

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Theory of the Partition of India

- According to the 'two-nation theory' advanced by the Muslim League, India consisted of not one but two 'people', Hindus and Muslims. That is why it demanded Pakistan, a separate country for the Muslims.

What were the political developments that lead to the Partition of India?/ What were the causes of partition of India?

But several political developments in 1940s, the political competition between the Congress and the Muslim League and the British role led to the decision for the creation of Pakistan.

What was the principle behind the partition of India?

- It was decided to follow the principle of religious majorities. This basically means that areas where the Muslims were in majority would make up the territory of Pakistan. The rest was to stay with India.

What was the process behind the Partition of India? How was India partitioned?

The idea might appear simple, but it presented all kinds of difficulties.

- **First** of all, there was no single belt of Muslim majority areas in British India. There were two areas of concentration, one in the west and one in the east. There was no way these two parts could be joined. So it was decided that the new country, Pakistan, will comprise two territories, West and East Pakistan separated by a long expanse of Indian territory.
- **Secondly**, not all Muslim majority areas wanted to be in Pakistan. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the undisputed leader of the North Western Frontier Province and known as 'Frontier Gandhi', was staunchly opposed to the two-nation theory. Eventually, his voice was simply ignored and the NWFP was made to merge with Pakistan.
- The **third** problem was that two of the Muslim majority provinces of British India, Punjab and Bengal, had very large areas where the non-Muslims were in majority. Eventually it was decided that these two provinces would be bifurcated according to the religious majority at the district or even lower level. This decision could not be made by the midnight of 14-15 August. It meant that a large number of people did not know on the day of Independence whether they were in India or in Pakistan. The partition of these two provinces caused the deepest trauma of Partition.
- This was related to the **fourth** and the most intractable of all the problems of partition. This was the problem of 'minorities' on both sides of the border. Lakhs of Hindus and Sikhs in the areas that were now in Pakistan and an equally large number of Muslims on the Indian side of Punjab and Bengal (and to some extent Delhi and surrounding areas) found themselves trapped.
- They were to discover that they were undesirable aliens in their own home, in the land where they and their ancestors had lived for centuries. As soon as it became clear that the country was going to be partitioned, the minorities on both sides became easy targets of attack.
- No one had quite anticipated the scale of this problem. No one had any plans for handling this. Initially, the people and political leaders kept hoping that this violence was temporary and would be controlled soon. But very soon the violence went out of control.
- The minorities on both sides of the border were left with no option except to leave their homes, often at a few hours' notice.

What were the consequences of Partition of India? Displacement/ Migration

The year 1947 was the year of one of the largest, most abrupt, unplanned and tragic transfer of population that human history has known.

- Minorities on both sides of the border fled their home and often secured temporary shelter in 'refugee camps'.
- They often found unhelpful local administration and police in what was till recently their own country. They travelled to the other side of the new border by all sorts of means, often by foot.
- It was a violent separation of communities who had hitherto lived together as neighbours. It is estimated that the Partition forced about 80 lakh people to migrate across the new border.

Violence and honour killing

- Even during this journey they were often attacked, killed or raped. Thousands of women were abducted on both sides of the border.
- They were made to convert to the religion of the abductor and were forced into marriage. In many cases women were killed by their own family members to preserve the 'family honour'.

Division of assets

The partition was not merely a division of properties, liabilities

Formation of Communal Zones

- Cities like Lahore, Amritsar and Kolkata became divided into 'communal zones'. Muslims would avoid going into an area where mainly Hindus or Sikhs lived; similarly the Hindus and Sikhs stayed away from areas of Muslim predominance.

Rise of Hindu Fundamentalism

- The Muslim League was formed to protect the interests of the Muslims in colonial India. It was in the forefront of the demand for a separate Muslim nation.
- Similarly, there were organisations, which were trying to organise the Hindus in order to turn India into a Hindu nation.

Fear of minorities

- The leaders of the Indian national struggle did not believe in the two-nation theory.
- And yet, partition on religious basis had taken place. Did that make India a Hindu nation automatically? Even after large scale migration of Muslims to the newly created Pakistan, the Muslim population in India accounted for 12 per cent of the total population in 1951.
- So, how would the government of India treat its Muslim citizens and other religious minorities (Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Jews)? The partition had already created severe conflict between the two communities.

Problem of Refugees

- Many children were separated from their parents. Those who did manage to cross the border found that they had no home. For lakhs of these 'refugees' the country's freedom meant life in 'refugee camps', for months and sometimes for years.