent ignorance of Indian political parties, the Indian National Congress grew increasingly cohesive – unified in the desire to oust the British from India completely.¹⁰ A very large number of Congress volunteers and delegates, members of other political parties and an especially large public gathering attended the session convened in Lahore. Despite the bitterly cold weather, Pattabhi Sitaramayya records that:

“The heat of passion and excitement, the resentment at the failure of negotiation, the flushing of faces on hearing the war drums – oh, it was all in marked contrast to the weather.”¹¹

Jawaharlal Nehru was elected President and veteran leaders like Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel returned to the Congress Working Committee. They approved a declaration of independence, which stated:

“The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually.... Therefore...India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence.”¹²

⁸ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Bombay, 1951, p. 441

⁹ R. Gandhi, Patel: A Life, p. 185

¹⁰ R. Gandhi, Patel: A Life, p. 185

¹¹ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Congress*, Allahabad, 1935, p. 600

At midnight on New Year's Eve, President Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the tricolour flag of India upon the banks of the Ravi in Lahore, which later became part of Pakistan. A pledge of independence was read out, which included a readiness to withhold taxes. The massive gathering of public attending the ceremony were asked if they agreed with it, and the vast majority of people were witnessed to raise their hands in approval. One hundred seventy two Indian members of central and provincial legislatures resigned in support of the resolution and in accordance with Indian public sentiment.

The Declaration of Independence was officially promulgated on 26 January 1930. Gandhi and other Indian leaders would immediately begin the planning of a massive national revolt that would encourage the common people to participate and also help involve revolutionaries into a struggle committed to non-violence.¹³ The *Salt Satyagraha* was initiated by Mohandas Gandhi and the Congress as the first struggle for complete independence.

Soon after the announcement of this "Independence Day" Gandhi announced that he would lead a march to break one of the most dreaded laws in British India which gave the State a monopoly in the manufacture and sale of salt.

The Dandi March or the Salt Satyagraha and the Birth of Civil Disobedience

The course of action that Gandhi decided to undertake is revealed by a remarkable letter that he addressed to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, a letter most unusual in the annals of political discourse. "Dear Friend", he wrote to his political adversary on March 2, "I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India." In a rather detailed analysis, Gandhi was to note the vast inequities in the salaries paid to Indians and to British officials: where the average Indian earned less than 2 annas per day, the British Prime Minister earned Rs. 180 per day, while the Viceroy received Rs. 700 per day; more tellingly, the Prime Minister of Britain received 90 times more than the average Britisher, but the Viceroy received "much over five thousand times India's average income." While not desirous of humiliating the Viceroy, Gandhi apologized for taking a "personal illustration to drive home a painful truth", and asked him "on bended knee" to "ponder over this phenomenon." The system of administration carried out in India was "demonstrably the most expensive in the world", and it had only further impoverished the nation.

If the British were not prepared to combat the various "evils" afflicting India under colonial rule, Gandhi was prepared to commence a fresh campaign of "civil disobedience". As he went on to inform Irwin, he intended to break the salt laws, a gesture that no doubt must have struck Irwin as

¹² <http://www.indiaofthepast.org/contribute-memories/read-contributions/major-events-pre-1950/283-purna-swaraj-the-demand-for-full-independence-26-january-1930->

India of the Past. Retrieved 2015-07-06

¹³ R. Gandhi, Patel: A Life, p. 185

bizarre. The British exercised a monopoly on the production and sale of salt: yet this was an essential ingredient, required by the poor as much as by the rich. "I regard this tax [on salt]", Gandhi wrote, "to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint. As the independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land the beginning will be made with this evil." Since Gandhi intended no harm to the Viceroy himself, or indeed to any Englishman, he chose to have his letter delivered in person by a "young English friend who believes in the Indian cause and is a full believer in non-violence". The Viceroy, not unexpectedly, promptly wrote back to express his regret that Gandhi was again "contemplating a course of action which is clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace."

"On bended knees I asked for bread and I have received stone instead", Gandhi remarked, and making good his promise, he set out on March 12 with seventy-eight of his followers and disciples from Sabarmati Ashram on the 241-mile march to Dandi on the sea. All along the way, he addressed large crowds, and with each passing day an increasing number of people joined Gandhi on the march. It is said that the roads were watered, and fresh flowers and green leaves strewn on the path; and as the satyagrahis walked, they did so to the tune of one of Gandhi's favorite bhajans, *Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram*, sung by the great Hindustani vocalist, Pandit Paluskar. On April 5, Gandhi arrived at Dandi: short prayers were offered, Gandhi addressed the crowd, and at 8:30 AM he picked up a small lump of natural salt. Gandhi had now broken the law; Sarojini Naidu, his close friend and associate, shouted: "Hail, Deliverer!" No sooner had Gandhi violated the law than everywhere others followed suit: within one week the jails were full, and subsequently Gandhi himself was to be taken into jail.¹⁴

The Salt March was important mainly for 3 reasons, firstly it was covered widely by the global media, particularly by the European and American press which brought India's case into global limelight. Secondly it was the first nationalist activity that involved women in large numbers, due to this movement, a substantial number of women also went to jail along with men. Thirdly it made the British realise that their Raj would not last forever and that they had to devolve some powers to the Indians.

Gandhi and Lord Irwin signed a truce, known as the "Gandhi Irwin Pact" and the British Government agreed to call a conference in London to negotiate India's demands for independence.

The London Dialogue

In response to the inadequacy of the Simon Report, the Labour Government, which had come to power under Ramsay MacDonald in 1929, decided to hold a series of Round Table Conferences in London.

¹⁴ <https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/History/Gandhi/Dandi.html>

The first Round Table Conference convened from 12 November 1930 to 19 January 1931. Prior to the Conference, M. K. Gandhi had initiated the Civil Disobedience Movement on behalf of the Indian National Congress. Consequently, since many of the Congress' leaders were in jail, Congress did not participate in the first conference, but representatives from all other Indian parties and a number of Princes did. The outcomes of the first Round Table Conference were minimal: India was to develop into a federation, safeguards regarding defence and finance were agreed and other departments were to be transferred. However, little was done to implement these recommendations and civil disobedience continued in India. The British Government realized that the Indian National Congress needed to be part of deciding the future of constitutional government in India.

Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, met with Gandhi to reach a compromise. On 5 March 1931 they agreed the following to pave the way for the Congress' participation in the second Round Table Conference: Congress would discontinue the Civil Disobedience Movement, it would participate in the second Round Table Conference, the Government would withdraw all ordinances issued to curb the Congress, the Government would withdraw all prosecutions relating to offenses not involving violence and the Government would release all persons undergoing sentences of imprisonment for their activities in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The second Round Table Conference was held in London from 7 September 1931 to 1 December 1931 with the participation of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. Two weeks before the Conference convened, the Labour government had been replaced by the Conservatives. At the conference, Gandhi claimed to represent all people of India. This view, however, was not shared by other delegates. In fact, the division between the many attending groups was one of the reasons why the outcomes of the second Round Table Conference were again no substantial results regarding India's constitutional future. The view was challenged mainly by the Muslim League which claimed to stand for the interests of the Muslim Minority; from the Princely states which claimed that the Congress had no stake in their territories and from a brilliant lawyer and thinker B.R Ambedkar who argued that Gandhi and the Congress did not really represent the interests of the lowest sections society. Meanwhile, civil unrest had spread throughout India again, and upon return to India Gandhi was arrested along with other Congress leaders. A separate province of Sind was created and the interests of minorities were safeguarded by MacDonal's Communal Award.

The third Round Table Conference (17 November 1932 - 24 December 1932) was not attended by the Indian National Congress and Gandhi. Many other Indian leaders were also absent. Like the two first conferences, little was achieved. The recommendations were published in a White Paper in March 1933 and debated in Parliament afterwards. A Joint Select Committee was formed to analyse the recommendations and formulate a new Act for India. The Committee produced a draft Bill in February 1935 which was enforced as the Government of India Act of 1935 in July 1935.¹⁵

¹⁵ <http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/round-table-conferences-1930-1932>

This act promised some kind of representation to the Indians, 2 years later in an election held on the basis of restricted franchise the Congress won a comprehensive victory, now 8 out of 11 provinces had a Congress “Prime Minister” working under the Supervision of a British Governor. The full text of the Act can be found at the link provided in the footnote ¹⁶

In September 1939 the Second World War broke out, both Gandhi and Nehru had been strongly critical of the Nazis and Adolf Hitler. The Congress offered the British their support against Nazi Germany in return of India’s independence. This offer was declined by the crown and in protest the Congress ministries resigned in October 1939. Through 1940 and 1941 the Congress organised a series of Individual Satyagraha to pressurise the rulers into granting freedom to India post the war.

The Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League

The Lahore Resolution written by Muhammad Zafarullah Khan and presented by A. K. Fazlul Huq, the Prime Minister of Bengal was a formal political statement adopted by the All-India Muslim League on the occasion of its three-day general session in Lahore on March 22–24, 1940. The resolution called for independent states as seen by the statement:

“That geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North Western and Eastern Zones of (British) India should be grouped to constitute ‘independent states’ in which the constituent units should be autonomous and sovereign.”

Although the name "Pakistan" had been proposed by Choudhary Rahmat Ali in his Pakistan Declaration,¹⁷ it was not until after the resolution that it began to be widely used.

Background

Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, told the leaders of the Muslim League that the Government of Great Britain intended to divide India into three dominions – among the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Rulers of Princely States. Within the *Muslim League Working Committee*, various sub-committees were established, numerous proposals were presented with the final decision resting with the British. However, when the British saw that their objectives could not be met, they unilaterally rejected all proposals submitted by the Muslims. At this point, Zafarullah Khan was asked to submit a proposal on the partition of India, about which the Viceroy wrote to the Secretary of State for India:

¹⁶ <http://lawmin.nic.in/legislative/textofcentralacts/GOI%20act%201935.pdf>

¹⁷ Choudhary Rahmat Ali, (1933), *Now or Never; Are We to Live or Perish Forever?*, pamphlet, published January 28. (Rehmat Ali at the time was an undergraduate at the University of Cambridge)

“Upon my instruction Zafarullah wrote a memorandum on the subject. Two Dominion States. I have already sent it to your attention. I have also asked him for further clarification, which, he says, is forthcoming. He is anxious, however, that no one should find out that he has prepared this plan. He has, however, given me the right to do with it what I like, including sending a copy to you. Copies have been passed on to Jinnah, and, I think, to Sir Akbar Hydari. While he, Zafarullah, cannot admit its authorship, his document has been prepared for adoption by the Muslim League with a view to giving it the fullest publicity”

—Lord Linlithgow, March 12, 1940¹⁸.

The Lahore Conference.

The session was held between March 22 and March 24, 1940, at Iqbal Park, Lahore. The welcome address was made by Sir Shah Nawaz Khan of Mamdot. He was also the chairman of the reception committee and personally bore all the expenses. A. K. Fazlul Huq presented the resolution. The resolution text unanimously accepted the concept of a united homeland for Muslims on the grounds of growing inter-communal violence¹⁹ and recommended the creation of an independent Muslim state.²⁰

Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan is credited as the author of the resolution. After the presentation of the annual report by Liaquat Ali Khan, the resolution was moved in the general session by A.K. Fazlul Huq, the chief minister of undivided Bengal, and was seconded by Choudhury Khaliqzaman who explained his views on the causes which led to the demand for partition. Subsequently, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan from Punjab, Mohammad Abdul Ghafoor Hazarvi from North-West Frontier Province, Sir Abdullah Haroon from Sindh, Qazi Esa from Baluchistan, and other leaders announced their support. In the same session, Jinnah also presented a resolution to condemn the Khaksar massacre of March 19, owing to a clash between the Khaksars and the police, that had resulted in the loss of 32 lives.²¹

The Statement

The Lahore resolution was actually adopted on March 24, 1940, but officially in Pakistan March 23 is considered the date of its adoption. In 1941, it became part of the Muslim League's constitution.

¹⁸ Khan, Wali. "Facts are Facts: The Untold Story of India's Partition" (PDF). pp. 40–42. Retrieved March 9, 2011

¹⁹ Muhammad Aslam Malik (2001), *The Making of the Pakistan Resolution*, Oxford University Press, Delhi. ISBN 0-19-579538-5

²⁰ Syed Iftikhar Ahmed (1983), *Essays on Pakistan*, Alpha Bravo Publishers, Lahore, OCLC 12811079

²¹ Nasim Yousaf (2004), *Pakistan's Freedom & Allama Mashriqi: Statements, Letters, Chronology of Khaksar Tehrik (Movement)*, Period Mashriqi's birth to 1947. page 123. AMZ Publications. ISBN 0-9760333-0-5

In 1946, it formed the basis for the decision of Muslim League to struggle for one state for the Muslims.^[7] The statement declared:

“No constitutional plan would be workable or acceptable to the Muslims unless geographical contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary”.²²

Additionally, it stated:

“That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in the units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights of the minorities.”

Most importantly, to convince smaller provinces such as Sindh to join, it provided a guarantee:

“That geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North Western and Eastern Zones of (British) India should be grouped to constitute ‘independent states’ in which the constituent units should be autonomous and sovereign.”

The political landscape was now tense, the independence movement was no longer a two way struggle between the Indians and the British, it was now a three way dispute between the Congress, the Muslim League and the British.

In the spring of 1942, the Prime Minister of Britain, Sir Winston Churchill sent one of his ministers, Sir Stafford Cripps to India to negotiate a compromise.

The Cripps Mission

1942 saw the advancement of British forces in India. Apart from that there was a pressure from the American President F. Roosevelt and Chinese premier Chiang Kai-Shek to concede the real political power to the people of India. The fall of Burma was enough to frighten the British and when the Japanese army began to knock the doors of India after Burma and Singapore, the war cabinet of Britain sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India on March 1942 to elicit cooperation from the Indians. It promised for the fulfillment of past promises to self-government to Indian people. The proposal of the Cripps mission was that: “India would be a dominion associated with the United Kingdom”. It promised that immediately after the war is stopped, steps would be taken up to set up an elected body charged with the task of making the constitution for India and provisions would be made so that the Indian states could participate in the framing of the constitution. Through the Cripps mission for the first time, British government recognized the “Right of Dominion’ for India. Indians were given promise of liberty to frame their own constitution.

²² H Qureshi, (1992), *A Short History of Pakistan*. University of Karachi, Reprint of 1967 edition. ISBN 969-404-008-6

The Cripps mission which was a move to appease the Congress, Muslim League and Indian states at the same time was rejected by all of them. Gandhi wanted an undivided India, Muslim league wanted a separate Pakistan,

Congress demanded a full control over defense “stating that a slave country cannot have any inspiration”. Muslim league said there was inadequate representation of Muslims. Sikhs rejected because of non-accession of provinces.

Hindu Mahasabha rejected because the “Pakistan Virus” was alive. The Dalits and depressed classed also rejected because there was nothing new for them.²³

After the failure of the Cripps Mission, Gandhi decided to launch his third major movement against British Rule, the Quit India Movement

The Quit India Movement

he Quit India Movement, also known as the August Movement was a Civil Disobedience Movement launched by Gandhi for Satyagraha (independence).

The movement was accompanied by a mass protest on non-violent lines, in which Gandhi called for “an orderly British withdrawal from India”. Through his passionate speeches, Gandhi moved people by proclaiming “every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide...”. “Let every Indian consider himself to be a free man”, Gandhi declared in his fiery “Do or Die” speech the day the Quit India Movement was declared.

The British were prepared for this massive uprising and within a few hours of Gandhi’s speech most of the Indian National Congress leaders were swiftly arrested; most of whom had to spend the next three years in jail, until World War II ended. During this time the British were deriving heavy support from the Viceroy’s Council, Muslims, the Communist Party, princely states, the Indian Army and the Civil Services. Most Indian businessmen were experiencing profits due to wartime spending and hence did not support the Quit India Movement. Most students were drawn towards Subhas Chandra Bose who was in exile and the only support Indian got from outside the country was from American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who compelled the then British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to agree to the demands of the Indians. But the British refused to do so and said that this would only be possible when World War II ended.

Isolated incidents of violence broke out around the country, but the British acted quickly and arrested thousands of people and kept them in jail till 1945. Apart from filling up jails with

²³ <http://www.gktoday.in/cripps-proposals-1942/>

rebellious leaders, the British also went ahead and abolished civil rights, freedom of speech and freedom of press.

The reason why it was so easy for the British to crush the Quit India Movement was because of a weak coordination and no clear cut plan of action. Though despite of its flaws, the Quit India Movement remains significant because it was during this movement that the British realized that they would not be able to govern India successfully in the long run and began to think of ways they could exit the country in a peaceful and dignified manner.

1939 saw the outbreak of World War II, following which Britain went to war with Germany. Since India was an important part of the British Empire, India also became part of the war. On 10th October 1939 the Congress Working Committee declared their unhappiness regarding the hostile activities taking place in Germany and announced that India refused to be a part of the war because it was against fascism. On 17th October 1939 the Viceroy released a statement in which he announced that the reason Britain was waging a war was to restore peace in the world. He also promised that once the war ended the government would amend the Act of 1935 which included a provision of the establishment of a “Federation of India” which would be made up of British India and some or all of the princely states.

Simultaneously, important political changes were taking place in England. Churchill came to power as the Prime Minister and being a conservative, he was not moved by the demands of the Indians. Following the rejection of the demands made by the Congress and the large scale dissatisfaction that was prevailing across the country, Gandhi decided to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Gandhi used his weapons of Satyagraha and non-violence against the British and chose his follower Vinoba Bhave to start the movement. Satyagrahis across the country made passionate speeches urging people not to support the war. This was immediately followed by the arrest of around 14,000 Satyagrahis.

The failure of the Cripps Mission was another event which triggered off the Quit India Movement. On 22nd March the British Government sent Sir Stafford Cripps to have a dialogue with Indian political parties seeking their support in the war that Britain was waging in Europe. A Draft Declaration of the British Government was offered to India, which included the establishment of a dominion, the establishment of a constituent assembly and the rights of provinces to make separate constitutions. All this would however be granted at end of the war. The Congress was not happy with these future promises, with Gandhi saying “It is a post dated cheque on a crashing bank”. Other factors which led to the Quit India Movement was the fear of Japan attacking India, terror in East Bengal and the fact that India had realized that the British could not defend the country anymore.

One of the greatest achievements of the Quit India Movement was that it kept the Congress Party united all through these challenging times. The British dismayed by the Japanese Army advancing

towards the Indian-Burma border arrested Gandhi and all members of the party's working committee. The Congress Party was further banned by the British. Large protests took place all across the country following this. Despite Gandhi's mantra of non-violence not all protests were peaceful and bombs were exploded and government offices were burned down.

The British responded to this by mass arrests and public flogging. Hundreds of innocent people died in this violence and the Congress leadership was cut off from the rest of the world till the war was over. Despite his failing health and the recent demise of his wife, Gandhi who was in prison, took on a 21 day fast and continued with his resolution. The British released Gandhi due to his ill health, but Gandhi continued his opposition and asked for the release of the Congress leaders who were in prison.

By 1944, even though the Congress leaders had not been released, peace was restored to India. Many nationalists were disappointed that the Quit India Movement had failed. The Congress Party in turn faced severe criticism from Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the All India Muslim League and the Communist Party on the failure of the movement.²⁴

Rise of the Muslim League

It is during the Quit India Movement, while Congress leaders were languishing in jails, Jinnah and his colleagues in the Muslim League worked patiently to expand their influence. It is in this period that the League began to make a mark in Punjab and Sind, two regions where it barely had any presence previously. In late 1944 Gandhi held a series of meetings with Jinnah in order to bridge the gap between the League and the Congress.

In 1945 a Labour Government came to power in Britain and committed itself to granting Independence to India. Meanwhile back in India Lord Wavell brought the League and the Congress Together for a series of fresh talks.

In early 1946 fresh elections were held to the provincial legislatures. The Congress swept the "General Category" but in the seats reserved for muslims, the Muslim League won an overwhelming majority, this meant that the muslims of India now regarded the League to be their representative. The political polarisation was now complete. In the summer of 1946 a Cabinet Mission was sent from Britain to India to propose a federal structure for an Independent India however it failed.

The Cabinet Mission and its Failure

²⁴ <http://www.mapsofindia.com/on-this-day/8th-august-1942-mahatma-gandhi-launches-the-quit-india-movement-in-mumbai>

The political agitation in India was mounting every day. It was an alarming sign because once the forces went out of control the 1857 history could have easily been repeated.

The Prime Minister of United Kingdom, therefore, at once announced that a team of three Cabinet Ministers would be sent to India 'to promote in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion, the early realization of a full self-government in India'.

This was the indication of a very liberal attitude because for the first time the adjective of 'full' had been added to self-government. A further indication in that direction was given in March when he announced that the Government of England would be willing to consider complete Independence for India provided there was no political hitch and he further provided that the major political parties in the country could solve their own mutual problem.

The Cabinet Mission arrived in March, 1946 when there were hectic political activities in the Capital and the Provincial Head Quarters all over the country. A series of meetings were held with leaders of the Congress and League in order to find out a common leader of the Congress and League in order to find out a common line of action but the two political parties had divergent views and therefore, could not agree upon any formula whatsoever.

The Mission had the same fate as the Cabinet Mission and the Simla Conference had already met. It was too a failure although the Mission gave out its own scheme to be considered by both the Congress and the League.

The Plan

According to the proposals of the Cabinet Mission announced in May, 1946, the country could have a Federal government consisting of the British and the Indian India. The Federation was naturally to look after the national and international problems like the Defense and communication, the foreign affairs and the international trade while the provinces were to enjoy complete autonomy in Provincial subjects like police, agriculture, industries, educational and many other local problems.

So far as the scheme was concerned, it was almost the same as had been recommended by the 1935 Act, but the major recommendation was to divide the provinces into three groups so that the Muslim dominated provinces could form themselves in separate groups and thus manage their own affairs within the framework of the new Federal Government. The Muslim majority areas as claimed by the League were in the West as well as in the East while the areas in between the two and up to the south were populated mostly by the majority community. It was, therefore, decided that the Punjab, N.W.F. Province, Sindh and Baluchistan would form one group and Bengal and Assam the second group and the third group was to be consisted of all the remaining States and Provinces.

These groups were entitled to have their own separate legislatures and to draw up their constitutions according to their own will with the help of the Constituent Assemblies to be elected by the popular electorate. The Provinces underlying each group were authorized to opt to join any of the three

groups after the election of their own legislatures and thus the will of the people would be ascertained whether they would like to remain within the groups they were assigned in the beginning or would join some other group to suit their convenience or liking.²⁵

There were two plans proposed

Plan of 16 May:

Promulgated on 16 May 1946, the plan, to create a united dominion of India as a loose confederation of provinces, came to be known by the date of its announcement:

- 1 A united Dominion of India would be given independence.
- 2 The Muslim-majority provinces would be grouped, with Sind, Punjab, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province forming one group, and Bengal and Assam would form another.
- 3 The Hindu-majority provinces in central and southern India would form another group.
- 4 The central government, stationed in Delhi, would be empowered to handle nationwide affairs, such as defense, currency, and diplomacy, and the rest of powers and responsibility would belong to the provinces, coordinated by groups.

Plan of 16 June:

The plan of 16 May 1946 had a united India, in line with Congress and Muslim League aspirations, but that was where the consensus between the two parties ended since Congress abhorred the idea of having the groupings of Muslim-majority provinces and that of Hindu-majority provinces with the intention of balancing one another at the central legislature. The Muslim League could not accept any changes to this plan since they wanted to keep the safeguards of British Indian laws to prevent absolute rule of Hindus over Muslims.

Reaching an impasse, the British proposed a second plan on 16 June 1946 to arrange for India to be divided into Hindu-majority India and a Muslim-majority India that would later be renamed Pakistan since Congress had vehemently rejected 'parity' at the centre. A list of princely states of India, which would be permitted to accede to the dominion or attain independence, was also drawn up.

The Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 23 March 1946 and in Delhi on 2 April 1946. The announcement of the Plan on 16 May 1946 had been preceded by the Simla Conference in the first week of May.

Reasons for Failure

The approval of the plans determined the composition of the new government. The Congress Working Committee officially did not accept either plan. The resolution of the committee dated 24 May 1946 concluded that The Working Committee should consider the connected problems involved in the establishment of a provisional government and a Constituent Assembly should be

²⁵ <http://www.importantindia.com/16811/cabinet-mission-1946/>

viewed together. The Committee was unable to give a final opinion. The resolution of 25 June 1946, in response to the June plan, concluded that in the formation of a provisional or other government, Congressmen could never give up the national character of the Congress or accept an artificial and unjust parity or agree to a veto of a communal group. The Committee was unable to accept the proposals for formation of an interim government as contained in the statement of June 16. The committee, however, decided that the Congress should join the proposed constituent assembly to frame the constitution of a free, united and democratic India. Nehru held a press conference in Bombay and declared that Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly.

Following consultations, the Viceroy invited 14 men to join the interim government on 15 June 1946. They were Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari and Hari Krishna Mahtab of the Indian National Congress; Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Mohammed Ismail Khan, Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin and Abdul Rab Nishtar of the Muslim League; Sardar Baldev Singh (representing the Sikhs), Sir N.P. Engineer (representing the Parsis), Jagjivan Ram (representing the scheduled castes) and John Mathai (representing the Christians). The Congress proposed Zakir Hussain among its quota of 5 nominees to the interim council. Objecting to the decision, on 29 July 1946, Jinnah announced that his party would not participate in the process to form the Constituent Assembly.

The Viceroy began organizing the transfer of power to a Congress-League coalition but League president Muhammad Ali Jinnah denounced the hesitant and conditional approval of the Congress and rescinded League approval of both plans. Thus Congress leaders entered the Viceroy's Executive Council or the Interim Government of India. Nehru became the head, vice president in title, but possessing the executive authority. Patel became the home member, responsible for internal security and government agencies. Congress-led governments were formed in most provinces, including the NWFP, in Punjab (a coalition with the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Unionist Muslim League). The League led governments in Bengal and Sind. The Constituent Assembly was instructed to begin work to write a new constitution for India.

Jinnah and the League condemned the new government, and vowed to agitate for Pakistan by any means possible. Disorder arose in Punjab and Bengal, including the cities of Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. On the League-organized Direct Action Day, over 5,000 people were killed across India, and Hindu, Sikh and Muslim mobs began clashing routinely. Wavell stalled the Central government's efforts to stop the disorder, and the provinces were instructed to leave this to the governors, who did not undertake any major action. To end the disorder and rising bloodshed, Wavell encouraged Nehru to ask the League to enter the government. While Patel and most Congress leaders were opposed to conceding to a party that was organizing disorder, Nehru conceded in hope of preserving communal peace.

League leaders entered the council under the leadership of Liaquat Ali Khan, the future first Prime Minister of Pakistan who became the finance minister, but the council did not function in harmony, as separate meetings were not held by League ministers, and both parties vetoed the major initiatives proposed by the other, highlighting their ideological differences and political antagonism.

At the arrival of the new (and proclaimed as the last) viceroy, Lord Mountbatten of Burma in early 1947, Congress leaders expressed the view that the coalition was unworkable. That led to the eventual proposal, and acceptance of the partition of India. The rejection of cabinet mission plan led to a resurgence of confrontational politics beginning with the Muslim League's Direct action day and the subsequent killings in Noakhali and Bihar. The portioning of responsibility of the League, the Congress and the British Colonial Administration for the breakdown continues to be a topic of fierce disagreement. Jinnah Called the day of DIRECT ACTION on August 16,1946.

Direct Action Day

Direct Action Day (16 August 1946), also known as the Great Calcutta Killings, was a day of widespread riot and manslaughter between Hindus and Muslims in the city of Calcutta in the Bengal province of British India. The day also marked the start of what is known as *The Week of the Long Knives*.

The 'Direct Action' announced by the Muslim League Council to achieve the Muslim League's demand for the creation of Pakistan (a separate country for Indian Muslims) resulted in the worst communal riots that British India had seen.

The Muslim League and the Indian National Congress were the two largest political parties in the Constituent Assembly of India in the 1940s. The 1946 Cabinet Mission to India for planning of the transfer of power from the British Raj to the Indian leadership proposed an initial plan of composition of the new Dominion of India and its government. However, soon an alternative plan to divide the British Raj into a Hindu-majority India and a Muslim-majority Pakistan was proposed by the Muslim League. The Congress rejected the alternative proposal outright. The Muslim League planned a general strike on 16 August, terming it as Direct Action Day, to protest this rejection and assert its demand for a separate Muslim homeland.

In those days the situation in Bengal was particularly complex. In the province, Muslims represented the majority of the population (56%, as against 42% of Hindus) and were mostly concentrated in the eastern part. As a result of this demographic structure and specific developments, this province was the only one in which a Muslim League government was in power under the provincial autonomy scheme introduced in 1935 in coalition with the Europeans, and against the hurdle of strong opposition from the Congress, the Communist Party of India and also from a Hindu nationalist party, the Hindu Mahasabha. The latter was supported by many members of the rich Marwari trading community, composed of immigrants from Rajasthan, who largely dominated the economy of central Calcutta (although European capital was still important). In consequence, the inhabitants of Calcutta, 64% Hindus and 33% Muslims, were by then divided into two highly antagonistic entities. Against this backdrop, the protest triggered massive riots in Calcutta. More than 4,000 people lost their lives and 100,000 residents were left homeless in Calcutta within 72 hours. This violence sparked off further religious riots in the surrounding regions of Noakhali, Bihar, United Provinces (modern Uttar Pradesh), Punjab, and the North Western Frontier Province. These events sowed the seeds for the eventual Partition of India.

Birth of a Nation.

In February 1947 Lord Wavell was replaced by Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten made one final attempt to bring the League and the Congress to the table for talks, however when this failed, it became clear to the political leadership on both sides that the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent was now inevitable.

Lord Mountbatten now declared that India was to be freed, but also divided. The formal transfer of power was scheduled for 15th of August 1947.

Reasons for Partition

It is possible that Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, simply wished to use the demand for a separate state as a bargaining chip to win greater power for Muslims within a loosely federated India. Certainly, the idea of 'Pakistan' was not thought of until the late 1930s.

One explanation for the chaotic manner in which the two independent nations came into being is the hurried nature of the British withdrawal. This was announced soon after the victory of the Labour Party in the British general election of July 1945, amid the realisation that the British state, devastated by war, could not afford to hold on to its over-extended empire.

Transfer of Power

An act of parliament proposed a date for the transfer of power into Indian hands in June 1948, summarily advanced to August 1947 at the whim of the last viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten. This left a great many issues and interests unresolved at the end of colonial rule.

In charge of negotiations, the viceroy exacerbated difficulties by focusing largely on Jinnah's Muslim League and the Indian National Congress (led by Jawaharlal Nehru).

The two parties' representative status was established by Constituent Assembly elections in July 1946, but fell well short of a universal franchise.

Tellingly, although Pakistan celebrated its independence on 14 August and India on 15 August 1947, the border between the two new states was not announced until 17 August.

It was hurriedly drawn up by a British lawyer, Cyril Radcliffe, who had little knowledge of Indian conditions and with the use of out-of-date maps and census materials.

Communities, families and farms were cut in two, but by delaying the announcement the British managed to avoid responsibility for the worst fighting and the mass migration that had followed.

Tensions in India

Many have wondered why the British and Indian leaders did not delay until a better deal over borders could have been agreed. One explanation is that in the months and years immediately

following World War Two, leaders on all sides were losing control and were keen to strike a deal before the country descended into chaos.

Immediately before World War Two, India was ravaged by the impact of the Great Depression, bringing mass unemployment. This created tremendous tensions exacerbated during the war by inflation and food grain shortages. Rationing was introduced in Indian cities and in Bengal a major famine developed in 1942.

The resulting discontent was expressed in widespread violence accompanying the Congress party's 'Quit India' campaign of 1942 - a violence only contained by the deployment of 55 army battalions.

With the cessation of hostilities, the battalions at the disposal of the government in India were rapidly diminished. At the same time, the infrastructure of the Congress Party, whose entire leadership was imprisoned due to their opposition to the war, had been dismantled.

The Muslim League, which co-operated with the British, had rapidly increased its membership, yet still had very limited grassroots level organisation.

This was dramatically revealed on the 16 August 1946, when Jinnah called for a 'Direct Action Day' by followers of the League in support of the demand for Pakistan. The day had dissolved into random violence and civil disruption across north India, with thousands of lives lost.

This was interpreted by the British as evidence of the irreconcilable differences between Hindus and Muslims. In reality, the riots were evidence as much of a simple lack of military and political control as they were of social discord.

Further evidence of the collapse of government authority was to be seen in the Princely State of Hyderabad, where a major uprising occurred in the Telengana region, and with the Tebhaga ('two-thirds') agitation among share-cropping cultivators in north Bengal. A leading role was played in both by the Communist Party of India.

Elsewhere, the last months of British rule were marked by a naval mutiny, wage strikes and successful demonstrations in every major city. In all of these conflicts the British colonial government remained aloof, as it concentrated on the business of negotiating a speedy transfer of power.

Hope for Pakistan

Strong support for the idea of an independent Pakistan came from large Muslim landowning families in the Punjab and Sindh, who saw it as an opportunity to prosper within a captive market free from competition.

Support also came from the poor peasantry of East Bengal, who saw it as an opportunity to escape from the clutches of moneylenders - often Hindu. Both were to be disappointed. Independent Pakistan inherited India's longest and strategically most problematic borders.

At the same time, 90% of the subcontinent's industry, and taxable income base remained in India, including the largest cities of Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. The economy of Pakistan was chiefly agricultural, and controlled by feudal elites.

Furthermore, at the division of India, Pakistan won a poor share of the colonial government's financial reserves - with 23% of the undivided land mass, it inherited only 17.5% of the former government's financial assets. Once the army had been paid, nothing was left over for the purposes of economic development.

The great advantage enjoyed by the Indian National Congress was that it had worked hard for 40 years to reconcile differences and achieve some cohesion among its leaders. The heartland of support for the Muslim League, however, lay in central north India (Uttar Pradesh) which was not included within Pakistan.

Muslims from this region had to flee westwards and compete with resident populations for access to land and employment, leading to ethnic conflict, especially in Sindh.²⁶

Culmination of a Long History

Some scholars see Partition as a culmination of a communal politics that started developing in the opening decades of the twentieth century. They suggest that separate electorates for Muslims, created by the colonial government in 1909 and expanded in 1919, crucially shaped the nature of communal politics. Separate electorates meant that Muslims could now elect their own representatives in designated constituencies. This created a temptation for politicians working within this system to use sectarian slogans and gather a following by distributing favours to their own religious groups. Religious identities thus acquired a functional use within a modern political system; and the logic of electoral politics deepened and hardened these identities. Community identities no longer indicated simple difference in faith and belief; they came to mean active opposition and hostility between communities. However, while separate electorates did have a profound impact on Indian politics, we should be careful not to over-emphasise their significance or to see Partition as a logical outcome of their working.

Communal identities were consolidated by a host of other developments in the early twentieth century. During the 1920s and early 1930s tension grew around a number of issues. Muslims were angered by “music-before-mosque”, by the cow protection movement, and by the efforts of the Arya Samaj to bring back to the Hindu fold (*shuddhi*) those who had recently converted to Islam. Hindus were angered by the rapid spread of *tabligh* (propaganda) and *tanzim* (organisation) after 1923. As middle class publicists and communal activists sought to build greater solidarity within their communities, mobilising people against the other community, riots spread in different parts of the country. Every communal riot deepened differences between communities, creating disturbing memories of violence.

²⁶ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/partition1947_01.shtml

The Provincial Elections of 1937 and the Congress Ministries

In 1937, elections to the provincial legislatures were held for the first time. Only about 10 to 12 per cent of the population enjoyed the right to vote. The Congress did well in the elections, winning an absolute majority in five out of eleven provinces and forming governments in seven of them. It did badly in the constituencies reserved for Muslims, but the Muslim League also fared poorly, polling only 4.4 per cent of the total Muslim vote cast in this election. The League failed to win a single seat in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and could capture only two out of 84 reserved constituencies in the Punjab and three out of 33 in Sind

In the United Provinces, the Muslim League wanted to form a joint government with the Congress. The Congress had won an absolute majority in the province, so it rejected the offer. Some scholars argue that this rejection convinced the League that if India remained united, then Muslims would find it difficult to gain political power because they would remain a minority. The League assumed, of course, that only a Muslim party could represent Muslim interests, and that the Congress was essentially a Hindu party. But Jinnah's insistence that the League be recognised as the "sole spokesman" of Muslims could convince few at the time. Though popular in the United Provinces, Bombay and Madras, social support for the League was still fairly weak in three of the provinces from which Pakistan was to be carved out just ten years later – Bengal, the NWFP and the Punjab. Even in Sind it failed to form a government. It was from this point onwards that the League doubled its efforts at expanding its social support.

The Congress ministries also contributed to the widening rift. In the United Provinces, the party had rejected the Muslim League proposal for a coalition government partly because the League tended to support landlordism, which the Congress wished to abolish, although the party had not yet taken any concrete steps in that direction. Nor did the Congress achieve any substantial gains in the "Muslim mass contact" programme it launched. In the end, the secular and radical rhetoric of the Congress merely alarmed conservative Muslims and the Muslim landed elite, without winning over the Muslim masses.

Moreover, while the leading Congress leaders in the late 1930s insisted more than ever before on the need for secularism, these ideas were by no means universally shared lower down in the party hierarchy, or even by all Congress ministers. Maulana Azad, an important Congress leader, pointed out in 1937 that members of the Congress were not allowed to join the League, yet Congressmen were active in the Hindu Mahasabha– at least in the Central Provinces (present-day Madhya Pradesh).

This was also the period when the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) were gaining popularity, these were organisations pledged to the ideology of Hindu nationalism, convinced that India was a land of Hindus.

The Pakistan Resolution

The demand for Pakistan was formalised gradually. On 23 March 1940, the League moved a resolution demanding a measure of autonomy for the Muslim-majority areas of the subcontinent. This ambiguous resolution never mentioned partition or Pakistan. In fact Sikandar Hayat Khan, Punjab Premier and leader of the Unionist Party, who had drafted the resolution, declared in a Punjab assembly speech on 1 March 1941 that he was opposed to a Pakistan that would mean “Muslim Raj here and Hindu Raj elsewhere ... If Pakistan means unalloyed Muslim Raj in the Punjab then I will have nothing to do with it.” He reiterated his plea for a loose (united), confederation with considerable autonomy for the confederating units.

The origins of the Pakistan demand have also been traced back to the Urdu poet Mohammad Iqbal, the writer of “*Sare Jahan Se Achha Hindustan Hamara*”. In his presidential address to the Muslim League in 1930, the poet spoke of a need for a “North- West Indian Muslim state”. Iqbal, however, was not visualising the emergence of a new country in that speech but a reorganisation of Muslim-majority areas in north-western India into an autonomous unit within a single, loosely structured Indian federation.

The Suddenness of Partition

We have seen that the League itself was vague about its demand in 1940. There was a very short time – just seven years – between the first formal articulation of the demand for a measure of autonomy for the Muslim-majority areas of the subcontinent and Partition. No one knew what the creation of Pakistan meant, and how it might shape people’s lives in the future. Many who migrated from their homelands in 1947 thought they would return as soon as peace prevailed again.

Initially even Muslim leaders did not seriously raise the demand for Pakistan as a sovereign state. In the beginning Jinnah himself may have seen the Pakistan idea as a bargaining counter, useful for blocking possible British concessions to the Congress and gaining additional favours for the Muslims. The pressure of the Second World War on the British delayed negotiations for independence for some time. Nonetheless, it was the massive Quit India Movement which started in 1942, and persisted despite intense repression, that brought the British Raj to its knees and compelled its officials to open a dialogue with Indian parties regarding a possible transfer of power.

Post War Developments

When negotiations were begun again in 1945, the British agreed to create an entirely Indian central Executive Council, except for the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, as a preliminary step towards full independence. Discussions about the transfer of power broke down due to Jinnah’s unrelenting demand that the League had an absolute right to choose all the Muslim members of the Executive Council and that there should be a kind of communal veto in the Council, with decisions opposed by Muslims needing a two-thirds majority. Given the existing political situation, the League’s first demand was quite extraordinary, for a large section of the nationalist Muslims supported the Congress (its delegation for these discussions was headed by Maulana

Azad), and in West Punjab members of the Unionist Party were largely muslims, the British had no intention of annoying the Unionists who still controlled Punjab's Government and had been loyal to the British.

Provincial elections were again held in 1946. The Congress swept the general constituencies, capturing 91.3 per cent of the non-Muslim vote. The League's success in the seats reserved for Muslims was equally spectacular: it won all 30 reserved constituencies in the Centre with 86.6 per cent of the Muslim vote and 442 out of 509 seats in the provinces. Only as late as 1946, therefore, did the League establish itself as the dominant party among Muslim voters, seeking to vindicate its claim to be the "sole spokesman" of India's Muslims. You will, however, recall that the franchise was extremely limited. About 10 to 12 per cent of the population enjoyed the right to vote in the provincial elections and a mere one per cent in the elections for the Central Assembly.

All of the above stated factors contributed to the partition of the Indian Subcontinent.