

UPSC Civil Services Examination

Subject – UPSC GS-III

Topic – Radcliffe Line

What is the Radcliffe Line?

On 17 August 1947, the borderline that separated India from Pakistan, known as the Radcliffe Line was revealed.

The Radcliffe line is spread through the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat till international border in Jammu in Jammu & Kashmir, dividing India and Pakistan into two different countries. Radcliffe divided India into three halves:

- West Pakistan
- East Pakistan and
- India

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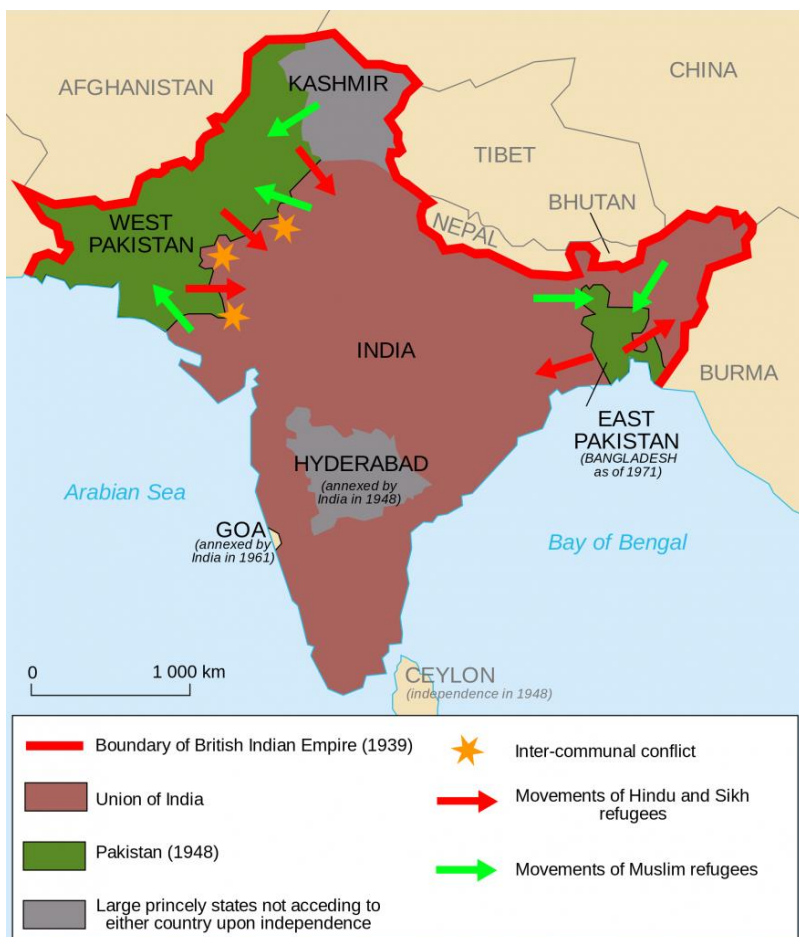
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Background to Radcliffe Line (Border Line between India & Pakistan)

- On this day, the line demarcating India from the newly formed Pakistan after partition was published.
- It was named after the chairman of the Border Commissions, Sir Cyril Radcliffe. He was a lawyer from England who had no previous knowledge or experience with cartography.
- This border line is today the international boundary between India and Pakistan on the western side and between India and Bangladesh on the eastern side.
- Before independence, it was decided to partition India into India and Pakistan for the Hindu and Muslim communities respectively.
- The provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan with an overwhelming majority of Muslims (more than 70% and 90% respectively) were granted to Pakistan.
- However, the provinces of Punjab and Bengal only had a marginal majority of Muslims. Punjab had 55.7% of Muslims and Bengal had 54.4% Muslims. Even though Muhammad Ali Jinnah wanted these

provinces to go to Pakistan in their entirety, the Congress Party did not agree considering the feelings of the Hindu and Sikh populations.



- So it was decided to cut through these provinces and give portions to both countries.
- This was an arduous task especially in the Punjab province since the population was by and large scattered, and it was impossible to have a neat line that divided the populations according to religion.
- Sir Cyril Radcliffe was made the Chairman of the two Border Commissions (one each for Bengal and Punjab) in June 1947.
- Each commission had 5 members – Sir Cyril, 2 members nominated by the Muslim League and 2 members nominated by the Congress Party.
- Sir Cyril was asked to complete the demarcation by 15 August but the final result was published only on 17th.
- Sir Cyril was a neutral man in the eyes of the British and he could not be partial to either India or Pakistan as he had no prior knowledge about India or the conditions here. This was one of the reasons behind his appointment.
- Not only the population, but the border commissions had also to take care of roadways and railway lines, power systems, irrigation schemes and also individual landholdings. They intended to avoid or minimise the separation of farmers from their fields, and also reduce the number of people who would have to migrate to the 'right' side.
- The total area of land they were charged with dividing totalled 450000 sq. km. with a population of 88 million people.

- Since the representatives from the League and the Congress could not see eye to eye on many issues, it was left to the chairman to make all the final decisions.
- Some areas were especially hard to place on either side of the border with an unclear majority of people and also factors like cultural references and irrigation lines to consider. Some Muslim majority areas (marginal majority) were awarded to India like Gurdaspur district's Muslim majority tehsils, Ajnala in Amritsar, Zira and Ferozpur in Ferozpur, etc. Chittagong Hill Tracts (with 97% non-Muslim, mostly Buddhist) were awarded to East Pakistan because of inaccessibility to India. The Khulna district with a marginal Hindu majority of 51% was awarded to East Pakistan. Murshidabad with 70% Muslims was given to India.
- The partition of the country saw more than a million deaths and about 12 million people were displaced.
- Sir Cyril Radcliffe left India even before the line was published and did not accept his payment of Rs.40000 for the job.

The study of Radcliffe line and other such boundary lines that separate India from other countries is a major topic to prepare for the UPSC [Civil Services Exam](#).

Radcliffe Line - Final Outcome

On 8th July 1947, Radcliffe arrived in India and was given a target of five weeks to work on the borderline. Once in India, Radcliffe met Lord Mountbatten and travelled to Kolkata and Lahore to meet the members of the Boundary Commission. The members mainly were Jawaharlal Nehru, a representative from the Indian National Congress and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, representative of the Muslim League.

Dividing the two countries was a very tough job because the division was done on the basis of religious majority and a fair decision had to be made while drawing a boundary between the two countries.

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What was the main motive of Radcliffe Line?

The main motive of giving Radcliffe a target to work on the borderline was that both the parties were keen in getting a finalised boundary line by 15th August 1947 but due to political reasons, the Radcliffe line was officially revealed on 17th August 1947, two days after the Independence. Apart from the Radcliffe line, there are a few other boundaries that divide India from Pakistan.

Also on This Day

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