Lecture 5
Partition of British India

Introduction

1. The sporadic movements, protests and rebellions that started immediately after East India Company's occupation of Bengal continued throughout the British rule. Initial protests were against some of the decisions or actions of the East India Company or the British Government. As time passed, these protests and movements gained momentum and took the form of "Quit India" movement.

2. As the British finally left, the sub-continent was partitioned into two independent nation states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan at the midnight between 14 and 15 August 1947. A series of events led to the partition of British India.

Nationalist Movement Against British Rule

3. **Swadeshi Movement 1905 to 1917**. The Swadeshi Movement started as a reaction to the division of Bengal. Petitions, speeches, public meetings, and press campaigns were the main form of protest before the Swadeshi movement was launched. However, the Swadeshi Movement called for boycotting the foreign goods including Manchester cloth and salt from Liverpool. Interestingly, the boycott encountered the greatest visible success on the practical and popular level.

The song, Amar Sonar Bangla was written by Rabindranath Tagore in protest against Bengal's partition that later became the national anthem of Bangladesh. In Calcutta session of 1906, under the leadership of Dadabhai Naoroji, Congress adopted 'Swaraj' as the Goal of Indian people. In response to the Swadeshi movement the partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911 by Lord Hardinge.

4. **The Khilafat Movement 1919 to 1924**. The Ottoman Empire was defeated in the First World War and the harsh terms of the Treaty of Sevres (1920) was felt by the Muslims as a great insult. So, the Muslims in India launched the Khilafat Movement which was jointly led by the Khilafat leaders and the Congress.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, M.A. Ansari, Saifuddin Kitchlew and the Ali brothers {Shaukat Ali (1873-1938) and Mohamed Ali Jauhar (1878-1931)} were the prominent leaders of this movement. Subsequently, the Khilafat Movement merged with the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920.

5. **Non-cooperation Movement 1920**. The Non-Cooperation Movement was launched on 5th September 1920 by the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in the wake of a series of events including the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. However, the movement was called off because of Chauri Chaura incident of 1922.

Political Developments from 1929 to 1947

6. **Call for full Independence of India**. The Indian National Congress, on 19 December 1929, passed the historic 'Purna Swaraj' (total independence) resolution at its Lahore session. A public declaration was made on 26 January 1930.

7. **Idea of a Separate Homeland for Muslims**. In his presidential address to the Muslim League session at Allahabad in 1930, Dr Allama Iqbal, a poet-politician demanded the establishment of a confederated India to include a Muslim state consisting of Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sindh, and Balochistan.

8. **Government of India Act 1935**. Owing to the growing demand for self-governance and constitutional reforms, the British government passed the Government of India act in 1935 that came into effect in 1937. It provided for:

a. Establishment of an All-India Federation consisting of provinces and princely states as units.

b. Powers was divided in terms of three lists—Federal List (Centre with 59 items), Provincial List (with 54 items) and the Concurrent List (with 36 items).

c. The franchise was expanded to 14% of the population from 3%.

d. A federal court was established.

e. Separate electorates were provided for Muslims, Sikhs and others

f. Residuary powers were given to the Viceroy. Governor enjoyed critical emergency powers.

However, the federation never came into being as the princely states did not join it.

9. **Lahore Resolution of 1940**. In the Muslim League Council's annual conference held on 23 March 1940, the Chief Minister of Bengal Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haq put forward a proposal related to the interests of Muslims in this sub-continent. The proposal was adopted, with Muhammad Ali Jinnah as chair. That proposal is known as historic 'Lahore resolution.' The main features of Lahore Resolution were:

a. Autonomous and sovereign independent states to be formed with the Muslim majority regions in the North-Westem and Eastern India.

b. Sufficient measures must be taken in the constitution to ensure the rights and interests of the minority groups after discussing with them.

Lahore Resolution envisaged the formation of two sovereign states comprising of two Muslim majority regions. In 1946, in the 'Delhi Muslim Legislators Convention', the plan of more than one states was dropped and one Pakistan plan was adopted.

10. **Role of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose**. Subhas Chandra Bose known as Netaji joined the Indian National Congress in 1921. He was a strong propagator of complete Swaraj and was in favour of the use of force to gain it. During the World War II, he escaped from the country in 1941 to Germany via Afghanistan and the Soviet Union to fight against the British. He is believed to have died in a plane crash in Taiwan in August 1945.

11. **Quit India Movement 1942**. The All India Congress Committee met in Bombay in August 1942 and ratified the 'Quit India' resolution. Gandhi called for 'Do or Die'. Gandhi, members of the Congress Working Committee and other Congress leaders were arrested by the British Government the next day. The arrest of Gandhi and the Congress leaders led to mass demonstrations throughout India. Thousands were killed and injured in the wake of the 'Quit India' movement. The 'Quit India' movement, more than anything, united the Indian people against British rule.

Partition of India

12. After World War II, the British government recognised that her devastated economy would not be able maintain an over-extended empire. Accordingly, a Cabinet Mission was sent to India in March 1946 to work out a constitution for India. The Mission faced a major obstacle. While the Muslim League wanted a separate sovereign Muslim state Pakistan, the Congress wanted a united India.

13. Failing to reconcile, the Cabinet Mission proposed its own plan which rejected the Muslim League demand for a separate state. As the reconciliation efforts failed, Muhammad Ali Jinnah declared 16 August 1946 as the Direct Action Day. Muslims were asked to 'suspend all business' on that day to support the demand for Pakistan. On the other hand, the Hindu popular opinion rallied round the anti-Pakistan slogan. Disturbances started on the morning of 16 August when League volunteers forced Hindu shopkeepers in North Calcutta to close their shops and Hindus retaliated by obstructing the passage of League's processions which resulted in severe clash between Muslims and Hindus that left some 4,000 people dead and a further 100,000 homeless.

As riots spread to other cities and the number of casualties escalated, the leaders of the Congress Party, who had initially opposed Partition, began to see it as the only way to solve the problem.

By March 1947, a new viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten, arrived in Delhi. He announced that independence would be brought forward to August that year, presenting politicians with an ultimatum that gave them little alternative but to agree to the creation of two separate states.

Pakistan – its eastern and western wings separated by around 1,700 kilometres of Indian territory – celebrated independence on August 14 that year; India did so the following day. The new borders, which split the key provinces of the Punjab and Bengal in two, were officially approved on August 17. They had been drawn up by a Boundary Commission, led by British lawyer Cyril Radcliffe.

With the partition, there began one of the greatest migrations in human history, as millions of Muslims trekked to West and East Pakistan while millions of Hindus and Sikhs headed in the opposite direction. Many hundreds of thousands never made it.

Fifteen million refugees poured across the borders to regions completely foreign to them. In addition to India’s partition, the provinces of Punjab and Bengal were divided, causing catastrophic riots and claiming the lives of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike.

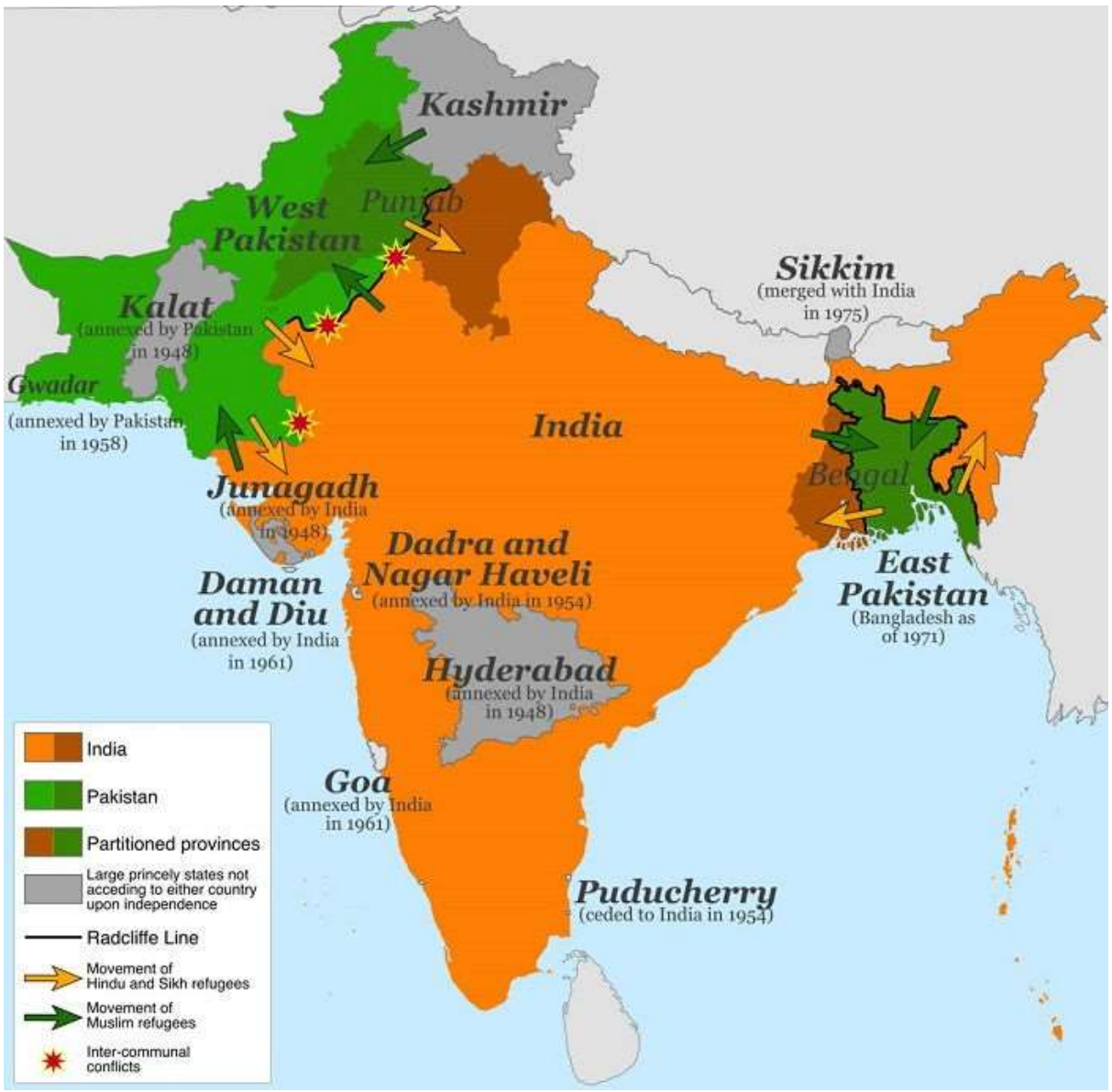
(Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, also called Massacre of Amritsar, incident on April 13, 1919, in which British troops fired on a large crowd of unarmed Indians in an open space known as the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in the Punjab region (now in Punjab state) of India, killing several hundred people and wounding many hundreds more.)

(In Chauri Chaura, Uttar Pradesh, a violent mob set fire to a police station killing 22 policemen during a clash between the police and protesters of the movement).

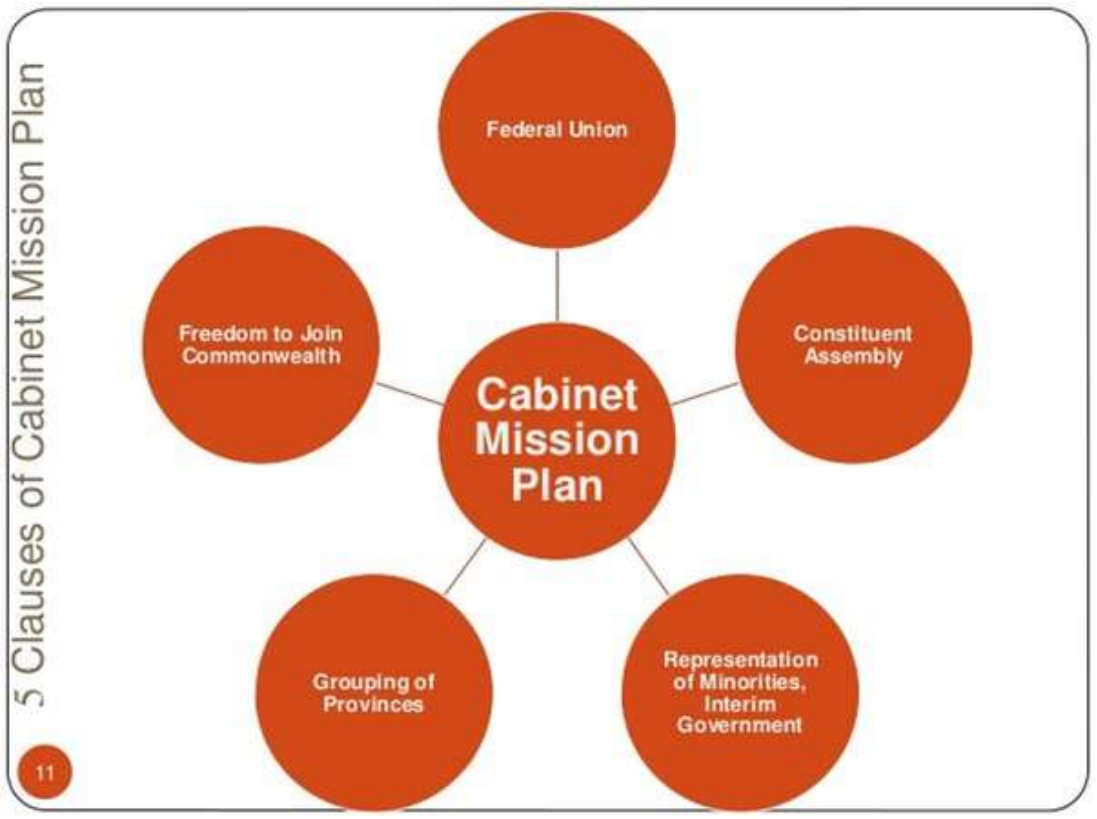
Non-cooperation movement focused on abolishing the use of British products, declining or resigning from British posts, educational institutions, prohibiting government regulations, courts, etc.

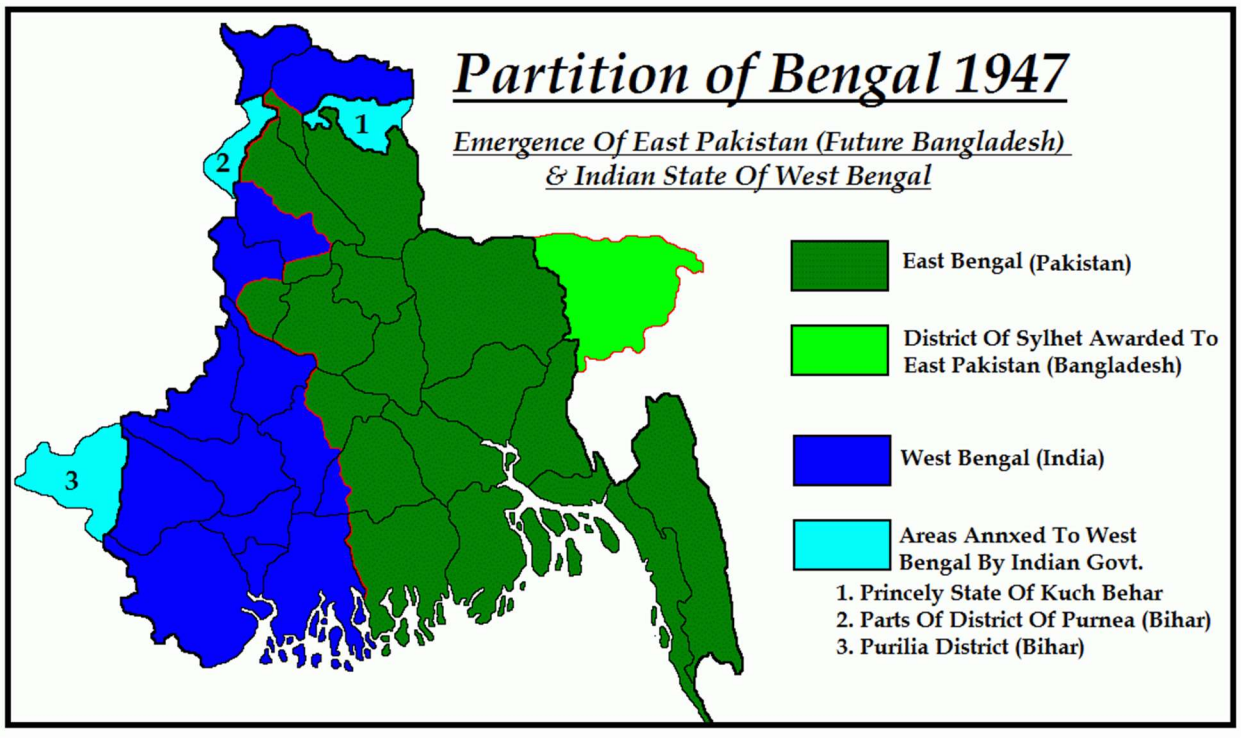






Movement of Refugees


5 Clauses of Cabinet Mission Plan
Federal Union
Freedom to Join Commonwealth
Cabinet Mission Plan
Constituent Assembly
Grouping of Provinces
Representation of Minorities, Interim Government
11


Partition of Bengal 1947
Emergence Of East Pakistan (Future Bangladesh)
& Indian State Of West Bengal
1
2
3
East Bengal (Pakistan)
District Of Sylhet Awarded To East Pakistan (Bangladesh)
West Bengal (India)
Areas Annxed To West Bengal By Indian Govt.
1. Princely State Of Kuch Behar
2. Parts Of District Of Purnea (Bihar)
3. Purilia District (Bihar)



Partition of Punjab



Partition of India



Partition of India



Jalianwalabagh Massacre Memorial