

Why 1947 Boundary Commission awards for Punjab, Bengal irked India

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On August 17, 1947, two days after Independence, the award of the Boundary Commissions for the partition of Punjab and Bengal was announced.



[ref: tribune India]

What were the two Boundary Commissions?

- **Sir Cyril John Radcliffe**, a British lawyer, was appointed Chairman of two boundary commissions in Punjab and Bengal in June 1947, with the task of drawing up India's and Pakistan's new borders.
- The boundary commissions of **Punjab and Bengal** also included **two nominees each of the Indian National Congress and Muslim League respectively**.
 - The **Punjab commission** had Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan, Justice Teja Singh, Justice Din Mohammad and Justice Muhammad Munir as members.
 - The **Bengal commission** comprised Justice CC Biswas, Justice BK Mukherjee, Justice Abu Saleh Akram and Justice SA Rehman.

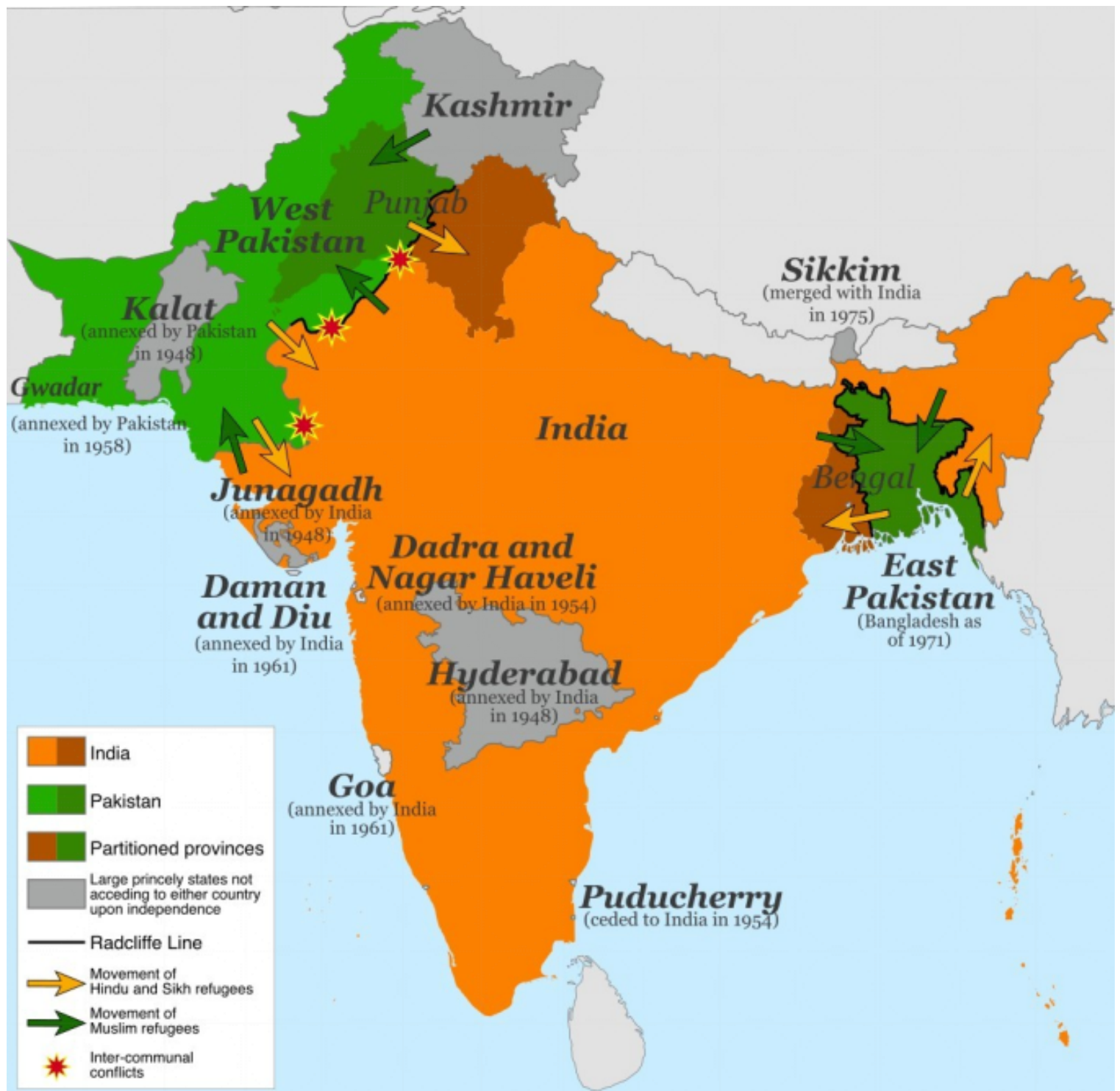
Bengal:

- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru protested against the award of **Chittagong hill Tracts** to Pakistan (East Pakistan, now Bangladesh).
 - Then Indian Minister of Justice B R Ambedkar and Industry and Supply Minister Syama Prasad Mukherjee proposed to bring the **Chittagong Hill Tracts issue to the United Nations (UNO)**.
- He said that he had never considered that the allocation of **Chittagong Hill Tracts** to East Bengal was possible under the terms of reference of the boundary commission.
- The area has **97 per cent population** of Buddhists and Hindus.
- Lord Mountbatten defended the award, stating that the **Karnaphuli River**, which flows through the hill tract, needed to be properly supervised by the port because the Chittagong district and the hill tracts have strong economic ties.

- The joint note of the two ministers (**B R Ambedkar and S P Mukherjee**) pointed out that the decision of the award is “**unjust and unfair**” and against the **fundamental policy of the partition**.

Punjab:

- Nehru stated that he believed the **Sikhs**, who posed a particularly challenging issue, would be **negatively impacted** by the appointment of a boundary commission in the Punjab.
- **Liaquat Ali Khan** said that there would be a negative reaction among Muslims if the government pursued this policy.
 - He said that as Prime Minister, he felt it was his duty to **stand up for the rights of the Sikhs in West Punjab** as much as the Indian leaders did for the Sikhs in East Punjab.
 - He emphasized that full religious freedom is allowed.
- In **Sardar Patel's opinion**, a massive population transfer was the only way to resolve the Punjab award.



[ref: historyhub.info]