

INITIAL POLITICS OF PAKISTAN (1947–1956)

Introduction

The period 1947–1956 was the formative phase of Pakistan's political and constitutional development. After independence on 14 August 1947, Pakistan faced enormous challenges, including the refugee crisis, division of assets, administrative weakness, Kashmir conflict, economic difficulties, provincial tensions, and the absence of a permanent constitution. The early death of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1948 and the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 further weakened political stability. During this period, Pakistan moved from the Government of India Act 1935 as its interim constitutional framework toward the Objectives Resolution (1949) and finally the Constitution of 1956, which declared Pakistan an Islamic Republic.

1. IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Pakistan inherited a weak administrative and economic structure compared with India.

Major Problems:

- Massive refugee influx from India.
- Communal violence and rehabilitation problems.
- Shortage of trained administrative personnel.
- Division of military and financial assets.
- Dispute over canal water.
- Kashmir dispute and the 1947–48 war.
- Financial difficulties and lack of industrial infrastructure.
- Integration of princely states.
- Constitutional uncertainty.
- Provincial and linguistic tensions.
- Weak political institutions.

These problems severely affected the political development of the new state.

2. QUAID-I-AZAM'S ROLE (1947–1948)

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah became Pakistan's first Governor-General.

His Major Priorities:

- Establishment of administrative machinery.

- Rehabilitation of refugees.
- Protection of minorities.
- Establishment of law and order.
- Strengthening national unity.
- Settlement of Kashmir.
- Creation of a democratic constitutional system.

Jinnah emphasized rule of law, equality of citizens, religious freedom, parliamentary democracy, and national unity.

Jinnah died on 11 September 1948, creating a major leadership vacuum.

3. DEATH OF QAUID-I-AZAM AND ITS IMPACT

The death of Jinnah was a serious blow to Pakistan.

Political Consequences:

- Pakistan lost its most respected political leader.
- The Muslim League lacked an equally powerful successor.
- Bureaucracy gradually gained greater influence.
- Political factions became stronger.
- Constitutional disagreements intensified.

Khawaja Nazimuddin succeeded Jinnah as Governor-General, while Liaquat Ali Khan continued as Prime Minister.

4. LIAQUAT ALI KHAN'S GOVERNMENT

Liaquat Ali Khan served as Pakistan's first Prime Minister from 1947 to 1951.

His government concentrated on:

- Consolidating the state.
- Refugee rehabilitation.
- Economic management.
- Foreign relations.
- Constitutional development.
- Islamic orientation of the state.

The most important constitutional development was the Objectives Resolution of 1949.

5. OBJECTIVES RESOLUTION (1949)

The Objectives Resolution was presented by Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan on 7 March 1949 and adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 12 March 1949.

Major Principles:

1. Sovereignty of Allah — Sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to Almighty Allah, while authority is exercised by the people through their chosen representatives.
2. Democracy — Democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance, and social justice.
3. Islamic Principles — Muslims would be enabled to order their lives according to the Quran and Sunnah.
4. Minority Rights — Freedom to profess, practice, and develop religious and cultural life.
5. Federalism — A federal constitutional structure.
6. Fundamental Rights — Equality before law, political and economic justice, freedom of thought, expression, belief, and association.

Significance:

The Objectives Resolution became the ideological foundation of Pakistan's constitutional development. It attempted to reconcile Islamic principles, democracy, fundamental rights, and representative government.

6. BASIC PRINCIPLES COMMITTEE (1949)

After the Objectives Resolution, the Constituent Assembly established the Basic Principles Committee (BPC) to prepare recommendations for the future constitution.

Major Issues:

- Federal structure.
- Distribution of powers.
- Representation of provinces.
- Role of Islam.
- Parliamentary system.
- Fundamental rights.
- Electoral system.

7. FIRST BASIC PRINCIPLES COMMITTEE REPORT (1950)

The first report generated controversy, particularly over representation in the central legislature.

East Pakistan had a larger population and demanded representation according to population. West Pakistan feared domination by East Pakistan.

The report failed to satisfy both sides.

8. LIAQUAT-NEHRU PACT (1950)

The Liaquat-Nehru Pact, also called the Delhi Pact, was signed on 8 April 1950.

Main Provisions:

- Protection of minority rights.
- Religious freedom.
- Security of life and property.
- Protection against forced migration.
- Return of abducted women.
- Minority complaints to be addressed by both governments.

Significance:

The pact reduced tensions between Pakistan and India and demonstrated Pakistan's commitment to protecting minorities.

9. DEATH OF LIAQUAT ALI KHAN (1951)

Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated on 16 October 1951 at Company Bagh, Rawalpindi.

Consequences:

- Political instability increased.
- The Muslim League weakened.
- Bureaucratic influence increased.
- Constitutional development slowed.
- Political factions became stronger.

Khawaja Nazimuddin became Prime Minister, while Ghulam Muhammad became Governor-General.

10. NAZIMUDDIN GOVERNMENT (1951–1953)

Khawaja Nazimuddin became Prime Minister after Liaquat's assassination.

His government faced:

- Economic problems.
- Food shortages.
- Language controversy.
- Religious agitation.
- Political instability.

11. BENGALI LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

Language became a major political issue in early Pakistan.

The central government initially emphasized Urdu as the national language, while East Pakistan's Bengali-speaking majority demanded recognition of Bengali as a state language alongside Urdu.

On 21 February 1952, students in Dhaka demonstrated for recognition of Bengali. Police firing resulted in deaths.

Political Significance:

- Strengthened Bengali nationalism.
- Increased East-West tensions.
- Created resentment against the central government.
- Became an important symbol of Bengali identity.

Eventually, Bengali was recognized as a state language alongside Urdu in the 1956 Constitution.

12. ANTI-AHMADIYYA AGITATION AND 1953 CRISIS

In 1953, serious religious and political agitation occurred in Punjab. The movement demanded that Ahmadis be declared non-Muslims and that certain officials be removed.

The situation became violent.

Result:

The government imposed Martial Law in Lahore in March 1953.

Significance:

- Demonstrated weakness of civilian administration.
- Showed increasing influence of the military.
- Highlighted political instability.
- Raised difficult questions about the constitutional role of religion.

Nazimuddin's government was dismissed by Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad in April 1953.

13. BOGRA FORMULA (1953)

After dismissing Nazimuddin, Ghulam Muhammad appointed Muhammad Ali Bogra as Prime Minister.

Bogra introduced a constitutional compromise in 1953.

Main Idea:

A bicameral legislature was proposed:

- Upper House: Equal representation for East and West Pakistan.
- Lower House: Representation according to population.

Significance:

The formula attempted to combine the principle of population with provincial equality. It offered East Pakistan representation according to population in the lower house while protecting West Pakistan through equal representation in the upper house.

14. CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS OF 1954

The Constituent Assembly continued working on a constitution but faced serious political disagreements.

Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad dismissed the Constituent Assembly on 24 October 1954.

The government argued that the Assembly had failed to produce a constitution and had become ineffective.

15. MAULVI TAMIZUDDIN CASE

Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan, President of the Constituent Assembly, challenged the dissolution in court.

The Sindh Chief Court initially ruled in his favour, but the Federal Court under Chief Justice Muhammad Munir later overturned the decision on technical grounds.

Historical Significance:

- Weakened parliamentary sovereignty.
- Strengthened executive authority.
- Increased bureaucratic influence.
- Contributed to future constitutional interventions.

16. ONE UNIT SCHEME (1955)

In 1955, the government merged the provinces and princely states of West Pakistan into a single administrative unit called West Pakistan.

Objectives:

- Administrative efficiency.
- Reduction of provincial rivalries.
- Creation of parity between East and West Pakistan.
- Strengthening national unity.

East Pakistani leaders opposed the scheme because they believed it reduced their numerical majority.

17. ESTABLISHMENT OF PARITY

After One Unit, Pakistan effectively had two major units:

- East Pakistan
- West Pakistan

The principle of parity was adopted between the two wings.

Although parity temporarily addressed the representation dispute, it increased resentment in East Pakistan.

18. SECOND CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

After the dissolution of the first Constituent Assembly, a new Constituent Assembly was established in 1955.

It worked toward completing the constitution, addressing:

- One Unit.
- Parity between East and West Pakistan.
- Federal structure.
- Islamic provisions.

This eventually led to the Constitution of 1956.

19. CONSTITUTION OF 1956

Pakistan adopted its first constitution on 23 March 1956. It came into force on the same day.

Pakistan officially became the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Main Features:

1. Federal System — Pakistan was a federation consisting of East Pakistan and West Pakistan.
2. Parliamentary Government — President as head of state; Prime Minister as head of government; Cabinet responsible to the National Assembly.
3. Islamic Republic — Official name became Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
4. Islamic Provisions — Laws should not contradict Islamic principles and Muslims should be enabled to live according to Islam.
5. Fundamental Rights — Equality, freedom of speech, religion, association, and movement.
6. Unicameral Legislature — National Assembly with equal representation based on parity.
7. Independent Judiciary — Supreme Court and High Courts.
8. Universal Adult Franchise — Broader democratic participation through adult franchise.

20. WHY DID IT TAKE NINE YEARS TO MAKE THE CONSTITUTION?

Major reasons:

- Leadership crisis after Jinnah's death.
- Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan.
- Dispute over Islamic vs. secular principles.
- East-West representation controversy.
- Language controversy.
- Provincial disagreements.
- Bureaucratic interference.
- Governor-General's intervention.
- Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly.
- One Unit controversy.

21. MAJOR POLITICAL PROBLEMS: 1947–1956

Problem — Political Impact

Refugee crisis — Administrative instability

Kashmir dispute — Security pressure

Death of Jinnah — Leadership vacuum

Objectives Resolution — Islamic-democratic framework

Bengali Language Movement — East-West tensions

1953 religious agitation — Martial Law in Lahore

Death of Liaquat — Political instability

Bogra Formula — Attempted constitutional compromise

Dissolution of Constituent Assembly — Executive dominance

Tamizuddin Case — Weakening of parliamentary authority

One Unit — Increased provincial resentment

Constitution 1956 — Pakistan becomes Islamic Republic

22. POLITICAL EVOLUTION: 1947–1956

1947 — Independence



1948 — Death of Jinnah



1949 — Objectives Resolution



1950 — Liaquat-Nehru Pact



1951 — Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan



1952 — Bengali Language Movement



1953 — Religious Agitation & Martial Law



1953 — Bogra Formula



1954 — Dissolution of Constituent Assembly



1955 — One Unit



1956 — First Constitution



ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

23. CRITICAL EVALUATION

The initial political history of Pakistan from 1947 to 1956 was characterized by a struggle between democratic institution-building and executive-bureaucratic dominance. Pakistan made important constitutional progress through the Objectives Resolution, Basic Principles Committee, Bogra Formula, and ultimately the Constitution of 1956. However, the deaths of Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan deprived the country of strong political leadership. Provincial tensions, especially between East and West Pakistan, complicated constitution-making. The dismissal of elected governments and dissolution of the Constituent Assembly strengthened the Governor-General and bureaucracy at the expense of parliamentary institutions. Consequently, although Pakistan successfully adopted its first constitution in 1956, its democratic institutions remained fragile.

24. CSS ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

A strong CSS answer should identify the period as a crisis of institution-building.

Key questions:

- Who would exercise power — politicians or bureaucracy?
- What would be the nature of the state — Islamic-democratic or purely parliamentary?
- How would power be distributed — centre or provinces?
- How would East and West Pakistan be represented — population or parity?
- What would be the role of the military — professional institution or political actor?

These unresolved questions shaped Pakistan's politics for decades.

25. CSS EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the major political and constitutional problems faced by Pakistan from 1947 to 1956.
2. Critically evaluate the role of the Objectives Resolution in the constitutional development of Pakistan.
3. Why did Pakistan take nine years to frame its first constitution?
4. Discuss the causes and consequences of the dissolution of the First Constituent Assembly.

5. Analyze the political significance of the Bogra Formula.
6. How did the One Unit Scheme contribute to East-West tensions?
7. Critically examine the political developments that led to the Constitution of 1956.
8. “The period 1947–1956 laid the foundations of Pakistan's future political instability.” Discuss.

26. IMPORTANT DATES

- 14 August 1947 — Independence of Pakistan
- 11 September 1948 — Death of Quaid-i-Azam
- 12 March 1949 — Objectives Resolution adopted
- 8 April 1950 — Liaquat-Nehru Pact
- 16 October 1951 — Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan
- 21 February 1952 — Bengali Language Movement
- 1953 — Punjab religious agitation
- 1953 — Bogra Formula
- 24 October 1954 — First Constituent Assembly dissolved
- 1955 — One Unit Scheme
- 23 March 1956 — First Constitution enforced
- 23 March 1956 — Pakistan becomes Islamic Republic

Conclusion

The period 1947–1956 was the foundational decade of Pakistan's political history. The new state survived enormous challenges and established the basic institutions of governance, but political instability prevented the rapid development of a strong democratic system. The deaths of Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, constitutional disagreements, East-West tensions, the Bengali Language Movement, religious agitation, bureaucratic intervention, dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, and the One Unit Scheme all influenced Pakistan's political trajectory. Nevertheless, the Objectives Resolution and Constitution of 1956 provided important foundations by combining Islamic principles, democracy, federalism, fundamental rights, and parliamentary government. The period therefore represents both an era of institutional foundation and political instability, setting the stage for the subsequent constitutional crisis and the rise of military influence in Pakistan.