

## Cripps Mission

### Background:

- Japan pushed beyond the eastern borders of India, and the fall of Burma was a war jolt against the British.
- There was an imminent threat of the Japanese invasion of India and Indian support was crucial to the British war effort.
- The Viceroy Lord Linlithgow declared India a war party in the British Empire when the Second World War broke out in 1939.
- It was done without the consultation of the Indians and led to major congressional demonstrations.
- The party leaders, who ruled 7 provincial governments, resigned.
- It was celebrated as "Deliverance Day" by the Muslim League.
- Britain was under pressure from the US and other allied leaders to implement its own colonial policies in India, as well as to gain Indian participation in the Allied war effort.
- This has also prompted the British Government to send Cripps to India.

### Reasons for Cripps Mission to come to India:

- The British suffered setbacks in South-East Asia. As a result of this, India faced an invasion by the Japanese.
- The British allies, namely the United States, the Soviet Union, and China, forced Britain to obtain Indian cooperation for the war.
- India agreed to support Britain in the war in exchange for complete independence from Britain soon after the war.

### Main Proposal:

- There would be the formation of an Indian union with **Dominion status**.
- That Indian union would be free to choose its relations with the **Commonwealth and international organizations such as the United Nations**.
- The Indian defence sector was to be under British control.

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- The governor general's powers were preserved.
- A constituent assembly was formed to draft a new constitution, and it was to be partly elected by provincial assemblies and partly nominated by the Princes.
- The British government would accept the new constitution under two conditions:
  - Any province unwilling to join the Union could have its own constitution and form its own Union, and
  - The new constitution-making body and the British government would negotiate a treaty to effect the transfer of power and to protect racial and religious minorities.

**Significance:**

- The creation of the constitution was to be solely in Indian hands (rather than 'primarily' in Indian hands, as stated in the August Offer).
- The constituent assembly was given a concrete plan.
- Any province could have a separate constitution—a blueprint for India's partition.
- Free India could withdraw from the Commonwealth.
- Indians were given a large share of administration during the interim period.

**Failure of Cripps Mission:**

- The Cripps Mission proposals failed to satisfy Indian nationalists and turned out to be nothing more than a propaganda tool for the US and China.
- The British saw the proposals as too radical, while the INC, which desired complete independence, saw them as too conservative.
- The **INC**, the **Muslim League**, and other Indian organizations all opposed the Mission.
- The **Hindu Mahasabha** and the Liberals were both opposed to the states' right to secede.

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- The **Depressed Classes** objected because they were concerned about their position in a country where they would be a minority.
- The mission is also thought to have failed due to a lack of support from Viceroy Linlithgow, British Prime Minister **Winston Churchill**, and Secretary of State for India, **Leo Amery**.
- The explanation that the proposals were intended to supplement rather than replace the August Offer cast doubt on the British intentions.
- Cripps' inability to go beyond the Draft Declaration and his rigid "**take it or leave it**" attitude exacerbated the impasse.
- Cripps had previously mentioned "cabinet" and "national government," but later clarified that he only meant an expansion of the executive council.
- The procedure for joining was not well defined. A resolution in the legislature with a 60% majority was to be used to decide on secession.
  - If less than 60% of members voted in favour, the decision would be made by a plebiscite of adult males in that province with a simple majority.
  - If Hindus in Punjab and Bengal wanted to join the Indian Union, this scheme worked against them.
- It was unclear who would implement and interpret the treaty that resulted in the transfer of power.
- The issue of the viceroy's veto stymied negotiations.
- **Gandhi** referred to the scheme as a "**post-dated cheque.**"

**Causes of INC's Rejection:**

- The offer of dominion status rather than a provision for complete independence.
- Representation of the princely states by nominees rather than elected representatives.
- Right of provinces to secede as this violated the principle of national unity.

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- Absence of any plan for immediate transfer of power and absence of any real share in defence; the governor general's supremacy had been retained, and the demand that the governor general be only the constituency governor.

**Causes of Muslim League's Rejection:**

- They criticized the concept of a single Indian Union.
- They objected to the machinery for forming a constituent assembly and the procedure for deciding on provinces' accession to the Union.
- They believed that the proposals denied Muslims the right to self-determination and the establishment of Pakistan.

