The Partition of India

The British divided and quit India in 1947. The Partition of India and the creation of Pakistan uprooted entire communities and left unspeakable violence in its trail. This volume – by two highly regarded scholars in this field – tells the story of Partition through the events that led up to it and the terrors that accompanied it, to migration and resettlement. In a new shift in the understanding of this seminal moment, the book also explores the legacies of Partition which continue to resonate today in the fractured lives of individuals and communities, and more broadly in the relationship between India and Pakistan and the ongoing conflict over contested sites such as Jammu and Kashmir. In conclusion, the book reflects on the general implications of partition as a political solution to ethnic and religious conflict. The book, which is accompanied by photographs, maps and a chronology of major events, is intended for students as a portal into the history and politics of the Asian region.


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The Partition of India

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x  Acknowledgements

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March 2009
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Glossary

akhara  welding pit
anjuman  association
ansars  helpers; refers back to the inhabitants of Medina who assisted the Prophet and his followers after their flight from Medina
antahpur  inner household rooms
bait-ul-maal  Islamic treasury
Bangaals  Bengali refugees from East Bengal
bania  Hindu trading caste; the term was often used pejoratively to mean moneylender
batai  rent in kind
bhadralok  gentlefolk, respectable folk
bhadrabahila  gentlewoman
biraderi  brotherhood, patrilineal kinship group
chak  village
chowk  crossroads, junction
crore  ten million
dacoit  criminal; dacoities: criminal actions, robberies
dargah  tomb, shrine of a Sufi saint
desh  native place; could refer to nation, province or village
doab  region lying between two rivers
dupatta  long scarf
ghallughara  massacre
goondas  thugs
gurdwara  Sikh temple
hakim  practitioner of Unani medicine
Harijan  member of Untouchable caste
hartal  strike, political protest
izzat  prestige, honour, reputation
jatha  band, armed group
jathedar  Sikh leader
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jihad  striving, collective war against unbelief, or individual
moral endeavour
jotedar  peasant farmer, usually one with large holdings
kafla  caravan, convoy of people
kanal  measurement of land, one twentieth of an acre
katra  originally fortified market, a residential locality
kothi  residential plot
kotwali  headquarters of city police
kucha  neighbourhood, residential quarters
lakh  one hundred thousand
langar  public kitchen in which free food is served at a Sufi
shrine or gurdwara
lathi  wooden club
mali  gardener
mandir  Hindu temple
maulvi  learned Muslim
mela  a fair
mirasi  musician
misl  Sikh territorial unit; misldar: military chief
mohajir  refugee, Muslim who has fled for religious reasons
mohalla  neighbourhood
pir  Sufi spiritual guide
pukka  superior, often referring to a brick- or stone-built
dwelling
pursharti  term used for Hindu refugee
qurbani  sacrifice
rais  an important, or honourable man
roti  bread, food
sahukar  moneylender
samadh  tomb associated with Sikh and Hindu holy men
Sant  saint or holy man; one who realises Truth (sat)
sardar  leader, chief
satyagraha  truth force, often referring to Gandhian non-violent
struggle
sewa  Sikh community service, religious service
shuddhi  Hindu re-purification right, adopted by the Arya Samaj
for conversion purposes
Sufi  Muslim mystic
swadeshi  home-produced goods
tehsil  major administrative sub-division of a district
udvastu  uprooted out of place, out of home
Glossary

ulama (pl. of alim) Muslims learned in Islamic religion
unani medical system practised in some parts of the subcontinent
Zamindar landholder
zila revenue sub-division, district
Chronology

**Main events leading to Independence and Partition, 1937–1947**

1937  
February  
Provincial elections held under the terms of the 1935 Government of India Act. Congress wins 716 out of the 1,161 seats it contested. Muslim League, with the exception of Bengal, fares dismally in the Muslim-majority provinces.

July  
Congress forms ministries in seven Indian provinces. Failure to create coalition ministry with Muslim League in United Provinces (UP).

October  
Reorganisation of Muslim League at its Lucknow session. Muslim prime ministers of Assam, Bengal and Punjab advise their followers to join All-India Muslim League.

1938  
December  
Jinnah at Patna League session raises the spectre of ‘Congress Fascism’. Pirpur Report published into Muslim grievances in Congress-ruled provinces.

1939  
March  
Shareef Report into the grievances of Muslims in Bihar.

September  
Outbreak of Second World War.

October  
Tenancy Act passed in UP. Sind Muslim League Conference calls for examination of future constitutional proposals designed to safeguard the Muslim national interest. Resignation of Congress Provincial Ministries.

December  
Muslim League celebrates ‘Deliverance Day’ from Congress rule.

1940  
March  
Lahore Resolution for a Pakistan state raised at Muslim League Annual Session.

August  
Viceroy Lord Linlithgow sets out in his ‘August Offer’ plans for an expanded Executive Council and new War Advisory Council. Assurance given
that power will not be transferred to any government whose authority is denied by important elements in India.

October

Congress launches individual civil disobedience.

1941 May

By this date over 25,000 satyagrahis had been convicted for offering individual civil disobedience.

July

Viceroy enlarges his Executive Council and creates National Defence Council. Jinnah successfully gets Muslim prime ministers of Assam, Punjab and Bengal to resign from the latter body in a demonstration of his authority in All-India Muslim politics.

December

USA enters the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7th.

1942 February

Fall of Singapore to the Japanese on 15th.

March

Mission of Sir Stafford Cripps to India. Key promise of Dominion Status at the end of the war, with the proviso that provinces would have the right to opt out. Cripps Mission widens gulf between British and Congress.

April

Congress launches Quit India movement. This becomes the gravest challenge to British authority since 1857. Congress is declared an unlawful organisation and most of its leaders spend the remainder of the war years in jail.

1943 October

Wavell replaces Linlithgow as Viceroy. One of his first acts is to fly to Calcutta to see the effects of the devastating famine in Bengal.

1944 April

Gandhi is released from custody on medical grounds.

September

Gandhi–Jinnah talks fail but Jinnah’s prestige is further enhanced.

1945 March–June

Wavell in London for discussions over India’s future.

June

Simla Conference to discuss the formation of a new Executive Council convenes on 25th.

July

Clement Attlee becomes prime minister after Labour Party general election victory. Simla Conference fails over Jinnah’s insistence that all
Muslim members of the Executive Council must be Muslim League nominees.

August
Surrender of Japan on 14th ends Second World War.

1946

January
Provincial elections in India see a Muslim League triumph in the Majority ‘Pakistan’ provinces.

March–June
Cabinet Mission to India. Proposal for a three-tiered Indian Union initially accepted by Congress and Muslim League, but then rejected when Nehru questions the grouping arrangements of the provinces.

August
Muslim League observes ‘Direct Action Day’ on 16th. The ‘Great Calcutta Killing’ on 16th–18th. Around 4,000 victims and 100,000 people made homeless.

October
Communal killing spreads to Noakhali in East Bengal. Gandhi undertakes foot-pilgrimage for peace. Muslim League joins the Interim Government, but is accused by Congress of attempting to wreck it.

November
Muslims massacred in Bihar. Wavell estimates the death toll at between 5,000 and 10,000. Over 120,000 Muslims made homeless.

December
Failed meeting of Jinnah, Nehru and Baldev Singh in London. Constituent Assembly meets on 9th without Muslim League members. Attlee offers the Viceroyalty to Mountbatten.

1947

February
Attlee announces on 20th that the British will leave India by June 1948, and that Mountbatten is to succeed Wavell as Viceroy.

March
Resignation of Khizr Tiwana Coalition Government in Punjab sparks off widespread communal violence. Mountbatten arrives in India on 22nd.

April
Mountbatten has meetings with Indian political leaders to the backdrop of endemic violence in the Punjab which is now under direct Governor’s rule.

May
Work begins on the plan for Partition. When Nehru is confidentially made aware of it, he sees it as a threat of Balkanisation and the plan has to be
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<td><strong>redrafted. Dominion Status enables the plan to be accelerated.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>June</strong></td>
<td>The Indian leaders accept the 3 June Partition plan. The machinery for Partition is established including a Partition Council and Boundary Commission. Mountbatten announces that the date for Independence is to be brought forward from June 1948 to 15 August 1947. The States Department is created to oversee relations between the States and the successor governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>July</strong></td>
<td>Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the Chairman of the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions, arrives in India on 8th. Draft Standstill Agreement and Draft Instrument of Accession created for the States between 26 and 31 July.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>August</strong></td>
<td>Jinnah and Mountbatten attend the Independence celebrations in Karachi on 14 August and address the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. Celebration of Indian Independence in New Delhi on 15th. Massacres and migrations on a large scale in Punjab. The Boundary Awards are announced on 17th August.</td>
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