



Reflections on the Partitions of **India and Palestine** after 70 years

A Full Day Workshop Jointly Organized by
MEI Transsystemic Law Research Cluster and ISAS

ASEF Conference Room | Asia-Europe Foundation
31 Heng Mui Keng Terrace | Singapore 119595

Workshop Statement

Despite the similarities between the partitions of British India and Mandate Palestine, there have been few comparative studies. This is surprising as partition was raised as a possible solution to the dispute in Palestine as early as 1937. In 1947, both Indian and Pakistani diplomats took leading roles in debates at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (UNGA) on the Partition Plan for Palestine, arguing in favour of a federal scheme that the Indian National Congress had rejected in India. Just over three months after the partition of British India on 15 August 1947, the UNGA voted by a slim majority to partition Palestine. The United Kingdom abstained, while India and Pakistan voted against the Plan.

The UN Partition Plan for Palestine, adopted by the UNGA on 29 November 1947, was frustrated by the outbreak of war between Israel and the Arab states in 1948. Yet, despite that war, and the numerous conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians since then, the UN Partition Plan continues to be cited in UN debates until this day. Indeed, the two-state solution is, in many ways, a truncated form of partition. In contrast, the partition of British India has consistently been viewed in a more critical light, especially in India.

This workshop, one of the first of its kind, will provide opportunities for scholars to break out of the mold of looking at the partitions of the Middle East and South Asia individually, and to look at the bigger picture and the tapestries that link them. What do these pivotal moments tell us about the state of international relations in this period, and about partition more generally? Rather than thinking of partition as a uniquely South Asian, Palestinian Arab, Jewish or British phenomenon, we argue it is necessary to look at partition holistically and at the political leaderships, ideologies, laws, and institutions that connect them.

Workshop Schedule

Wednesday, 15 August 2018

08.30am **Registration**

09.00am **Welcome Remarks**

09.10am **Ambassador Bilahari Kausikan**

Chairman, Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore

Introductory Remarks

Professor C Raja Mohan

Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore

09.20am **Introductory Lecture: What is Partition?**

Dr Victor Kattan

Senior Research Fellow, Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore

09.45am **Photo Taking and Tea Break**

10.00am **Panel Discussion One:
The Partition of British India (August 1947)**

Chairperson

Dr Gyanesh Kudaisya

Associate Professor of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore

Panellists

The Paradigmatic Partition? The Pakistan Demand Revisited

Professor Ayesha Jalal

Mary Richardson Professor of History, Tufts University, United States

***The Mountbatten Viceroyalty Revisited: Personality, Prestige
and Strategic Vision in the Partition of India***

Professor Ian Talbot

Professor of Modern British History University of Southampton,
United Kingdom

Question and Answer Session

11.30am **Break**

Workshop Schedule

11.45am

Panel Discussion Two: The Partition of Mandate Palestine (November 1947)

Chairperson

Dr Victor Kattan

Senior Research Fellow

Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore

Panellists

A Lasting Imprint: The Peel Commission and Postwar Partition Planning

Professor Penny Sinanoglou

Assistant Professor of History, Wake Forest University, United States

Partition and the Question of International Governance: The 1947 United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

Professor Laura Robson

Associate Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History Portland State University, United States

Question and Answer Session

01.15pm

Lunch

02.15pm

Panel Discussion Three: The Partitions of India and Palestine compared

Chairperson

Dr Iftekhar Chowdhury

Principal Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies

National University of Singapore; and Former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh

Panellists

Whispers, Rumours and Footnotes: Connecting the Partitions of Palestine and India

Professor Amrita Shodhan

Senior Teaching Fellow, University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, United Kingdom

India's Dilemma of Pragmatism vs. Principles: Nehru's Preference for a Partitioned India but a Federal Palestine

Professor P R Kumaraswamy

Professor at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Question and Answer Session

Workshop Schedule

03.45pm **Tea Break**

04.00pm **Panel Discussion Four:
Consequences of Partition for South Asia,
the Middle East and Beyond**

Chairperson

Dr James M Dorsey

Senior Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Panellists

***Partitioned Identities? Caste, Religion and Linguistic Identity
in Post-1947 Indian and Pakistani Punjab***

Dr Iqbal Singh Sevea

Visiting Research Associate Professor, Institute of South Asian Studies, National
University of Singapore

***The Partition of Palestine of 1947 in the Islamist Eyes:
Explaining the Specific Place of Palestine in Islamic
Mobilizations and Narratives***

Dr Mohamed-Ali Adraoui

Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellow, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service

Question and Answer Session

05.30pm **Closing Remarks**

Dr Victor Kattan

Senior Research Fellow, Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore

05.45pm **End of Workshop**
