Finding a Solution, 1940–47

The Second World War and India, the Pakistan (Lahore) Resolution, the Cripps Mission, Gandhi–Jinnah talks, the Simla Conference, the 1945–46 elections, the Cabinet Mission, Direct Action Day, the June 3 Plan, the Radcliffe Award and the Indian Independence Act.

Finding a solution, 1940–47

Timeline

Year	Event
1939	Second World War begins; Congress ministries resign
1940	Pakistan (Lahore) Resolution; August Offer
1942	Cripps Mission; Quit India Movement
1944	Gandhi–Jinnah talks
1945	Wavell and the Simla Conference; British election (Labour wins)
1945–46	elections in India
1946	Cabinet Mission; Direct Action Day
1947	Mountbatten; the June 3 Plan; Radcliffe Award; independence (14/15 August)

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The Second World War and India

The British Viceroy, **Lord Linlithgow**, took India into the war **without consulting** Indian leaders. **Congress** demanded a promise of independence and **resigned** its ministries. The **Muslim League** did not oppose the war effort, but said it would only support the British in return for a promise that no constitution would be imposed without its agreement.

The **Quit India Movement** (**August 1942**): Gandhi called on the British to "**Quit India**". Congress leaders were **arrested**, and there were riots and sabotage. The Muslim League **opposed** it and **did not take part**, which gave it a chance to grow while Congress was in prison.

The Pakistan (Lahore) Resolution, 23 March 1940

- Held at **Lahore** at the annual session of the **All-India Muslim League** (22–24 March 1940), in what is now **Minar-e-Pakistan** (Iqbal Park).
- **Moved** by **A.K. Fazlul Huq** (Chief Minister of Bengal), and **seconded** by **Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman** (and others).
- **Jinnah's presidential address** stated that Hindus and Muslims were **two nations**.
- The Resolution said that **geographically contiguous units** should be formed into **regions** that would be constituted so that the areas with a Muslim majority (in the North-West and East) **would be grouped to constitute "independent states"**, in which the units would be **autonomous and sovereign**. It also called for **safeguards for minorities**.
- **Importance:** it was the **first official demand** by the Muslim League for a separate state. Hindu newspapers called it the "**Pakistan Resolution**" and the League adopted the name. The League accepted **Pakistan** as its aim, and it formed the basis of the later negotiations.

The Cripps Mission, March 1942

Sir **Stafford Cripps** came with a British proposal to win Indian support during the war (Japan was advancing). It promised **dominion status** after the war, a **constituent assembly**, and the right of any province to **stay out** of the Indian Union (and to make its own arrangement). **Congress rejected it** (it wanted immediate power and objected to the provincial opt-out), and the **League rejected it** because it did not **clearly accept Pakistan**.

Why the Cripps Mission failed.

- The offer was only for **after the war** ("a post-dated cheque", Gandhi is said to have called it), and Congress wanted real power at once.
- Britain kept **defence** in its own hands for the duration of the war.
- The proposal said a province could **opt out**, which Congress disliked (it threatened the unity of India) and the League thought **too vague**, as it did not promise a separate Muslim state.
- It had to be accepted **as a whole**, and only if **both** parties agreed.
- The **Japanese** advance had made Britain look weak, and Congress was already moving towards **Quit India**.

The Gandhi–Jinnah talks, September 1944

Held at **Bombay** after the **C.R. Formula** (by **Rajagopalachari**) suggested that Muslim-majority areas could vote after the war. **Gandhi** and **Jinnah** met, but they **failed** because Gandhi would not accept the **two-nation theory** or a **sovereign Pakistan**; Jinnah demanded the Muslim areas in full, and that it be agreed **before independence**.

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Lord Wavell and the Simla Conference, 1945

The new Viceroy, **Lord Wavell**, held a conference at **Simla** (June–July 1945). He proposed an **Executive Council** with **equal numbers of Muslims and Hindus** ("caste Hindus"). The conference **failed** because Jinnah insisted that the League alone should name **all the Muslim members**, but **Congress** (and the **Unionist** leader of the Punjab) objected. The League's claim to be the **sole representative of Muslims** was accepted in effect.

Why Simla failed, in detail. Jinnah objected that the **Sikh** and **Scheduled Caste** members would usually vote with the Hindus, leaving Muslims a **permanent minority** on the Council despite "parity"; he refused to let Congress name a Muslim (Congress had its own Muslim leaders, such as its president **Maulana Azad**); and he pointed out that the League had **won recent by-elections**. Wavell closed the conference in **July 1945**.

The elections of 1945–46

- The **Labour Party** came to power in Britain (July 1945), and was ready to leave India. It held **elections** in India.
- **Muslim League** won **all 30 Muslim seats** in the **Central Assembly** and about **442 of 509** Muslim seats in the provinces (roughly 90%). **Congress** won most **general** seats.
- **Consequences:** it proved that the League was the **representative of Indian Muslims** and that Pakistan was a **popular** demand. The British had to **negotiate** with Jinnah as an equal.

The Cabinet Mission, 1946

Three British ministers (**Pethick-Lawrence**, **Stafford Cripps**, **A.V. Alexander**) came in **March 1946**. After talks, they **rejected** a fully separate Pakistan (it would be "**moth-eaten**" and not viable) and proposed (**May 1946**):

- a **federation** with only **defence, foreign affairs and communications** at the centre;
- provinces in **three groups**: **A** (Hindu-majority), **B** (**Punjab, NWFP, Sindh, Balochistan**) and **C** (**Bengal and Assam**), with the right to leave after 10 years;
- an **interim government**.

The **League accepted** the plan (it kept the idea of Pakistan open through the groups). **Congress** accepted in part but **Nehru** said that provinces could **leave the groups**, so the League **withdrew its acceptance** in **July 1946**. The plan **failed**.

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Direct Action Day, 16 August 1946

The League called for "**Direct Action**" to show Muslim feeling after the failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan. In **Calcutta** severe **riots** broke out (the "**Great Calcutta Killing**"), in which about **4,000** people (of both communities) died in about three days and roughly **100,000** were left homeless, and the violence spread to **Noakhali**, **Bihar** and elsewhere. The communal problem became so serious that **partition** seemed the only solution. An **interim government** led by Nehru was formed in September 1946, and the League joined in October (Liaquat Ali Khan as Finance Minister), but it did not work.

The June 3 Plan, 1947

Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy, arrived in **March 1947** with the instruction to transfer power by **June 1948**, and soon decided to act fast. After talks he announced the **June 3 Plan** (**3 June 1947**), also called the **Mountbatten Plan**:

- India would be **partitioned** into **India** and **Pakistan**;
- the **Punjab and Bengal** assemblies would meet in **two sections** (Muslim and non-Muslim majority districts) to vote on partition;
- a **referendum** in the **NWFP** and in **Sylhet** (Assam) would decide;
- **Sindh** and **Balochistan** would decide (Balochistan through the Shahi Jirga and Quetta municipality);
- the **princely states** would decide themselves, with advice to join one of the two;
- a **Boundary Commission** would draw the borders;
- **power transferred earlier**: in **August 1947**.

All the main parties **accepted** it. Mountbatten's first draft was rejected by **Nehru** when he saw it at Simla in May, so the final plan was reworked with the help of **V.P. Menon**, and on **2 June** Mountbatten put it to seven Indian leaders (Nehru, Patel, Kripalani, Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Abdur Rab Nishtar and Baldev Singh).

The Radcliffe Commission and Award, 1947

Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer with no knowledge of India, chaired the **Boundary Commissions** for the Punjab and Bengal; each had **four** Indian members (two nominated by Congress and two by the League) who could not agree, so Radcliffe made the final decision. Jinnah called the Award "unjust, incomprehensible and even perverse". The decision was announced on **17 August 1947**, two days **after** independence. It was **controversial**: some Muslim-majority areas (such as parts of **Gurdaspur**, and **Ferozepur** and **Zira** tehsils) went to **India**, which gave India **access to Kashmir** and control of the **headworks** of rivers. **Pakistan** felt cheated (see chapter 11).

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The Indian Independence Act, 18 July 1947

- Passed by the **British Parliament**. It created **two independent dominions**, **India and Pakistan**, from **15 August 1947** (Pakistan on **14 August**).
- Each dominion would have a **Governor-General** and a **Constituent Assembly**, which also acted as the **legislature**.
- The British **paramountcy** over the **princely states** ended; the princes were free to join either dominion.
- It continued the **Government of India Act 1935** as the **interim constitution** for each dominion.
- **Jinnah** became the first Governor-General of Pakistan; **Liaquat Ali Khan** the first Prime Minister.

> **TRY IT**
>
> How did the success of the Muslim League in the 1945–46 elections lead to changes in British attempts to solve the problems of the subcontinent?

Outline. The League won all Muslim seats in the Centre and most in the provinces, so it proved it spoke for Muslims; the Labour government **could not ignore** Pakistan; it sent the **Cabinet Mission** and agreed to talks, accepting the League as an **equal partner**; when its plans failed, the British moved to **partition** (Mountbatten and the June 3 Plan).

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