

MANIDHANAHEYAM FREE IAS ACADEMY – TNPSC GROUP – PRELIMINARY EXAM  
 UNIT – VII – INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT  
**Wavell Plan and Simla Conference - 1945**

**Background:**

- Once the **tide of the war turned in their favour**, the British started realising by the end of 1944 generally that, the Indian situation **should not be allowed to remain** where it stood after the Quit India Movement.
- They realised that it would be **impossible to hold India by force** for long.
- A **dialogue** therefore, had to begin with the imprisoned Congress leaders, if not for anything else, at least for **preventing them in future** from taking advantage of an explosive post-war situation of economic hardships and unemployment.
- According to **Wavell** the energies of the Congress and its fellow-travellers were required to be directed from the **path of agitation** into “some more **profitable channel**, i.e. into dealing with the administrative problems of India and into trying to solve the constitutional problems”.
- Thus, the viceroy, Lord Wavell was permitted to **start negotiations** with Indian leaders, with the release of Congress Leaders from jails in June 1945.

**Wavell Plan:**

- The **main proposals** of the Wavell Plan were as follows.
  - With the exception of the governor-general and the commander-in-chief, all members of the executive council were to be Indians.
  - Caste Hindus and Muslims were to have **equal representation**.
  - The reconstructed council was to function as an **interim government** within the framework of the 1935 Act (i.e. not responsible to the Central Assembly).
  - The **governor-general** was to **exercise his veto** on the advice of ministers.
  - Representatives of different parties were to **submit a joint list to the viceroy** for nominations to the executive council.

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- If a joint list was not possible, then **separate lists** were to be submitted.
- Possibilities were to be kept open for **negotiations on a new constitution** once the war was finally won.
- **The Reactions:**
  - The **League** wanted all Muslim members to be League nominees, because it feared that since the aims of other minorities—depressed classes, Sikhs, Christians, etc.—were the same as those of the Congress, this arrangement would reduce the League to a one-third minority
  - While, **the Congress objected** to the plan as “an attempt to reduce the Congress to the status of a purely caste Hindu party and insisted on its right to include members of all communities among its nominees”
- **Criticism of the Plan:**
  - The Wavell Plan, in essence, proposed the **complete Indianisation of the Executive Council**, but **instead of asking all the parties to nominate members** to the Executive Council from all the communities, seats were **reserved** for members on the basis of religion and caste, with the caste Hindus and Muslims being represented on it on the basis of parity.
  - While the plan proposed **immediate changes to the composition of the Executive Council it did not contain any guarantee of Indian independence**, nor did it contain any mention of a future constituent assembly or any proposals for the division of power between the various parties of India.

### Simla Conference:

- **The Simla Conference of 1945** was a meeting between the Viceroy of India Lord Wavell and the major political leaders of British India at the Viceregal Lodge in Simla.
- Lord Wavell invited a conference of 21 Indian Political leaders at the Summer Capital British India to **discuss the provision of Wavell Plan**.
- Eventually permitted by the home authorities to set the ball of negotiations rolling, the **Viceroy, Wavell**, ordered on 14 June 1945 the **release of all the Congress Working Committee members**, and invited them along with others, notably the League leaders, to join in a Conference in Simla (24 June – 14 July 1945) for setting up a new **Executive Council** at the Centre (As according to Wavell plan).
- While attending the conference, the Congress naturally refused to be treated as a “Caste Hindu” body, and, asserting its **secular nationalist character** **staked the right to select the representatives** of any community, including Muslims (of whom Abul Kalam Azad and Abdul Ghaffar Khan presented themselves in Simla in the capacities of the leaders and distinguished members respectively, of the Congress delegation), as the **Congress nominees to the council**.
  - The **Muslim league objected** to the Congress Stand, and claimed an **absolute jurisdiction** for choosing all the Muslim members of the council.
- Further, the **league demanded a communal veto** by asking for a **two-third majority**, in the proposed council, instead of a simple one.
- In his anxiety for encouraging the League’s posture, and brushing aside the Congress offer to join the council by keeping to open for the League to step in later, the **Viceroy Wavell**, abruptly **decided to abandon** the British proposals and **dissolve the Simla Conference**.

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- Thus, his actions not only implied an **official recognition of League's monopoly**, but also the power to **negate any future negotiation** that did not suit its own convenience.
- Thus, the **Simla Conference** failed in its objective and set the trend for the immediate topics that would **dominate** discourse until **Indian independence**.

