



# JOINT CRISIS COMMITTEE

*Agenda: Navigating the Partition of 1947*

***Freeze Date: July 1, 1947***



**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

## **Background Guide**

### **Joint Crisis Cabinet**

***Agenda 1 : Navigating the Partition of 1947***

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## **Letter from the Executive Board**

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to SFHSMUN'24.

The following Background Guide has been formulated keeping in mind various aspects of the agenda to be discussed in committee. Though this Background Guide lists out the broad facets of the agenda that we would like to see being debated upon in committee, let us highlight the fact that this piece of document is NOT exhaustive and that further reading on part of the delegates are essential in order to steer the debate in the right direction. Also, not under any circumstances can the Background Guide be quoted or used as substantial proof in committee sessions. Delegates are expected to build their research upon the topics highlighted in the following pages, though further research would also be appreciated.

We are most looking forward to seeing what you, members of the committee, can bring to the table, both in terms of your ideas in debate and your creativity in crafting solutions.

Regards,

Executive Board

## **Joint Crisis Cabinet**

The Joint Crisis Cabinet (JCC) stands as a unique and high-stakes simulation that immerses delegates in one of the most critical and turbulent moments in the history of the Indian subcontinent, the days leading up to the Partition of 1947.

We have specifically chosen to situate this committee on July 1, 1947, just weeks before India's independence from British rule. This freeze date marks a moment of deep uncertainty, where decisions made behind closed doors will soon manifest in irreversible consequences for millions. Political negotiations are intensifying, communal tensions are surging, and administrative structures are struggling under the pressure of imminent division.

Throughout the course of the committee, delegates will face a series of evolving and unpredictable crises, each with the potential to alter the course of history. From border demarcations and mass migrations to communal violence and leadership disputes, no two crises will be alike. Each will demand sharp diplomatic acumen, principled decision-making, and rapid coordination.

Every member of this committee represents a key leader, stakeholder, or community from undivided India. Your role is to deliberate, negotiate, and respond, not merely to survive the crisis, but to shape a vision for the future of South Asia. The decisions taken within this cabinet will determine whether chaos prevails or peace is preserved.

While this committee is rooted in a historical timeline, its objective is not to replicate history but to re-examine it through collective leadership. JCC offers a space to rethink how the challenges of the Partition could have been addressed differently, and perhaps, more humanely.

## **Introduction**

The Indian national movement was undoubtedly one of the biggest mass movements modern society has ever seen. It galvanized millions of people of all classes and ideologies into political action and brought a mighty colonial empire to its knees. Alongside the British, French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, and Vietnamese revolutions, it holds great relevance for those seeking to transform political and social structures.

Various aspects of the movement, especially Gandhian political strategy, are relevant not only in societies functioning within democratic and civil libertarian frameworks but also in others. Leaders such as Lech Walesa consciously drew from Gandhian methods during the Solidarity Movement in Poland.

The Indian national movement provides the only historical example of a semi-democratic or democratic structure being successfully transformed. It demonstrated how a broadly Gramscian strategy of position could be implemented through a prolonged moral, political, and ideological struggle. Reserves of counter-hegemony were built through progressive stages, alternating between phases of active struggle and passive resistance.

It also exemplified how constitutional spaces could be used effectively without being co-opted by them. The movement did not reject these spaces outright but used them alongside non-constitutional strategies to challenge the existing order.

This movement was marked by the coexistence of diverse political and ideological strands united by a common goal. Despite tensions and differences, its internal diversity and freedom of debate became sources of strength rather than division.

## **The Simla Conference**

The Simla Conference, convened by Viceroy Lord Wavell on 25 June 1945, was a significant attempt to break the political deadlock in British India by proposing the formation of a new, more representative Executive Council. This initiative, known as the Wavell Plan, aimed to ease the existing political tensions and move India towards the goal of full self-government. Wavell invited twenty-one key political leaders to Simla, including representatives from the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, the Scheduled Castes, the Sikhs, provincial leaders, and prominent figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The proposed Executive Council was to be composed entirely of Indians, except for the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, with equal representation for Caste Hindus and Muslims. The Council would operate within the existing constitutional framework, and while the Viceroy retained his overriding powers, it was assured these would not be used unreasonably. For the first time, the portfolio of external affairs was proposed to be transferred to an Indian, and a British High Commissioner was to be appointed to represent Britain's interests in India—steps intended to align India's governance structure closer to Dominion status.

However, the proposals deliberately excluded the princely states and avoided committing to any final constitutional arrangement. The purpose was not to finalize India's future, but to create an interim administrative structure that could manage wartime efforts and prepare for post-war development.

Despite these intentions, the conference failed due to deep disagreements between the Congress and the Muslim League. Jinnah demanded that the League alone be allowed to nominate all Muslim members, asserting its claim as the sole representative of Muslims in India. The Congress refused, maintaining its right to include Muslims within its fold. This disagreement proved insurmountable, and the conference ended without agreement.

The failure of the Simla Conference exposed the sharp communal and political divisions between India's major political factions and set the stage for the continued stalemate that would eventually lead to the Cabinet Mission Plan and, later, the Partition of India.



## **The Constituent Assembly**

The Constituent Assembly of India was formed as a result of the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946, which sought to provide a constitutional framework for an independent India. It was established with the objective of drafting a constitution for a free and united India, though later political developments led to the emergence of separate dominions. Elections to the Assembly were held indirectly through the provincial legislative assemblies, with representation distributed among provinces and princely states. Although initially designed to represent a united India, the Muslim League chose to boycott the Assembly following its rejection of the Cabinet Mission's groupings, marking the beginning of a clear divide in the political landscape.

The Constituent Assembly first convened on 9 December 1946 in the Central Hall of Parliament in New Delhi. In the absence of the Muslim League, 207 members attended the inaugural session. Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha was appointed as the interim chairman, and later, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected as the permanent President of the Assembly. Among its first major resolutions was the Objective Resolution, introduced by Jawaharlal Nehru on 13 December 1946, which laid down the foundational principles of the future constitution, including justice, equality, freedom, and sovereignty.

Despite its legislative responsibilities, the Assembly was also caught in the political turbulence of the time. Communal violence was intensifying, and by mid-1947, the inevitability of partition became increasingly clear. The Assembly thus had to navigate both the task of nation-building and the practical realities of division. After the announcement of the 3rd June Plan and the Indian Independence Act of 1947, the Constituent Assembly became the sovereign legislative body of the Dominion of India, while a separate assembly was created for Pakistan.

## **Mountbatten Talks**

Lord Louis Mountbatten arrived in India on 24 March 1947 as the last British Viceroy, tasked with overseeing the transfer of power. His appointment came at a time of deep political uncertainty, following the failure of previous negotiations such as the Cabinet Mission Plan and the breakdown of trust between the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League. With British resolve to leave India clearly announced by Prime Minister Attlee in February 1947, Mountbatten was given considerable discretion to facilitate an orderly and timely withdrawal. His mission, however, was not just to transfer power, but to do so in a way that minimized civil unrest and safeguarded British interests in the region.

In the weeks following his arrival, Mountbatten initiated a series of intense consultations with the major political leaders of India. He held separate meetings with Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Maulana Azad, and leaders of the Sikh and Scheduled Caste communities. These talks were critical in assessing the viability of a united India, particularly in light of the Muslim League's persistent demand for Pakistan. Mountbatten also engaged with British officials and advisers to consider the administrative and strategic implications of different constitutional arrangements.

What became increasingly evident during these discussions was that any further delay or insistence on unity would likely lead to large-scale violence and the collapse of the administrative machinery. Gandhi remained opposed to partition, while Nehru and Patel gradually came to accept its inevitability as a means to prevent civil war. Jinnah, on the other hand, was firm in his demand for a separate Muslim homeland, arguing that Muslim interests could not be safeguarded within a Hindu-majority India.

By the end of May 1947, Mountbatten concluded that partition was the only practical solution. These talks laid the groundwork for the formulation of the 3rd June Plan, under which British India would be divided into two independent dominions, India and Pakistan.



## Timeline of Indian Independence

Date	Event	Details
<b>March 23, 1940</b>	<b>Lahore Resolution</b>	All-India Muslim League, led by Jinnah, formally demands a separate Muslim nation, Pakistan.
<b>August 1942</b>	<b>Quit India Movement</b>	Launched by the Indian National Congress under Gandhi, demanding immediate British withdrawal. Suppressed by mass arrests.
<b>June–July 1945</b>	<b>Simla Conference</b>	Failed British-led attempt to form a representative interim government due to disagreements between Congress and the Muslim League.
<b>March–May 1946</b>	<b>Cabinet Mission Plan</b>	Proposed a united federal India. Initially accepted, later rejected due to disputes over provincial groupings and representation.
<b>August 16, 1946</b>	<b>Direct Action Day</b>	Called by the Muslim League to assert Pakistan demand. Led to widespread communal riots, especially in Calcutta.
<b>September 2, 1946</b>	<b>Interim Government Formed</b>	Congress forms interim government; Muslim League joins in October but friction persists.
<b>December 9, 1946</b>	<b>Constituent Assembly Convenes</b>	Assembly meets for the first time. Muslim League boycotts the session, refusing to accept a united India framework.
<b>February 20, 1947</b>	<b>Attlee's Announcement</b>	British Prime Minister declares Britain will leave India by June 1948, at the latest.

<b>March 24, 1947</b>	<b>Mountbatten Appointed Viceroy</b>	Lord Mountbatten arrives as the last Viceroy, tasked with ensuring a smooth transfer of power.
<b>April–May 1947</b>	<b>Mountbatten Holds Talks</b>	Consults major Indian leaders. Concludes that Hindu-Muslim unity is unworkable, and partition is inevitable.
<b>June 3, 1947</b>	<b>Mountbatten Plan / 3rd June Plan</b>	Officially announces partition of India into India and Pakistan. Includes referendums, boundary decisions, and princely state choices.
<b>June 1947</b>	<b>Congress &amp; League Accept Partition</b>	Indian National Congress, Muslim League, and Sikh leaders reluctantly accept the partition plan.
<b>June 4 – July 1, 1947</b>	<b>Indian Independence Act Introduced</b>	The bill is introduced in the British Parliament to legalize partition and the creation of two dominions by August 15, 1947.

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