



**Study Guide for Historical Crisis Cell (HCC) at the NUST
International Model United Nations**

Agenda – The First Round Table Conference

Historical Crisis Cell

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Mandate of the Committee

The crisis committee would focus on addressing the demand for Indian self-rule, including dominion status or complete independence, while considering the distinct interests of the Muslim League. It would aim to negotiate power distribution while balancing the representation of diverse Indian states, minorities, and marginalized groups, including addressing the League's concerns about safeguards for Muslim political and cultural rights. Key discussions would include resolving economic grievances like taxation and land revenue, drafting constitutional reforms, and ensuring fair power-sharing mechanisms. The committee would also work to reconcile British economic and strategic interests with Indian aspirations, bridge ideological gaps between Congress, the Muslim League, British authorities, and other representatives, and address tensions arising from ongoing civil disobedience movements. Ultimately, it would strive to foster consensus and goodwill, ensuring adequate protections for minorities, including Muslims, while setting a precedent for constructive dialogue in future conferences.

Introduction and Historical Context

The First Round Table Conference (1930–1931) marked a significant turning point in India's struggle for constitutional reform and self-rule under British colonial governance. This historic gathering brought together representatives of various Indian political parties, communities, and

princely states, as well as the British government, to discuss India's constitutional future. The decade preceding the conference witnessed critical developments that shaped these negotiations and highlighted the growing demands for Indian autonomy.

1. Morley-Minto Reforms (1909): A Step Toward Limited Representation

The **Indian Councils Act of 1909**, known as the Morley-Minto Reforms, was an early attempt by the British to address nationalist demands while retaining ultimate control.

Key Features:

- **Expansion of Councils:** Legislative councils were expanded to include more Indian representatives, with the Imperial Legislative Council growing to 60 members.
- **Separate Electorates for Muslims:** Muslims were granted separate electorates, ostensibly to protect minority interests, though critics saw it as a divisive policy.
- **Symbolic Appointments:** Satyendra Prasad Sinha's inclusion in the Viceroy's Executive Council marked a nominal shift toward inclusivity.

Reactions:

- The **Indian National Congress (INC)** criticized the reforms as inadequate, calling for self-rule.
- The **All-India Muslim League** welcomed separate electorates, viewing them as safeguards for Muslim representation.

2. Partition of Bengal (1905–1911): A Prelude to Mass Protests

Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905 split the province into **East Bengal and Assam (Muslim-majority)** and **West Bengal (Hindu-majority)**, citing administrative efficiency. Many Indians viewed it as an attempt to divide the nationalist movement.

Impact:

- **Swadeshi Movement:** Indians boycotted British goods and supported indigenous industries.
- **Cultural Renaissance:** Figures like Rabindranath Tagore inspired patriotism through art and literature.
- **Unity in Protest:** Hindus and Muslims temporarily united to oppose the partition, which was annulled in 1911, marking a victory for nationalists but leaving behind communal tensions.

3. World War I and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919)

World War I (1914–1918):

India's contributions of troops and resources raised expectations for political concessions, but post-war economic hardships and events like the **Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919)** deepened resentment against British rule.

Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms:

The **Government of India Act of 1919** introduced dyarchy, dividing governance into:

- **"Reserved" subjects:** Controlled by British officials (e.g., defense, foreign affairs).
- **"Transferred" subjects:** Managed by Indian ministers (e.g., education, public health).

Despite expanding voting rights to a limited elite, the reforms fell short of nationalist aspirations, intensifying calls for self-rule.

4. Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922): Gandhi's Call to Action

Mahatma Gandhi launched the **Non-Cooperation Movement** in 1920, urging Indians to boycott British institutions and embrace indigenous products like **Khadi**.

Key Developments:

- **Mass Mobilization:** Millions joined the movement, making it a pan-Indian struggle.
- **Commitment to Nonviolence:** Despite its abrupt end after the violent **Chauri Chaura incident (1922)**, the movement showcased the potential of nonviolent resistance in India's independence struggle.

5. Simon Commission and Nehru Report (1927–1928)

The **Simon Commission**, formed to review constitutional progress, faced backlash for excluding Indian members. Protests erupted nationwide under the slogan "**Simon, Go Back.**"

In response, the **Nehru Report (1928)**, drafted by Indian leaders, demanded:

- Dominion status for India.
- Universal adult suffrage.
- Equal rights for all citizens.

However, the **Muslim League** opposed the report, citing insufficient safeguards for minorities, exposing growing communal tensions.

6. Civil Disobedience Movement (1930): Defiance in Action

The **Civil Disobedience Movement**, launched by Gandhi, aimed to challenge British laws through nonviolent defiance.

Key Features:

- **Salt March (1930):** Gandhi's symbolic march to Dandi to make salt defied British monopoly laws.
- **Mass Participation:** People from all walks of life, including women and rural communities, joined the movement.
- **British Repression:** Thousands, including Gandhi, were arrested, but the movement reinforced India's resolve for independence.

7. Events Leading to the First Round Table Conference

India's Role in the Treaty of Versailles (1919):

India's participation in the Treaty of Versailles and membership in the **League of Nations** gave it international recognition, though domestically, it remained a British colony with fragmented sovereignty.

Simon Commission Protests (1928):

The commission's exclusion of Indian representatives led to widespread protests, culminating in the drafting of the **Nehru Report** and the INC's adoption of **Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence)** as its goal in 1929.

8. The First Round Table Conference (1930): A Milestone in Negotiations

The **First Round Table Conference**, held in London from **November 12, 1930, to January 19, 1931**, was convened to address India's constitutional future. It was a unique event where diverse Indian political factions and British officials engaged in direct dialogue.

Participation:

- The conference saw representatives from across India, including:
 - The **Indian National Congress (INC)**, representing the majority of nationalist aspirations.
 - The **All-India Muslim League**, advocating for minority safeguards.
 - Delegates from **princely states**, minority communities, and other interest groups.

- This inclusive representation marked a significant effort to address India's diverse concerns.

Discussions:

- **Federal Structure:** Proposals for integrating princely states and British provinces into a federal government.
- **Minority Rights:** Safeguards for minority communities were extensively debated.
- **Provincial Autonomy and Franchise:** Steps toward greater Indian self-governance were considered.

Outcome: While no definitive resolutions were reached, the conference highlighted the importance of collaboration between India's political factions and the British government. It also laid the groundwork for future negotiations, showcasing the collective resolve of Indian leaders to shape their nation's destiny.

Conclusion

The First Round Table Conference symbolized a new phase in India's journey toward independence. The participation of multiple political parties and communities underscored a unified demand for constitutional reform, even as differing visions for India's future persisted. This event marked the beginning of a critical dialogue that would ultimately lead to India's liberation from colonial rule.

Citations

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[Read the full article here](#)

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