

## UPSC Civil Services Examination

### UPSC Notes [GS-I]

#### Topic: Wavell Plan and Shimla Conference [NCERT Notes]

The Wavell Plan was first presented at the Shimla Conference in 1945. It was named after Viceroy of India, Lord Wavell.

The Shimla Conference was convened in order to agree on the Wavell Plan for Indian self-government, which provided for separate representations on communal lines. Both the plan and the conference failed on account of the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress not coming to an agreement.

This is an important topic for the [UPSC Prelims exam](#).

#### Background of the Wavell Plan and the Shimla Conference

The Second World War had caused many socio-economic problems in the British Empire, especially when it came to maintaining their overseas colonies. Thus the British Government saw it fit to grant India the freedom it had been demanding for so long. In addition, the [Quit India Movement](#) and an increase in revolutionary activity only made the British position in India tenuous at best.

Lord Wavell, who became the Viceroy in 1943, was charged with presenting a formula for the future government of India that would be acceptable to both the Indian National Congress and the [All-India Muslim League](#), allowing for a smooth transition of power. Lord Wavell was considered an apt person for this task as he had been the head of the Indian Army and thus had a better understanding of the Indian situation.

To know more about the [Governor Generals of Bengal and India](#), visit the linked article.

#### What did the Wavell Plan Propose?

In May 1945 Wavell visited London and discussed his ideas with the British Government. These London talks resulted in the formulation of a definite plan of action which was officially made public simultaneously on 14 June 1945 by L.S. Amery, the Secretary of State for India. The Wavell Plan proposed the following:

- The Viceroy's Executive Council was to have all Indian members except the Viceroy himself and the Commander-in-Chief.
- The council was to have a 'balanced representation' of all Indians including 'caste-Hindus', Muslims, Depressed Classes, Sikhs, etc. Muslims were given 6 out of 14 members which accounted for more than their share of the population (25%).
- The Viceroy/Governor-General would still have the power of veto but its use would be minimal.
- The foreign affairs portfolio would be transferred from the Governor-General to an Indian member. The defence would be handled by a British general until the full transfer of power was made.

- A conference would be convened by the Viceroy to get a list of all the members recommended to the Council from all parties concerned. In case a joint list was not agreed upon, separate lists would be taken from the parties. This was to be the Shimla Conference.
- If this plan worked, similar councils would be formed in all provinces comprising of local leaders.

To know more about the [legislation passed in British India](#), click on the linked article.

## What happened at the Shimla Conference?

Lord Wavell invited 21 political leaders including Mahatma Gandhi and M A Jinnah to Shimla, the summer capital of British India to discuss the Wavell Plan on June 25th, 1945.

- The conference was a failure because the League and the Congress could not settle their differences.
- Jinnah insisted that only League members could be the Muslim representatives in the Council, and opposed to the Congress nominating Muslim members. This was because Jinnah wanted the League to be the sole representative of Muslims in India. Congress would never agree to this demand.
- In the Wavell Plan, there were 6 Muslim representatives out of 14 members, which was more than the Muslim share of the population. Despite this, the League wanted the power of veto to any constitutional proposal which it believed was not in its interest. Congress opposed this unreasonable demand also.
- Jinnah refused to give the names to the council unless the government acknowledged that only the Muslim League was the exclusive representative of Indian Muslims.
- The Wavell Plan, thus, was dissolved with the failure of the conference. And with it the last chance to avoid partition.
- After this, the war ended and a new Labour government was elected in Britain. This new government was intent on giving independence to India without much delay and sent the [Cabinet Mission](#) with that purpose.

The failure of the Wavell Plan and the Shimla Conference was a watershed moment for the [Indian Independence struggle](#). All steps taken to prevent partition had been met with failure, meaning that it was inevitable.