



India-Pakistan-United Kingdom Timeline:

-- Brian Mason, July 18, 2007

Profiles of Five Leading Figures of India-Pakistan Partition

1. Earl Louis Mountbatten

The last viceroy to India, Mountbatten was incumbered with brokering the deal for independence between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. He demanded negotiations occur swiftly, opting for speed and a precipitous withdrawal. During negotiations, Mountbatten is said to have favored the Hindu side, pushing for a partition rather than coexisting Muslim and Hindu states.

2. Mahatma Gandhi

The spiritual leader of India's independence and one of the Indian National Congress' most influential voices, Gandhi advocated change through non-violent resistance. After leading the Quit India movement in 1942, during the negotiations for independence, Gandhi favored a gradual withdrawal. He believed Indians should be exposed to newfound freedoms little by little. Gandhi also believed in a united India and deeply opposed partitioning the country.

3. Jawaharlal Nehru

Nehru, the President of the Indian National Congress and independent India's first Prime Minister, was a longtime political ally to Gandhi, though the two split during negotiations for Britain's withdrawal. Unlike Gandhi's call for gradual independence, Nehru advocated for a rapid British departure. Nehru, a native Kashmiri Hindu, pushed for Kashmir, a largely Muslim region, to remain part of India.

4. Muhammad Ali Jinnah

Jinnah, the first ruler of Pakistan and the opposition to Gandhi and Nehru during the partition, represented the Muslim League during negotiations. He proposed separate Muslim and Hindu nations that would coexist within a larger Indian state, where the Muslim state would include Kashmir. Although Jinnah ultimately hoped for secular nations, he believed a division along religious lines was necessary to guarantee a voice and protection for the outnumbered Muslim population.

5. Maharaja Hari Singh

Singh was the last Maharaja of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Although Jinnah expected the region to become part of Pakistan, Singh wished to make Kashmir independent of both Pakistan and India. When the Pakistani army began to make incursions into Kashmir, Singh signed the territory over to India.

June, 1757 – Battle of Plassey

The Battle of Plassey established the British East India Company's dominance over the Indian subcontinent. The Company defeated the Nawab of Bengal and installed a puppet ruler, enabling British business ventures in the region and allowing The Company to control trade from the national to the local level. The Company operated its trade out of Mumbai, which grew to be the commercial center of India.

August 2, 1858 – British Parliament passes India Act

Because the Company controlled most of India by 1858, the India Act effectively transferred that control to the British crown. This period of British rule is often referred to as the Raj. In the two years prior to the India Act, the Indian people mounted a bloody rebellion, but were ultimately defeated. Throughout the British colonization, tensions ran high between the European power and the conquered Asian nation.

Great Britain prospered greatly from their colonization of India. To keep money flowing into the British economy, the imperial power imposed regulations and taxes that stifled Indian industrial and commercial growth.

Approximately two fifths of the subcontinent remained outside British rule, though the ruling independent principalities typically cooperated with British if offered economic incentives.

1885 – Indian National Congress is founded

The Indian National Congress was often able to govern the subcontinent by consensus. However, in the years leading up to independence, the administrative body was split by factionalism.

1906 – The Muslim League is founded

The Muslim League was founded in 1906 to give a voice to underrepresented Muslims, who, at the time, comprised approximately 20 percent of the population.

1930 – The Muslim League proposes a separate Pakistani state

In a session of the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League proposed the idea of Pakistan – a separate state for the Muslim population – but found little support for the plan.

March 12, 1931 – Mahatma Gandhi leads the Salt March

To protest the British salt tax, Gandhi led nearly a hundred followers over 200 miles to the ocean to extract free salt from the sea. The protest drew both international press and the ire of British authorities.

1935 – Great Britain passes Government of India Act

The British Parliament passed the Government of India Act in 1935, establishing a federal system. The eleven different provinces founded were given more autonomy than ever before, planting the seeds for the partition.

1937 – First elections under federal system

In 1937, the British sponsored the first federal elections across the 11 provinces. Hindus won the majority of seats, alienating the Muslim League, which was unable to unite even in provinces with Muslim majorities.

July 14, 1942 – Indian National Congress demands British withdrawal

The Indian National Congress passed a resolution calling for an end to British governance, demanding their withdrawal. Less than a month later, Gandhi spurred the Quit India movement, advocating peaceful civil disobedience. But the protests, which began as worker's strikes and marches, turned violent, prompting British authorities to arrest more than 100,000 nation-wide, including many members of the Congress.

August 16, 1946 – Jinnah calls for "Direct Action Day" in support of Pakistan

To rally support for an independent Pakistani state, Jinnah called for a "Direct Action Day." The movement, however, broke into violence, taking the lives of thousands.

March 24, 1947 – Earl Luis Mountbatten sworn in as final Viceroy to India

Earl Luis Mountbatten was sworn in as the final Viceroy to India to broker India's independence. Mountbatten was instructed to finalize a plan by August 1947 – almost a year sooner than the originally planned June 1948 date.

Two main factors determined Great Britain's decision to seek decolonization: The administrative costs needed to suppress Indian activists proved too expensive as England recovered from the economic devastation of World War II, and following the war, the United States pressured their European ally to withdraw its colonial interests.

August 14, midnight 1947 – Pakistan declares independence

August 14, midnight 1947 – India declares independence, becoming the first British colony to separate from the Crown

Disputes between India and Pakistan stem from the 1947 British partitioning of India into two independent nations. The region's predominantly Muslim provinces were divided into East and West Pakistan, while predominantly Hindu areas became modern India. The border between the two states was conceived and finalized by the British lawyer Cyril Radcliffe. Boundaries were drawn hastily, using outdated census reports and maps.

Approximately 10 million Muslims migrated to the newly formed Pakistani state.

August 26, 1947 – Maharaja Hari Singh, the Indian ruler governing Jammu-Kashmir, signs region over to India, starts first India-Pakistan war over Kashmir

At the epicenter of the Indian-Pakistan conflict is the Jammu-Kashmir state, which, in 1947, had a predominantly Muslim population and was governed by an Sikh ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh. He signed Jammu-Kashmir over to India on October 26.

Many Pakistanis say the Kashmir region, with its majority Muslim population, belongs in their Islamic state. Indians, meanwhile, argue India has a legal right to the Kashmir territory.

India currently controls some two-thirds of the state; Pakistan controls about one-fifth; the eastern region has been controlled by China since 1963.

Since 1947, India and Pakistan have been locked in a tense and often hostile rivalry. The two countries have fought three wars, with two centering on the Kashmir conflict. As many as 50,000 people have died over the war-torn province.

Pakistan has refused to accept the legitimacy of India's claim to Kashmir, and Pakistani militias and Kashmiri Muslim rebels have fought to overthrow Indian rule. When Indian forces moved into the region to restore its control, the first major war between the two rivals began.

August, 1948 – U.N. resolution on Kashmir, calling for Pakistan to govern the northern – and mostly Muslim – territory, and India to govern the southern territory.

In August 1948, the United Nations intervened, issuing a resolution granting Pakistan control over the northern, and primarily Muslim, territory; leaving the remaining southern territory to India. Another U.N. resolution called for a direct vote on Kashmiri self-determination in the entire province, but India refused.

India deployed troops to the region to protect its borders from armed Pakistani and Kashmiri militias.

September 11, 1948 – Jinnah dies of cancer

Jinnah died of cancer less than a year into Kashmir's independence.

January 30, 1948 – Gandhi assassinated by Hindu radical

Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu radical who believed Gandhi to be too sympathetic towards the Muslim population.

July, 1949 – U.N. enlarged mission, passed resolution creating a ceasefire line through the Karachi Agreement

In July 1949, the U.N. Security Council enlarged its mission to the Kashmir region and passed another resolution creating a ceasefire line. Shortly afterward, Pakistan and India signed a deal, called the Karachi Agreement, that recognized the ceasefire line monitored by U.N. observers.

1952 – Article 370 enacted

The Indian government enacted article 370, an addition to its constitution which granted Jammu-Kashmir a special state status and increased autonomy.

1954 – Pakistan-U.S. alliance

Pakistan signed an agreement with the U.S. saying Washington will come to Pakistan's aid in a time of war. Islamabad had agreed to host U.S. military bases; its location was strategic in the U.S.'s Cold War positioning against the Soviet Union. That relationship was renewed in 1959.

India, meanwhile, practiced a policy of nonalignment, refusing to ally itself with any bloc or alliance -- especially those of the U.S. or Soviet Union.

August 1965 – Second India-Pakistan war over Kashmir

Bursts of violence in August 1965 between Pakistanis and Indians ignited the second major war between the bitter neighbors. The cities of Punjab and Kashmir endured the majority of ground battles and air strikes.

September 1965 – U.N. Security Council resolution calling for ceasefire

After both sides suffered thousands of casualties and the war reached a stalemate, the U.N. Security Council passed a new resolution in September 1965 calling for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Pakistani and Indian troops.

January 10, 1966 – Tashkent Agreement signed, troops withdrawn by February to pre-war borders

On January 10, 1966, the Pakistani President Ayub Khan and Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri signed the Tashkent Agreement in former Soviet state Uzbekistan. The agreement ordered both India and Pakistan to withdraw their troops by February that year to their pre-war borders.

1971 – Third India-Pakistan war, Bangladesh breaks away to become a sovereign state

India and Pakistan battled over East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, in their third major war. Pakistan accused India of supporting Bengali separatists who sought to overthrow Pakistani rule of Bangladesh.

After many casualties, Pakistan agreed to a cease-fire with Bengali troops and officially recognized the sovereignty of Bangladesh.

July 2, 1972 – Simla Pact signed, war over Bangladesh ends

Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi signed the Simla Pact to formally end the war over Bangladesh.

The Simla Pact also reinstated the Kashmir "line of control" similar to the one created by the 1949 U.N. resolution and Karachi Agreement. Pakistan, however, has lodged several complaints with the U.N. alleging ceasefire violations by Indian troops.

May 18, 1974 – India tests first nuclear device, Pakistan begins nuclear program

India tests its first nuclear device in May. Pakistan begins its nuclear program the same year, with a bitter arms race developing between the two nations.

December, 1979 – Soviet Union invades Afghanistan, Pakistan maintains allegiance to U.S.

During the Cold War, Pakistan remained allied with the U.S. against Soviet advances into northern Afghanistan and Central Asia.

1989 – Kashmiri Separatists attack villages in India-controlled Kashmir.

As Kashmiri separatists and insurgent movements increased in popularity and strength, India accused Pakistan of aiding militia groups which began attacking villages in Indian-controlled areas in Kashmir. Pakistan denied it provided military or financial aid to the separatists, maintaining it only gave moral support to their cause.

May 11, 1998 – India detonates first nuclear bomb

May 28, 1998 – Pakistan detonates first nuclear bomb

First India and then Pakistan successfully detonated nuclear weapons. The international community condemned the tests and levied economic sanctions on the feuding neighbors.

May 1999 – Kargil War, Pakistani incursion into India-controlled Kashmir

Pakistani-led troops, including a unit headed by current President Pervez Musharraf, crossed the border into Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee launched counter-attack air strikes to push out the Pakistani army.

Pakistan asserted it was fighting for Kashmir's liberation while India maintained its control of southern portion of the province was legitimate.

The conflict subsided when Pakistani President Nawaz Sharif ordered the army to withdraw to its side of the line of control.

The leaders officially ended fighting with the Lahore Declaration, which stressed that both countries must respect the line of control.

October 12, 1999 – General Pervez Musharraf takes power in military coup

General Pervez Musharraf staged a military coup, overthrowing the elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The Pakistani Supreme Court later validated Musharraf's leadership.

December 1999 – Terrorists hijack Indian flight bound for Nepal

Terrorists hijacked an Indian flight bound for Katmandu, Nepal and demanded the release of members of Kashmiri separatist groups, such as the Jaish-e-Mohammad leader, Maulana Masood Azhar.

The 155 people trapped aboard the plane were released after eight days, while the hijackers escaped. Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee blamed Pakistan for supporting the hijacking; Pakistan rejected those claims as untrue and "very irresponsible."

July, 2000

Hizbul Mujahedeen, a dominant Kashmiri Islamic separatist group, declared a unilateral ceasefire against Indian troops in Kashmir.

December 22, 2000 – Separatist groups claims responsibility for attack in New Delhi

The Kashmiri separatist group Lashkar-e-Tayyiba claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on the historic Red Fort in New Delhi, India.

May, 2001 – India-Pakistan peace summit regarding Kashmir

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee held a summit in New Delhi to negotiate a truce over Kashmir.

September 11, 2001 – U.S. and Pakistan ally to fight Taliban and al-Qaida

Pakistan became a major ally to the U.S. campaign against terrorism and its war effort to oust the Taliban and al-Qaida terrorists from Afghanistan.

December 13, 2001 – Indian parliament attacked by suspected Pakistani-based terrorists

Following a Dec. 13 attack on the Indian parliament, India ordered Pakistan to turn over 20 suspected terrorists believed to be hiding in the Islamic nation.

Pakistani officials arrested at least 50 members of two Pakistan-based Kashmiri separatist groups, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba -- including the leader of Jaish-e-Mohammad, Maulana Masood Azhar, who India released in Dec. 1999 to satisfy the demands of militants who hijacked an Indian Airlines plane with 155 people aboard.

New Delhi accused Pakistan of aiding the Islamic militant groups, but Islamabad denied any involvement. Both nations deployed more troops to their troubled border, with tensions continuing to rise near the year's end.

April, 2003 – Prime Minister Vajpayee offers to begin peace talks with Pakistan

India Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee offered Pakistan the "hand of friendship," signifying his nation was prepared to begin peace talks. Although Vajpayee later lost his reelection, his speech spurred a process of dialogue between the two nations.

June, 2004 – India and Pakistan sign nuclear test ban

India and Pakistan sign a ban on nuclear weapons testing and also establish a hotline for the purpose of warning against nuclear threats.

November, 2004 – India withdraws approximately 1,000 troops from Kashmir border

India withdrew approximately 1,000 troops from the Kashmir border.

April, 2005 – Bus service across Kashmir opens

A bus service opened between the Indian and Pakistani border in Kashmir, reuniting people divided for over 50 years. Though the bus service ran infrequently, it was seen as a watershed in the peace process.

October, 2005 – India and Pakistan sign security accords

India and Pakistan agreed to provide notification of any future surface-to-surface ballistic missile tests. In the accords, the two nations also signed off on a joint communication system between their coast guards.

July, 2006 – India blames Mumbai train bombings on Pakistani-friendly terrorists

A series of train bombings in Mumbai killed 186 and wounded over 1,000. India blamed the attacks on the Pakistani-based Lashkar-e-Tayyiba militants, but Pakistan denied any involvement.

September, 2006 – India and Pakistan agree to fight terrorism together

At a summit in Cuba, leaders from both India and Pakistan announced a new policy of cooperation in the fight against terrorism. The statement diverged from India's usual rhetoric of blaming terrorist attacks on Pakistan. Reversing course, India acknowledged that Pakistan, too, faces terrorist threats and the two nations need to fight radicals together.