Establishing the Nation, 1947–48

The problems facing Pakistan at independence (the Radcliffe Award, refugees, assets, the canal water dispute, the princely states and Kashmir, administrative and economic difficulties, language) and Jinnah's role as Governor-General.

Establishing the nation, 1947–48

The new state

Pakistan came into being on **14 August 1947**, in two parts, **West Pakistan** and **East Pakistan**, separated by about **1,600 km** of Indian territory. It was the largest Muslim state in the world by population. It faced **huge problems** from the first day.

The Radcliffe Award

- The **Radcliffe Award** (announced on **17 August 1947**) divided the **Punjab** and **Bengal**. Pakistan believed that it was **unfair**: parts of the **Muslim-majority** districts of **Gurdaspur** (and the tehsils of **Ferozepur** and **Zira**) went to **India**, giving India a **land route to Kashmir** and control of the **headwaters** of canals. It also gave **Calcutta** to India, though it was the centre of the jute trade, and the **Chittagong Hill Tracts** (a mostly non-Muslim area) to Pakistan.
- **Reactions.** The **Pakistan** government was bitter. **India** claimed that it was fair. **Sikhs** were angry because the Punjab was divided and their holy places left in Pakistan (such as **Nankana Sahib**).
- **Impact on Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.** As the boundary was only announced after independence, **millions did not know which side they were on**. **Massacres** broke out in the Punjab on both sides; **hundreds of thousands** were killed (estimates vary, from about **200,000 to 1 million or more**), women were abducted, and **about 14 million** people were displaced in one of the **largest migrations in history**.

The refugee and accommodation crisis

- About **6–7 million Muslim refugees** (**muhajirs**) came to Pakistan, mainly to the **Punjab and Karachi** (and Sindh), and about the same number of **Hindus and Sikhs** went to India.
- They arrived with **nothing**, often sick and hungry. The new government had to provide **food, shelter, medical care, jobs and land**. Camps were set up. Local people helped (the **Ansar–Muhajir** spirit). The **Evacuee property** left behind by Hindus and Sikhs was given to refugees, which led to disputes.
- It caused economic and social strain, a **housing shortage**, problems in **Karachi**, and later **ethnic tension**.

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The division of assets

- It was agreed that India would give Pakistan **a share** of the cash, military equipment and stores of British India (Pakistan's share of the cash balances was set at about **17.5%**, or **750 million rupees**).
- India **delayed**: only **200 million rupees** were paid at first, and then it **withheld the remaining 550 million**, because of the **war in Kashmir**, and refused to release the **military stores and equipment**. India eventually released the money in **January 1948**, after **Gandhi** fasted in protest.
- Pakistan started with **very few resources** and had to build a capital (Karachi), government offices, and an army from nothing.

The division of military assets. The army, navy and air force were divided, with Pakistan getting roughly **a third**, and troops chose between the two countries (mostly Muslims to Pakistan). Problems: Pakistan needed about **4,000 officers** but had far fewer trained Muslim officers, so some **British officers** were kept on for a time; all the **ordnance factories** of British India were in **India**, so Pakistan had to buy or build its own, and India agreed to pay compensation instead of handing over any; and much of the equipment sent was **old or damaged**.

The Canal Water Dispute

- The **rivers** that irrigate the Punjab flow through Indian-controlled land, and the **headworks** at **Madhopur** (on the Ravi) and **Ferozepur** (on the Sutlej) went to India.
- On **1 April 1948** India **stopped the flow** of water in the canals going to Pakistan, harming the crops in the **Punjab** (just as the sowing season began).
- **Resolution.** An **Inter-Dominion Agreement** (**May 1948**) restored the water in return for payments, but it was only temporary. The dispute was settled in the **Indus Waters Treaty (1960)** (mediated by the **World Bank**), under which **India** was given the **three eastern rivers** (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej) and **Pakistan** the **three western** (Indus, Jhelum and Chenab).

The princely states and Kashmir

There were about **560** princely states, which were free to join either dominion, according to the **geography** and the **wishes of the people**.

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State	What happened
Most states in Pakistan's area (**Bahawalpur**, **Khairpur**, **Kalat** (March 1948), **Swat, Dir, Chitral**, **Las Bela**, **Kharan** and **Makran**)	**acceded to Pakistan**
Junagadh (a **Hindu-majority** state in Gujarat with a **Muslim Nawab**)	the Nawab acceded to **Pakistan** (September 1947); **India occupied** it (November 1947)
Hyderabad (a Hindu-majority state with a Muslim Nizam)	the Nizam wanted independence; **India invaded** in **September 1948**
Jammu and Kashmir (a **Muslim-majority** state with a **Hindu Maharaja, Hari Singh**)	see below

Kashmir. The **Maharaja** delayed the decision. A revolt broke out in **Poonch** (the Muslims were unhappy), and in **October 1947** tribesmen from the **NWFP** entered Kashmir. The Maharaja asked **India** for help, and signed the **Instrument of Accession** to India on **26 October 1947**. **Indian troops** were flown to Srinagar. Pakistan did not accept the accession and said it was **forged by force**. The first **Indo-Pakistan war** (1947–49) followed. A part of Kashmir (**Azad Kashmir** and **Gilgit–Baltistan**) came under Pakistan's control.

The role of UN mediation. In **January 1948**, **India took the Kashmir dispute to the UN Security Council**. The UN set up the **United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP)**, which passed resolutions calling for a **ceasefire** and a **plebiscite** (vote) to let the Kashmiris decide. A **ceasefire** began on **1 January 1949**; the **Karachi Agreement** (July 1949) fixed the **ceasefire line**. The **plebiscite was never held**, as India refused to withdraw its troops first, and the issue **remains unresolved**.

Economic, social and administrative problems

- **Administration:** the government had to start from nothing. Most of the **civil service** and **officials** were Hindu and went to India. There was no **capital**: **Karachi** had few offices; **furniture and stationery** were short. The army (the state's best-organised body) helped.
- **Regional differences:** the new state was made up of **five main groups** with different languages and customs: **Pashtuns, Baloch, Sindhis, Punjabis and Bengalis**, which made national unity hard.
- **Power supply:** some of the sources that supplied electricity to the Punjab were in areas that went to India, so power was short.
- **Economy:** Pakistan inherited only about **10% of the industrial units** and a small share of skilled workers and power capacity (figures vary by source); there were **no large industries** (most were in India), but **raw materials** such as cotton, jute and wheat were produced. **East Pakistan** grew most of the **jute** (but **processing** mills were in Calcutta). There was a **shortage of capital, banks, trained people** and a **State Bank** (established July 1948).

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- **Social: education** and **health** services were poor; and the new country had to absorb **millions of refugees**.
- **Defence:** the army was small and had **little equipment** because India withheld the military stores.
- **The language issue:** in **March 1948** Jinnah announced in **Dhaka** that **Urdu** would be the state language. Bengalis, the majority, protested (see chapters 5 and 13).
- **Political:** a **Constituent Assembly** had to write a constitution (it was under the **1935 Act** as the interim constitution).

Pakistan joins the United Nations (September 1947)

Pakistan became a UN member on **30 September 1947** (Afghanistan voted against its admission). **Why it joined:** to be recognised as a **sovereign state** by the world; to have a platform to raise **Kashmir**, **Junagadh and Hyderabad**; for **security** against a larger neighbour; to support peace, self-determination and an end to colonialism; and to gain help from the UN agencies.

India's reactions and later significance

India **delayed assets**, **stopped canal water**, **occupied Junagadh and Hyderabad**, and held on to Kashmir. Many Pakistanis felt that India was trying to **destroy** the new state (some Indian leaders openly expected it to fail). These issues led to the **wars of 1965 and 1971** and a continuing mistrust.

Jinnah's role as Governor-General

Quaid-e-Azam became the **first Governor-General** (15 August 1947) and **President of the Constituent Assembly**. He:

- **inspired** confidence and worked **tirelessly**, though he was **seriously ill** (with tuberculosis and lung cancer, kept secret);
- called for **unity, faith and discipline** and said that the **minorities** would have equal rights (his address of **11 August 1947** to the Assembly);
- helped **refugees**, visited camps, and urged **calm**;
- set up the **State Bank** (1 July 1948) and encouraged industry and trade;
- supported the **Kashmiri Muslims**: in October 1947 he ordered the acting British army chief, **General Gracey**, to send troops into Kashmir, but Gracey refused without the approval of the Supreme Commander, **Field Marshal Auchinleck**;
- visited **Balochistan** and **Dhaka** (March 1948) and argued for **Urdu** as the state language, which was **resented in the East**.

He **died on 11 September 1948** at Karachi, only 13 months after independence. His death was a **great loss**, and the country lacked a leader who could unite it.

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TRY IT

How successful was the establishment of an independent nation between 1947 and 1948?

Outline. *Successes:* the state **survived**; the refugees were absorbed (with great suffering); a **government** and **State Bank** were set up; the **army** and administration were built; the Canal dispute was **settled for the time**. *Failures:* **Kashmir** unresolved; unfair **Radcliffe Award**; **economic weakness**; the **language issue** in East Pakistan; the **loss of Jinnah**. **Judgement:** the survival of the state against such odds was **a significant achievement**, though many problems remained.

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