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Nowadays, religious conflicts are very common for us. But, in reality, what we think of religious conflicts is not always true. Apart from religious differences, there are several reasons behind conflicts. Religious conflicts could be fully understood through primordial, instrumental, and constructivist conceptions. In this article, we will discuss about 1947 India-Pakistan partitions. After the former British divided the area into Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India, it was projected that almost 2 million people lost their lives and nearly 15 million were separated from their country for religious differences (Zakaria, 2022). Again, the picture below was taken during the 1947 India-Pakistan partitions. In the picture, armed Sikh soldiers were fighting to protect their communities. This picture portrays how there had been religious conflict at that time between Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus. This article explores the fundamental causes that go beyond simple cultural differences and points out the initiatives made by religious actors to promote peace throughout that period of conflict.



Figure: India-Pakistan conflicts

First of all, According to the primordial approach, one of the primary root causes of conflicts between states or groups of people is the distinction between the diverse religious and cultural traditions (Freedom Anatomy, n.d.). Conflict and violence within the two systems are more likely to happen when there are more discrepancies between them (Freedom Anatomy, n.d.). Since religious identity is so ancient and unalterable, religious conflict arises. India witnessed Hindu-Muslim riots for many decades prior to any British official ever visited the country (Verghese, 2018). Again, if we talk about India Pakistan partition. Based on, the two-nation theory Hindus and Muslims have distinct cultural backgrounds, with different religious beliefs and traditions (Manchester Historian, 2020). Muslim League claimed that Muslims deserved to have the right to establish their own independent state in India's Muslim-majority regions (Manchester Historian, 2020). On the other hand, the nations of India and Pakistan were founded on bloodshed. During the Indian subcontinent's division riots, regional cleansings, and across borders migrations cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Muslims and Hindus (Verghese, 2018). Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs' deeply held religious identities, and culture turned into the reason for the partition that occurred.

Furthermore, according to the instrumentalist approach, leaders or organizations typically use religion, race, or other identities as instruments to further their own political or individual goals. In this case, religion is treated as an instrument to achieve power. Not the prime reason for conflict. Certain leaders take advantage of the religious aspect to manipulate public affection against their competitors in the name of sectarian or religious opposition (Freedom Anatomy, n.d.). Moreover, if we think about the 1947 India-Pakistan partition context. "Divide and rule" policy by the British was the reason that created conflicts between Hindus and Muslims (Tharoor, 2017). Divide and rule strategy was mainly designed to maintain British control over Indian subcontinent. British believed that without the British, Indian subcontinent could not exist (Tharoor, 2017). They used religion as a weapon to create conflicts, but their real motivation was to gain power. Furthermore, Muslim League leader Mohammed Ali Jinnah wanted a separate Muslim state. He depended on the two-nation theory, which claimed that Muslims and Hindus belong to two different countries as they are totally different (Manchester Historian, 2020). After the partition, the first governor general of Pakistan was Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who served from August 15, 1947, until he passed away. So, he highlighted religion as the main reason for partition. But, in reality, he and other leaders used religious differences to create a separate Muslim state named Pakistan. Thus, the instrumentalist view highlights that political leaders or organization's decisions were made for their benefit in the name of religious identities, which caused bloodshed during the Partition.

Additionally, depending on constructivist viewpoints, the religious aspect could not only intensify the conflict but also have the potential to help resolve it and speed up the period of relaxation (Freedom Anatomy, n.d.). Mahatma Gandhi considered there was no need for the partition in 1947. He believed, that if Hindus-Muslims could live all together during the British rule period, they could also live after the partition (Morris,2019). Moreover, a lifelong pacifist, Abdul Ghaffar Khan gathered Pathans in India for battle against British colonialists (Mathew, 2023). He opposed Partition and was strongly in favor of nonviolence along with Hindu-Muslim mutual respect. He continued to be a supporter of democracy and nonviolence even after Pakistan was established, which created frequently disagreements with the ruling Pakistani government (Khurana, 2025). Although Conflict can be made worse by religion, but it can be utilized for the sake of peace. As, religion has the potential to promote unity among individuals, which may reduce conflict. In addition to bringing attention to the harsh reality of inter-communal violence, the picture of armed Sikh soldiers additionally acts as a reminder of the initiatives taken by different religious leaders who fought for peace and mutual understanding to bring an end to this militarization.

The 1947 India-Pakistan partition was a multifaceted event that was impacted by numerous factors apart from just disagreements over religion. This partition created not only two countries but also the reason for many people's valuable lives. Additionally, the government had allotted areas for each religion, many people were unwilling to leave their residences solely based on their religious differences (Morris,2019). This partition forced them to leave their residences. By analyzing, primordial, instrumental, and constructivist approaches we get to know the real reasons behind the 1947 India-Pakistan partition. Understanding these challenging variables is crucial to avoid similar tragedies in the coming years and promote a culture in which individuals of different identities live in peace with respect for one another.

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