



The Lakshmi Mittal and Family

SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Rediscovering Partition from New Perspectives *Panelist Transcript*

Moderator

- **Jennifer Leaning**, Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Panelists

- **Ian Talbot**, Professor of History and Director of the Centre for Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies, University of Southampton
- **Yaqoob Bangash**, Assistant Professor, Information Technology University, Lahore

The impact of the 1947 Partition still ripples throughout South Asia, 73 years later. However, our knowledge of this historic event is constantly being reevaluated by academics and researchers who have continued to illuminate the details of what occurred. This panel explores how new research efforts help us understand the full depth of the history and legacy of Partition.

BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION:

Chelsea Ferrell: Hello and welcome to today's seminar on Rediscovering Partition from New Perspectives. I'm Chelsea Ferrell, the Assistant Director at the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute at Harvard University. The mission of the institute is to engage through interdisciplinary research to advance and deepen the understanding of critical issues relevant to South Asia and its relationship with the world.

As part of this mission, the institute is sponsoring today's event that will explore how new research efforts help us to understand the full depth of the history and legacy of partition. Before we get started, we have a couple of housekeeping items for today. During the question and answer session, you can submit questions directly to moderators by the Q&A function on Zoom. There will be a short survey automatically sent to you at the end of the session, we would ask that you kindly fill this out. Finally, today's session will be recorded.

Without further ado, I'd like to introduce the moderator of today's panel, Dr. Jennifer Leaning. Dr. Leaning is the professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health and a senior fellow at the Harvard FXB Center. Dr. Leaning has field experience in the assessment of issues of public health, human rights and international humanitarian law in a range of crisis situations. She's been studying the 1947 partition through the lens of forced migration and contemporary humanitarian approaches. Dr. Leaning, thank you so much for being with us today.

Dr. Leaning: Thank you. Thank you, Chelsea, and good day, to everybody joining us. And it's a big privilege to be moderating a discussion between two very thoughtful and distinguished colleagues and I will introduce each of them now, and then turn the floor over to the first. So, Professor Ian Talbot is a Professor at the University of Southampton in Britain. He's Director of the Center for Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies there and he has written probably more prolifically and profoundly about the partition situation and on both sides of the Punjab border and extending as well, even to the eastern side of the Indian subcontinent. And, our focus today is going to be particularly around the Punjab. So that will be the topic that Professor Talbot will be talking about.

And the second very distinguished guest is Professor Yaqoob Bangash, who is a historian. He started out as being a historian, rather than turning it to later in life and he is an expert in the politics and policies that relate to the Punjab, both sides. And his perspective will be from Pakistan, but I know from experience, he's deeply steeped in the Indian side of this history as well.

And, the way we will be proceeding is, I will turn the floor over to Professor Talbot, he will speak for about 10 to 15 minutes, I will then ask him a question. And he will reply in however best form he chooses. And then we will turn to Professor Bangash and he will talk again for 10 or 15 minutes, I'll have a question for him, he will reply. And then we will start again with a topic that Professor Talbot will be talking about and then we'll move quickly to the topic that Professor Bangash will be talking about. And then we're going to mix it up and have the two of them talk back and forth with questions and it's at that point that we'll also entertain questions from the audience.

So, we are going to have a pretty solid introduction to the knowledge and judgment of these two on really expert analysts of the situation of the partition of British India in 1947 but also some of its antecedents and most particularly the consequences that have flown from that cataclysmic event. So, it is my pleasure to introduce Professor Talbot and the floor is yours.

Ian Talbot: Okay, thank you very much. And thank you for this opportunity to address the audience on the issue of looking at partition from new perspectives. I think the starting point really in terms of looking at partition is what is the current state of the literature. And also, what are the concurrent legacies of partition for a subcontinent. I think the first thing to bear in mind is that the literature has undergone successive changes, particularly over the last 20 or 30 years. And it's looking more at the lived experience of partition and the way in which ordinary lives were affected by migration or even those who didn't migrate, their lives were affected by the upheaval. And it's looking at some of these long-term cultural socio-economic and psychological legacies of partition for those people caught up in the event.

Now, when I started writing about partition 40 odd years ago, the emphasis wasn't at all on the lived experience of partition, it was still really about what had caused it. Why did it happen? At the time that I began my research, there had been a shift from looking at the high politics, as it was called, the constitutional negotiations, which mark the final years of British rule more to the region. And, to look at what was happening in the regions that were divided and, particularly, of course, I was looking at Punjab, other people were looking at regions like Bengal, for example, and also they were looking at areas which weren't divided but were still greatly affected by partition, such as areas like Sindh for example, the work of Sarah Ansari in that field. So, that was the beginning really of a movement in the literature away from perhaps why partition happened in terms of the big individuals Gandhi and Nehru, and looking more at the regional politics, which, in a sense, were really important because without the Muslim League breakthrough in the Punjab region, which I was looking at in my research, then Pakistan might have never come into being.

And that was really a crucial question which hadn't been fully explored at the time that I began my research. So, that was the beginning really of these constant sort of changes in approach and new focus on writings of partition, and it reflected in a way both changes in historical wider historiography, but also the availability of new sources and the spreading out of the sources moving away perhaps from just looking at documents, official documents to newspapers to party records. When I was looking at the breakthrough of the Muslim League in Punjab, I was looking at the Punjab Muslim League records which are there now in Karachi. And also, we're looking at these developments from the locality, rather than necessarily from the national level, what has happened, of course, since then, certainly since the 1990s, is this concern with what I would call the new history of partition or the history from below the partition.

In other words, how are ordinary people affected by firstly violence, but also by those who were able to safely relocate across the new international borders, which of course split the two cities in Lahore and Amritsar, which were only about 50 kilometers apart from each other. So, this new border is created and the emphasis now is on how are people, who crossed that border safely, how are they able to pick up the threads of their lives again, what were the factors in terms of perhaps government assistance or in terms of their own, if you like self-resettlement of why did these factors come into play in terms of their ability to self-settle? Some ended up in refugee camps, other people quite quickly acquired property and reestablished business life and activities and professional life.

So, immediately what you're getting there is the beginnings of a differential experience of partition in which there are some who are victims who can't recover the losses, the psychological, the material losses of partition and others

who seem to be able to reestablish old patterns of work and indeed their fortune. And that's really, I think, the way in which the literature is moved today is looking at this differential aspect of the long-term legacy of partition and resettlement. And it's interrogating both official narratives which were produced by the government of India and the government of Pakistan about this whole rehabilitation process, and it's also interrogating, to an extent, community narratives, which may establish a particular community-dominant narrative in Punjab, for example. It's often the fact that Punjab is as a whole, where there are these great differences across caste, class, and gender in the experience of resettlement, but nonetheless, the dominant Punjabi refugee narrative is that it was through enterprise, entrepreneurship that Punjabis were able to recover from partition and sometimes this is juxtaposed with the constructed view perhaps say the Bengali, who was less able to recover from the ravages of partition because they lack this enterprise.

Now both these official and community narratives, the Punjabi exception of this, are really based on the colonial stereotypes of Punjab, which were internalized and which were used perhaps to try and justify community practices and certainly to give a sense of a success story that was being told in terms of on both sides of Punjab of this massive dislocation involving probably 11 or 12 million people crossing the Punjab border and yet this region was able to recover from this dislocation. And of course, this dislocation had been created by violence, which had been endemic in the region, certainly from March 1947 onwards, and it left large areas of urban Punjab on both sides of the border sort of severely damaged. 10,000 houses had been destroyed in Amritsar in the period leading up to partition, 4,000 in Lahore, there had also been great destruction in Multan. So, you can see how partition is coming on the top of this earlier period, partition migration is coming on top of this earlier period of physical violence and destruction which goes on for months leading up to partition and, indeed, of course, is a contributory factor in the decision at the higher levels of politics to actually both partition India, but also to partition Punjab, along with the partition of India. So, this is where the literature has evolved I think over the last two or three decades, and in a sense, this literature has helped to break down some of the stereotypes, which were earlier created about the partition experience.

So, for example, looking at older testimonies, you very quickly come to a conclusion that all communities had their victims, all communities had their aggressors and the view which is sometimes expressed in publications or demonizing a particular community, whether it's the Sikhs for violence against Muslims in East Punjab, or whether it's in East Punjab demonizing the Muslims and saying that it was Muslim violence in West Punjab that maybe led to retaliation in East Punjab. So, you can see how these constructed narratives of partition are beginning to be queried by looking from particularly a localized angle. And indeed, the emphasis is not just on the individual, but the research emphasis has been very much on locality. So, there's been studies of, as I did, comparing Lahore and Amritsar and the impact of partition and the lead up to partition in both of those neighboring cities, but there's also been work done on cities such as Lalitpur, modern-day Faisalabad in Pakistan and Ludhiana in Indian Punjab and comparing and migrations in those two areas and seeing how communities reconstructed in some senses their economies in the different posts border setting after migration. And there's been work on other cities comparing how they developed in Pakistan in Sialkot, Gujranwala for example. Again, looking at the different trajectories which communities and cities had after partition.

So, all of this is building out a multi-textured and layered understanding of partition, which I think is a major advance on some of the stereotypical portrayals that dominated perhaps certainly into the 1980s, if not even beyond the 1980s in writings in both countries. And, I think the final point I really want to make about this is, of course, that understanding the two Punjabs in terms of what they were like before partition is very important as well in terms of contemporary relationships between India and Pakistan in terms of breaking down stereotypes, ensuring that there was a pluralism that actually worked, particularly in rural settings and was disrupted by the politics of 1947 and led to this massive dislocation.

So, the recovery of what Punjab was like before partition, the recovery of also these differences in terms of experiences in the cavities amongst individuals and social classes in groups. All of this I think is the trend forward in partition studies, with respect to Punjab. I've been talking about Punjab because that's the area I've worked on over the last 30 or 40 years but similar themes are emerging. If you look at other areas of the subcontinent, or other cities. If you look at cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, all of these cities, you see, highly differentiated experiences

of refugee rehabilitation. Also, if you look at other regions of India, Sindh for example or UP, you see again, perhaps interconnections which are there in Punjab in terms of migration. This has been brought out in a very recent publication 'Borders of Belonging', which looks at sort of that process. So that's really the state of play I think in terms of literature on partition.

Dr. Leaning: Thank you, that's a pretty elegant summary. I would like you to dive into a particularly interesting topic which you know very well and have written about and others have, which is deconstructing the notion that it was a mass frenzy and a mass frenzy of killing by everybody against everybody, which was part of the horror of partition. Partition had its horrors, its abrupt ones, and its lingering ones, certainly. But this notion that certainly prevail in Indians, that is Indian citizens of the new India, was it in the old ways of looking at it one that was so tinged with shame at how there'd been so much killing and outrage. And Yaqoob, you can speak on the Pakistani side but there's also this question of, how could a society that had, you know, very, very wonderful religious and moral values get so consumed in this period from, let's say March of 1947 until easily the summer of 1948. And, you've looked at this from the Punjab standpoint, and I was hoping you could say a little bit more about this from the perspective that we now understand about how the violence was provoked and how it was directed.

Ian Talbot: Yes. I mean, the violence was not sort of irrational, spontaneous, frenzied killings. Where violence occurred, it was very much with a political purpose, directed for a particular purpose. Some people would say, ethnic cleansing lay behind a lot of the violence that was occurring in the Punjab region as people were in a way trying to establish, and this includes the violence leading up to the publication of the boundary, or establishing dominance in a particular area, and the way to do this was through the use of violence.

And, I think that a lot of the actual perpetrators of violence were paid 'gundas' from criminal classes, they weren't always ordinary individuals, there were ex-servicemen who had been trained, there were members of paramilitary organizations also who undertook violence and all of this occurred within the breakdown of functioning administration. And I think that that's important because it enables people to act with impunity and that I think was a key factor in the violence. So, it's a political struggle for dominance and obviously each individual episode of violence might have its own catalyst and it might be the spread of rumors, it might be repaying old scores, off that is a factoring violence. It may be that it's a particularly disturbed area anyway with large criminality.

And that will be an interesting way to look at it in future to say were areas that had high crime rates in the years leading up to partition were these areas that were particularly disturbed? I mean, obviously people like Steven Wilkinson has tried to link areas of disturbance environments with military service, active military service during the Second World War. But, I think if you looked at some of the first information reports from police stations in areas which had high levels of disturbance in 1947, you might find that some of the perpetrators of that were very well known criminal gangs that who had a reputation for cattle lifting and other crimes, perhaps. That was known to the authorities and they were in the paper perhaps or local political groups who wanted to use them in order to try and access dominance within this particular territory. So, I think that is very important, the incidences of environments I know, of course, are not uniform. You have perhaps villages next to each other, one of which has complete massacred population, the other, which is unaffected, you have these sort of differences in the incidences of violence and is that because of local histories, is it because of who the local dominant groups are who might be able to squash violence, others may not want to squash it because it serves their purpose.

You may have all kinds of factors coming into play, it may just be you know that outsiders see a good opportunity to loot a particular community and I've looked for that opportunity for a long time with the breakdown of law and order and also I suppose they could present what they were doing in terms of having social and political support they take this opportunity to do looting and replaying old school. So, it's a very complex process, but it's not that violence is everywhere. If you look at Kotla for example, there was no violence there and a large Muslim community in this is within the eastern Punjab area, that's a princely state survived. So, there are these differences. And also, if you look at oral testimonies, there are many that show individuals protecting people from another community even at the risk of their own lives, these episodes do exist. And perhaps haven't been given the prominence in duration that they may be now likely to be killed, so that there are all of these factors I think play so that.

Dr. Leaning: There's always more work to be done, isn't there?

Ian Talbot: There's always more work to be done. Yes.

Dr. Leaning: Okay. Taking very much from this, Professor Bangash, you will be speaking on a wide range of things, and what I would like to do in terms of our audience here is to say that historians of many periods in many countries in the last 50 years had moved from the high politics to the particularities to not just South Asia that has been subjected to this, I think very positive scrutiny, but it's a bit late in terms of how we're looking at, say, British labor and the rise of the Union movement in Great Britain. There was a whole historiography that basically was about turning over the rocks and seeing what was going on underneath. And you have a very big talent for doing this, for looking at foreground, background, what is revelatory that people haven't actually noticed before. So, I'm very pleased that we can turn the floor over to you and have you speak from your deep knowledge of the documents and the circumstances from not just the Pakistan side but from this side that was actually trying to make sense of and restore order in the very early days. So please, the floor is yours.

Yaqoob Bangash: Thank you very, very much, Jennifer and I'm quite happy to be back on the Mittal Institute's platform again. I should just want to remember how I got interested in partition and it's actually related to you because it's your visit to Pakistan a few years ago when we first met that actually sparked my interest because till that time I thought everything had been done on partition and there was nothing more to actually write on partition because so many books and Ian's, of course, had done similar work on it, Gurharpal Singh and so many others from the 1990s as Ian points out, lots of people had looked at the at the subaltern aspects. So, the high politics and the low politics, everything had been done to a large extent. So, I thought, okay, it's done and dusted, and then if you remember, we went to the Punjab archives, as we went through those rooms that no one had really looked into where things were just thrown in.

Dr. Leaning: Wasn't it incredible? That was so incredible. I totally forgot about that, yeah.

Yaqoob Bangash: Exactly. And, I just, after your visit, when we also were there, we just picked up random books and began to look at them. So, I continue doing that in the months afterward and then saw that wow, there were lots of things that weren't a part of the historiography of partition and that people hadn't really worked on.

So, after you know completely thinking that you know partition had been done and dusted everything had been done, the last word on partition had actually been Britain. Then I, all of a sudden, ended up looking at partition again and by now actually, I've got three or four aspects that actually relate to partition, which we will, of course, talk about in the later times. But let me just pick up from where Ian left. Talking about the violence, and I think what even in the high politics that I think one of the things that has happened since the 1990s, is that we have focused very rightly on the lived experience, on the subaltern experience and how the common people felt because that was completely ignored beforehand.

One reason for that, of course, was, at least from the Pakistani side that I saw, was that a lot of people did not want to talk about the partition. It was too close in the 50s and 60s for them to actually talk about it, and it only takes up till about the 90s that people begin to open up about it. Like, I still remember from my own family like my mom, she's from that generation. She was in college at that time but she doesn't really speak about partition even now and just says, 'Oh yeah, let's just not talk about it.' So, a lot of people just never, never did and I think it took a long time till they got to a certain age, and they began to find the open up. So, at some level, the 80s opening up and early 90s opening up was the right time in that sense too.

But I think what's happened since then is that a lot of the high politics and even the middle tier, and I'll come back to it, has been lost because no one now looks at the high politics, no one now looks at the middle tier. The focus is solely on kind of a locality-based, people-based thing, which of course you know as Ian has also mentioned and others have worked on gives us a very useful understanding of what happened at partition, but doesn't complete the picture.

I'll just give you just a couple of interesting examples which I just saw even in terms of high politics. As a lot of people have written that a lot of the partition violence began after the 15th of August. That's when the ethnic cleansing really picked up, and I found it really fascinating when just randomly looking at some material that I found the very interesting correspondence, which I'm sure Ian knows really well between the Governor of East Punjab, Sir Chandulal, and the Home Minister of East Punjab Swaran Singh. And that was really interesting is that here the governor, the India-appointed Governor, writes to the Home Minister saying Muslims have been killed in large numbers in the Punjab, what are you actually doing about this? And the Home Minister doesn't reply. He writes again, doesn't reply, he writes a third time, then he replies and says, well, it's, it was bound to happen and doesn't really care about it.

So, I think one of the things which again has been lost in this thing, as Ian rightly said, it wasn't spontaneous, and it wasn't that the people in power did not know. I actually think, as compared to rather than saying that it was a breakdown of law and order, it was a very planned breakdown of law and order. Swaran Singh could control this, Swaran Singh chose to look the other way, and he chose to actually say I'm not really going to talk about this, I'm not going to prevent anyone from killing people. This is something that I kind of implicitly agree with, and I think that correspondence very much shows that. In terms of migration, people have worked on the migration from Lyallpur and I found really fascinating is that the migration from Lyallpur perhaps, as far as I've read, might not have happened if the Indian High Commission had not insisted that that happen. Because they wanted people, Hindus and Sikhs from Lyallpur, which was actually a Hindu and Sikh majority city, go to the other side so they could send Muslims these ways. So, a lot of the political High Command and after the 15th of August, a lot of the governments on both East and West Punjab are very, very integral to what happens afterward and, in some ways,, it's very, very planned, very minutely planned.

And the third thing that I just wanted to highlight there is the role of refugees, of course, very recently, a lot of very good and interesting work has come out on the refugees, but I really found it fascinating, in my sort of previous incarnation, I worked on the princely states, and there I found it was fascinating that, let's say this, the princely state of Bahawalpur, nothing, no violence had happened in Bahawalpur till the arrival of refugees. And it was very interesting, so Sir Penderel Moon actually mentioned this in his work that as soon as the Muslim refugees arrived from East Punjab, they saw a Sikh and killed him. And that's how the violence kind of picks up even in place like Bhawalpur. So, there are lots of interesting themes that I think really need to be still picked up in terms of the high politics, which actually inform a lot of what is happening on the ground. I think those kinds of trends really need to be now mixed up. I think we have done both sides independently, but that needs to be brought together.

Now, coming to the interesting documents that I found on the floor of that very interesting room that we saw about three years ago, I think, and that was really fascinating was, one of the things which I which I saw was this very interesting document called the Punjab Partition Council and the Punjab Partition Committee and it's minutes. And what that really showed was that a lot of the discussion of how the Punjab was going to be split was had taken place, and what I found really fascinating is that a very few works even mentioned it, let alone detailing what it did. It's really a footnote, it's really mentioned in passing because of course the Boundary Commission gets the bulk of the focus. And through that through looking through that document, there were several important elements of the partition history that I think the partition narrative that had actually been forgotten, and I thought that must be taken into consideration because that again shows us interesting elements of what was happening there.

So, the first thing there, of course, is the question of cooperation and I found it fascinating that at the height of summer 1947, you had regional politicians working together to find, to amicably, split the Punjab. And that, again you know, Ian's work and a couple of people have pointed it out that it's not necessarily that what was happening in the center was being replicated in the provinces and even Ayesha Jalal actually writes about that the Punjab had to really kind of take in partition as a given, rather than having any active, proactive role in making it happen. But if you look at the partition committee, that actually shows that a lot of people were cooperating, a lot of people were agreeing on a number of things and this was continuing throughout the summer as violence was picking up there was still elements of agreement. And, if I could just point out a couple of elements of agreement and I really found them fascinating because they've been kind of mentioned on and off somewhere, but no one had really made a big

deal about this. So, for example, both East and West Punjab had agreed that they were going to jointly take out, jointly have police training for a number of years and this I found really fascinating, police were largely Muslim, it had been politicized to a large extent. In here you have the Inspectors General of Police from both Eastern West Punjab agreeing and saying oh, in East Punjab, in Phillaur, they will do the trading for a couple of years to come and that's completely fine. Then, which was really fascinating was that electricity was under a joint control for nearly a year after partition. And I really found it fascinating that it's only towards the middle of 1948 that East Punjab begins to realize why are we giving electricity to West Punjab, they haven't paid us and then the whole thing kind of blows up. But 'til that time, I found it fascinating that you know from the Mandi hydroelectric dam, the main line comes through Lahore and then goes to each through East Punjab. So, that also shows us that, yes, there was a line that divided them on the 17th of August, but that line didn't really become firm or anything for years to come. It was a very fluid thing.

And then the third thing, which is a very small thing, but I still found it really fascinating was that West Punjab is telling East Punjab that oh, if you need a printing press, you can still use the printing press in Lahore. And this, why did I find it fascinating was, that East Punjab government was going to move to Simla, where the government of India had their printing press. So, they could have easily said, well, now you're going there, you can use the Government of India's as one but they said, no, no, no, if you really want a printing to be done, just send us your things and you can print this here. The same thing goes, and I've now done a whole article on it about Punjab University, they actually wanted to jointly run Punjab University till of course sadly, the Registrar of Punjab University gets murdered in Lahore. So, there's a lot of cooperation that is actually taking place on the ground and the grand picture of these two parties or three parties, for that matter, in the in the Punjab at each other's heads. That's true, to a certain extent, but at the regional level, at the provincial level, the politicians are cooperating, the civil servants are cooperating and it's only when the violence, just really takes off after the 15th of August, and it becomes practically impossible to actually jointly work on a number of issues that a lot of issues, end up in conflict. But even then, I really find it fascinating that it's really the summer of 48 that that umbilical cord is actually cut. So, I think that's a very important thing to look at.

The other thing that the Punjab partition committee shows is, and again, this is the first time that local ICS officers and, you know, it goes back again in a very interesting discussion how there are ICS officers in the whole Punjab account of things, which is another discussion. But this is the first time that Indian Hindu and Muslim ICS officers actually take over, and this is kind of, one of the arguments that I write in my paper is this is the setting up of these new states or East and West Pakistan in July 1947 because for the first time, they don't have a British ICS officer above them to whom they are reporting and they are the ones who are actually making the final decision.

So, the Chief Secretary designate of East Punjab, the Chief Secretary designate of West Punjab, on the one side a Hindu on the other side a Muslim, they are the ones who actually deciding and really doing a very interesting procurement kind of a process for the new provinces and, by extension, the new states. And the way they do it is also again really fascinating that they agree on most of the things and it's only about four or five very contentious issues that they disagree on. And this, again, you know, brings us into what Joya Chatterji, and it's very sad that she is not here with us with us today, but she has called this a secularization of the process, that were after a time even though this is a very communal decision to split the Punjab, but the process, in fact, if you look at the nuts and bolts of the process that becomes secularized to a large extent, and this the way the Punjab was actually divided is, I think, a very good example of that secularization of the process. So yes, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims all want to kill each other, they are at loggerheads but then when you come to these civil servants and the actual nuts and bolts of dividing the Punjab, it's a very secular process, and it's a process to set up a new province. It is a process to set up a new country, for that matter, and I think that, again, has not been actually dealt with to a large extent.

So, these are the, and I don't want to go on and on, but I, but I think there are certain stands in terms of how partition was looked at through this. Then the partition committee is really the middle tier of the partition saga, which has been missing from our analysis because we know the top politicians, we know the local people. Well, what's happening in this middle tier, because these are the real, these ICS officers that I've looked at, these are the ones who are actually conducting the partition, but they're also being partitioned at the same time. And what's really fascinating is, and I've given examples of several cases, several personal cases, even they are very confused also

what's happening. So, this is very fascinating to look at that all these different tiers, how they understand partition, what is their part in it, and how do they affect it. And what is fascinating is, these are the people who are affected perhaps by the end of it more than the central politicians, but their narrative was completely lost up till this time. So, you know, in the grand scheme of things, there are all these different nuts and bolts that I think if we begin to piece together even now we'd be able to understand more about the partition and Ian's actually work has shown, understand how the new countries were actually set up and how actually East and West Punjab were set up. So, the partition, as Vazira Zamindar has actually spoken about the long partition, more from the perspective of the UP and migration, it's the long partition for both the Punjabs also, and I think that needs to be recovered to a large extent in the narrative, and I think they are these you know bits and pieces which have not been looked at.

Dr. Leaning: Yes, thank you, it in the discussions we've had and what you share in your in your sense of the proceedings of the partition committee and then the council suggests that there's a level of professionalism in this administrative class on both sides of the new border that is retained and a mutual respect. I mean, there are little sparks of acrimony in the minutes, but the minutes themselves are beautifully written and decorous and formal and polite. And it's that it contrasts markedly with what, to some extent, is perceived because of the high narrative or the people's narrative as one that is complete frenzy. I mean, these are people that are speaking carefully and talking carefully with each other and if you could if you could say a little bit more about Punjab University and why it turned out to be so complicated? And what the final solution was, at least in terms of the ultimate solution? I'm not entirely sure but how they, in this these months of talking, determine that, in fact, this is not a divisible problem.

Yaqoob Bangash: Yeah, thank you for that, Jennifer. Punjab University is a really fascinating case because it is one of the most contentious ones. And I always thought and said, well they've agreed to split everything more or less, but why Punjab University? And, as far as I've been able to understand, one of the main reasons why have Punjab University becomes contentious is that it's one institution that rather than the government setting it up, a lot of the people had a role in setting it up and all three communities had a very integral role in setting it up. Because, of course, the whole history of Punjab University goes back to the Anjuman-e-Punjab and this whole movement of setting up this vernacular university.

And, what is different about Punjab University is that is the first university in the British Indian Empire that from its inception examines in the vernacular languages and it's actually set up for the promotion of vernacular languages. Bombay, Calcutta and Madras never did that at that time. So, there is this great sense of pride in terms of the people of the Punjab that we have set this wonderful university that not only teaches English but teaches in Arabic, in Sanskrit, in Persian and in Punjabi, of course. So, I think that makes it a very special kind of an institution.

Now, when it comes to splitting it of course the Hindus and Sikhs want this split on one side going to India, and the Muslims wanted kept on one side. It's a very long kind of a narrative but the short version is that when they get legal advice from the central partition committee and the Government of India, they say, well, it cannot be split because it is its own body corporate. But what is fascinating about this is that the people who leave Punjab University, they go to India and they set up a parallel Punjab University and they call it Punjabi University. So, if you go to, and again I really found it fascinating that if you go to the Punjab University Chandigarh's website, it doesn't even, the short description they have, doesn't even mention partition. It just says it began in Lahore and they did move to Chandigarh without mentioning well, actually there was this huge partition and actually it did not move to to Chandigarh. And, this is fascinating because a number of colleges, of course, moved. So, you know, there was Lyallpur Khalsa College and there were a couple of other colleges that actually, practically, except for the physical buildings, the whole college moved to India. So, the Lyallpur Khalsa College is still called the Lyallpur Khalsa College, even though it is now in East Punjab. But the Punjab University is the only one that actually both sides' claim it was set up exactly at the same time in 1882, and both of them came its legacy. And that I found was, again, a very particular kind of a Punjabi narrative, so to speak, and I think that really tells you about how, even in this in this middle tier, there was a sense of being Punjabi, and this Punjab University kind of exhibited that and that is what was being showcased.

So, this you know perhaps one can even call it this Punjabi resistance to being split, for that there was this one very small example of the Punjab University and they really tried at the beginning, they really tried to have Punjab

University on both sides and it was very sad that the Registrar of Punjab University, because he was Sikh, when he visited Lahore, he was stabbed to death actually right outside his office and that's when the East Punjab government decided no, no, no, we need to set something up completely. But before that they really were fine with the university physically being at Lahore and then examining and even affiliating colleges on both sides. And, what I really find fascinating is that in October 47, they get a re-affiliation letter the university at Lahore, they get a real affiliation letter from a college in Jammu. And this is right before Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, you know, the whole kind of battle over the state begins. So, it's really interesting, also from the idea of Jammu.

Legally speaking, Jammu and Kashmir is an independent country by October 47 but yet it still wants to affiliate with that college, still wants to affiliate with Punjab University. So, there are always examples, and I think there must be more, it's from that heap of lots of documents, I only picked up one document and I ended up working on it for a number of years. Imagine you know what else is in there. One of the other fascinating things which I think if you remember were these fascinating deputy commissioner meeting minutes that were held every couple of months and they even notate how many people were wandering in the streets, which I found really funny at one level and say, how are they counting those people.

So, the refugees wandering in the streets, they even had a number about that. So, this whole idea about really trying to understand what is happening for this middle tier trying to make sense of it and secularizing it and actually cooperating, the level of cooperation between East and West Punjab, even after the massacres, is I think, to some extent, very remarkable actually. Because, they shouldn't be able to see each other's faces but the meetings of the Punjab partition committee, actually, the last one is about 1958 or something. So, it's really interesting that they keep meeting and they keep just discussing and they keep solving problems and there's still some issues and they go back and forth, and it's very interesting in how the two Punjabs, at some level, are integral to the split and are integrity to the antagonism between India and Pakistan. But, at the same level, are actually interesting examples of cooperation in some very important and critical ways. So, it's a very mixed bag as Ian was actually saying, and I think we are still learning more and more about this even 73 years down the line.

Dr. Leaning: I agree, and I think it's good that you're both speaking this way because the sinews and the tissue that form the connections of the society across this arbitrary border were very difficult to sever abruptly and in many ways who wanted them to be severed is another question, because there was a lot of anguish and enormous friendships and professional ties across this very complex country. I mean the state of Punjab and it's, so there is a poignancy about the partition committee and the council and the way you trace it that I think is a very good, real, but also symbolic statement about what if, what might, how these people actually were behaving in their educated and responsible roles throughout this high level of violence and carnage.

I have there two and probably some more, very good questions from the audience. So, what I will say now for our next move is can you keep your remarks to about five minutes about the second topic you want to talk about. Is that ok? And then, we will have some discussion between you, the two of you, and then I will open up for the response from questions to the audience. Is that okay? So, let's, okay, so Professor Ian Talbot, it is back to you for five minutes of your next vast topics that you would like to cover.

Ian Talbot: Okay, thank you. What I'm wanting to look at now is how this impending 75th anniversary of partition will be both commemorated and what its impact will be on the historiography. Because a lot of these anniversaries in partition have actually been periods of time when there's been a major rethink in terms of the understanding of partition. If you go back to 1997, that's really the time that the 50th anniversary, where people began to think seriously about history from below, and I think it's not a coincidence that that was a fact. So, how are people going to look at partition on the 75th anniversary? And, I'm interested really in three particular areas, which I'll cover very briefly.

Firstly, I think that there is still more work that can be done on how migrants were able to recover from the losses of partition and how they're effective times, both with people from their own district they may be living alongside, but also perhaps with officials who came from that districts, how that impacts on issues like evacuee property, for example. And I think that that element could certainly be a dimension that could be looked at in urban context and

in a comparative way. You could look at how this operates, for example in Delhi, how it operates perhaps in Lahore, Amritsar but also the way in which it might operate in a totally different context say in Eastern India, in Calcutta. How do these ties actually, how are they operationalized and how effective are they? Are effective ties, in other words, effective in enabling you to resettle? That's the first thing which I think is of interest.

The second thing which I think certainly is of interest to me, is looking at the environmental aspects of partition, which really hadn't been covered that much. You get lots of accounts in personal testimonies of the dangers of crossing bloodied rivers, crisscrossing Punjab. You also get some accounts in newspapers of refugees who when they've made it to their new home, actually, a time when the house they are in collapses under the pressure of the monsoon rains because the house is being damaged and they've got nowhere else to stay. And there's a lot of press recording around it often about the anniversary of partition, partly because it coincides obviously with the monsoon period, but I was reading quite recently actually about August 1948 and how 18 refugees in a house that had been abandoned by Hindus in the Shalambi area of Lahore, collapsed and killed them all under the pressure of the monsoon rains. And, as a result of this, 2000 refugees stormed the Lahore municipal corporation the next day and vandalized in protest that the fact that nothing was being done to shore up these properties. And I think that that's an interesting short environmental aspect of partition and it feeds into this whole issue of differential experiences. Why is it that some refugees are more vulnerable to environmental risk, perhaps than others? And I think that's an interesting question that could be looked at.

Going forward, you could say, how did the local government and urban planning responses to this mass migration unprecedented, 43% of the population of Lahore were refugees 1951. How did they respond to this and did the planning processes that they should use to actually establish what might be called a kind of long term sort of environmental vulnerability, which has been shown very much the day you know in terms of flooding. monsoon time but also air pollution. How is the planning in response to this refugee influx? How does that create perhaps long-term problems?

The other area I just want to very briefly mention, which is new technology, which struck me when it was pointed out, actually by Rakesh Ankit former, a PhD student of mine. He's talking about project that's done, which is being launched literally from Oxford University and has Yasmin Khan, who I'm sure Yaqoob knows very well as one of its sponsors. And this is a project which is looking forward to the 75th anniversary, in terms of wanting to undertake 75 interviews with partition survivors, as they call them, but then wants to take these people back to their childhood locations through the use of virtual reality technology. And under this project is also aimed at setting up an interactive, virtual reality documentary experience which will put the viewer in the shoes of a 1947 migrant and the aim is to distribute this to film festivals and museums and the final element is obviously a documentary for younger members of the diaspora, who are very interested in partition and in the migrations of their grandparents but who really don't know anything about it, and it's a means of introducing them to the lived experience of partition. So, in a sense that this is an academic cum activists project using new technology in order really to further some of the aims, perhaps, of the new history which I was talking about, which has emerged in the past three decades. I think that's something that's very interesting as we look forward to the 75th anniversary.

Dr. Leaning: It's fascination. It's excellent and new technologies are being used in a number of ways in terms of crowdsourcing and it's a... I would just say, this last one with the virtual reality, somebody should do a human subjects review of it though, in terms of how shocking it might be for these old people to have a virtual reality. So, that will need to be carefully curated but that I'm sure is occurring to the people who are doing this and it's, it will be just riveting thing to have for 75th. Thank you. So, Yaqoob, five minutes about the topic you were prepared to talk 10 or 15 minutes about but if you could collapse it a bit, that would be wonderful.

Yaqoob Bangash: Sure, of course. Well, I just want to begin, so I'll just speak on to do two things. First is from where actually I left off the issue of technology. Of course, a lot of people are using it, but I want to kind of see it in the broader picture. And actually, sort of foreground this in a discussion and again, because the 75th anniversary of partition is coming up. Foreground to this, in this whole discussion on the whole partnership industry that has developed. And I think that's a really fascinating topic, I actually see on the on the participants' list, Dr Pippa Virdee and she's been working on it for a couple of months, from what I hear. And, she has actually, one of the things that

she actually talks about and I think it is very interesting and how it kind of mimics memory and Holocaust studies, and how these different strands are actually coming together. So, people are using family histories to no end, people are talking about lived experiences. Now we have AR, VR coming in. What does it mean to actually have this partnership industry? And what effect does it have on how we look at partition and remember partition. And I think these are very important questions that as the 75th anniversary, and sad to say, I think probably frenzy, that will take over. What is it actually doing to the field? What is it actually doing to research, what is it actually doing to reality and our imagination of it? I'll just point out one thing that that Dr. Virdee also looks at is that a lot of these interventions, these new interventions are actually not by people in either East or West Punjab, they are by the diaspora. So, that's a very interesting way of looking at it that actually people in East and West Punjab, and I used to go now of course because of Modi I don't go that much, but I used to go to Indian Punjab like every couple of weeks for that matter, every other month and we get along with each other, we had good chats and we connected people across the borders but we didn't really think about these things in these ways that the diaspora think things about.

So, the whole effect of Diaspora thinking now, doing the work for us, so to speak, what does that mean? So, all these kinds of interesting questions I think as we look towards 75 years and I think these kinds of interventions will only increase, you know crowdsourcing, all these are the kinds of things, these will only increase. What does that really do? And I think one needs to be a bit careful about that and really be very circumspect about what it's actually doing to the field and to research. So, I think that's one sort of last thing that I just wanted to highlight and sort of move on from.

The second thing that I really want to talk about, and this is something which I'm doing currently, so I don't have a final end product there is that I'm working on how Indian Christians actually looked at the partition. And, I picked this up because I think the only thing that's really been written on Indian Christians and partition was actually in an edited volume. And, I think he must have been a student of Ian's, a graduate student of Ian's that actually wrote about it using about it using the Mountbatten papers and I thought, wow, you know, that's it, really. So, you know, I was just got interested in it and really began to look at it, and what I really want to do there is to actually bring not just the narrative in terms of partition but then also bring it into what happened to them in East and West Punjab in the period immediately following partition. Now, why am I doing it? Well, for the most part, because yes, there were Hindu, Sikhs and Muslims in the Punjab, but in northern India, Christians were the largest, well the province that the Christians were the largest number in northern India was the Punjab, and there were about half a million Christians in the Punjab at that time. So that's, one demographic thing.

Secondly, that the impact on the development of the Punjab, I think, was exceptional. There was hardly a district in the Punjab that did not have a Christian school, a Christian dispensary, or any kind of missionary presence, and that made the impact larger than their numbers. And what I really found fascinating is that again in the history of the of the partition, they are kind of cell dimension. So, I think that was a very interesting kind of gap there, and well in terms of West Punjab, I became very interested is that 50-60 years down the line, I think it began about 40 years down the line, lots of myths began to emerge about Christians and the partition. So, I'll just speak on one minute. One big myth about Christians and the partition was that this leader of one of the Christian groups Dewan Bahadur SP Singha, very interestingly, the whole name is Satya Prakash Singha, which of course shows that he's from a Hindu descent. He votes for Pakistan during the partition proceedings and the myth that emerged about 30-40 years after partition and of course the, the guy actually dies a few months after partition, but then a myth emerges that it was his casting vote that actually led to the creation of Pakistan. Now you know a lot of Christians in Pakistan believe it, that is part of their foundational myths that that is how they are full members of Pakistan. And a lot of them get very annoyed and angry when actually show them the proceedings of the Punjab assembly and say, yes, he did vote for with the Muslim League, but that the difference of numbers was so much that it didn't make a difference. And they get really angry and they were like, no, no, no, but this report must be false, this report of the Punjab assembly is wrong because my father told me that that's the case.

So, I really found it fascinating that in West Punjab, the Christians had to come up with this foundational myth about how they took part in the Punjab, in the creation of Pakistan and the partition of the Punjab would not have happened without their agreement, which is a myth. So, then I begin to get interested in why this is the case, and I'm currently

working on it. And other very interesting incident that actually comes up in the Punjab, and again, Ian was talking about how these migrants habituate themselves in this different environment. So, it's very much connected to it, is that when these East Punjab Muslims come to West Punjab and take over Hindu and Sikh lands, a very interesting thing happens that a lot of Christians who were working on these lands get thrown out. Because only the Muslims are supposed to be there, now you had all these Christians who were very pro-Muslim League, but come January 1948 and SP Singha actually talks about it, and they're actually thrown out because they are not Muslims and only Muslims have a right to now exist in the Punjab. So, it's very interesting in how this whole, and it's not an inconsiderable number of Christians, there are thousands of what these people are called Mazaras that are actually thrown out. And this becomes a huge issue, and then they become refugees in West Punjab, even though they are from West Punjab. So, that becomes a very interesting side of the whole Christian debate.

The third side, which again is really fascinating, and I only realized it a couple of years ago when I went to Sialkot was that a lot of the outcasts, so the lower caste, the untouchables, when they realize that well partition is going to happen, they were weighing their options with side they be good at, and of course, if they went to East Punjab, they'll still be untouchables. So, a lot of the untouchables in Sialkot, for example, on the eve of partition and just afterwards become Christians. And that again is really fascinating because that's purely a political conversion, nothing to do with religion. And a lot of them keep practicing their old religious practices.

And I found this really fascinating, I think it was about two or three years ago when I went to Sialkot actually with Dr. Virdee and a couple of other colleagues, just looking through gurudwara and in one of the gurudwaras out there were all these Sikhs there, why are so many Sikhs in Sialkot, we never thought they were hundreds of Sikhs in Sialkot. Well, these are the people who, because of petition had converted, these were lower caste Hindus who had converted to Christianity and now because they realize that after 50-60 years that Sikhism was very acceptable in Pakistan. In fact, Sikhism was very much promoted in Pakistan that they had now become Sikhs. So, this agency of these untouchables during the time of partition is, I think really fascinating.

So, these are the kinds of things that I that I think, again, are these are these gaps in partition work that are still to be explored, these untouchables, it was very fascinating and how they actually maneuver themselves. And then, as actually Ian's work also shows, Gurupal Singh's too and a couple of others, that a number of times when violence was actually taking place, a lot of Christians or these you know recently converted Christians, would put a cross outside their house to say, we are Christians don't kill us, and they'd be saved. So, it's very interesting in how these lower caste are actually using a particular religion. One, not to die and then to maneuver in the new country they are in to get to certain positions. And how in the recent past, just a few years ago, they've now moved to another religion because now that religion is kind of a privileged minority religion in Pakistan. So, it's not, again, the question of what happened at the time of petition or even the couple of years beyond that, I'm talking about 2017 and 18, and how things that happened at the time of partition are still developing and are still taking shape.

Dr. Leaning: It's going to be very rich exploration and livelihoods will be very important in terms of who is designated to be a farmer, and this is, the livelihoods of Christians and poor Muslims collided in several settings that you've referenced. I think I'm not going to change course again for both of you, might as well I have no idea what time it is for you both, but I'm thank you for doing this. There are several very good questions from people who are staying with us and so I would like to start from the top and not have a discussion between and among the three of us, but get to the questions because people have asked some very good ones. Is that ok with both of you, we do that? Okay. You could object, but I think we should do this.

Alright, so, I'm going to start with one, so, I'm not sure this places exactly to what either of you are studying but one question is about the Cold War, and why the British were interested in having Pakistan succeed, that is success succeed, as a buffer against what they termed or they were worried about as leftist movements in India? And, I'm not sure that that is how this the question really is, characterizing it but yes, it is actually, that's what it is. So, in terms of, you don't have to take that summary of what the motives were but as the early Cold War, which was really heating up in 47-46 even but 47-48, I know that the British were really interested when they were figuring about whether partition was going to happen, and the division of the subcontinent. They basically looked very carefully at who had come in as a foreigner into India, subcontinent India, and looking for radicals, terrorists, anybody from

Eastern Europe, certainly anybody from Germany, anybody from China was closely scrutinized in terms of their political balance within the Indian subcontinent. And this is early on, this is in late 1946, early 1947. So, there clearly was an edge where the British high political mind was concerned about the Cold War. Brief responses, if I could ask each of you and one of you can go first. Let's reverse here and have Yaqoob go first, and then I'll ask Ian, and then we'll go to the next question, but brief, please.

Yaqoob Bangash: Okay. I think Ian knows a lot more about this because he has actually done, just finished work on the British High Commissions in both India and Pakistan. So, he is very much plugged into what happens in the Cold War, but my short answer with that is, my only real understanding of that is from this large book written by Sarila about a decade ago, I think, and that was the big claim being made there. I don't really think that the Cold War thing was that important at that moment. It was at the back of their mind, yes, but the whole argument, and I think some people have pushed it that Pakistan was created as this pro-British bastion of the Cold War. I think that's just later thinking that's been projected backwards. I don't think it was really important at that time. I don't think they really cared about it to that extent at that time. One example, if I may give there is that Americans didn't even appoint an ambassador to Pakistan for about a year. So, if Pakistan was that critical as a frontline state for the Cold War, at least the Americans should have had someone here immediately. So, I would doubt that, but I think Ian can shed a lot more light more light on it, I could be completely wrong here, too, but I think Ian can speak on it.

Ian Talbot: I think, as far as the Cold War is concerned, the British looked at this in terms of a continuation of a great game. And certainly, they wanted the security and stability of the north of India, doesn't mean, say wanted Pakistan to be created as a bastion, which is what the Sarila arch is. But certainly, once Pakistan came into being, those who, not just diplomats, but also the pro-Pakistan group within the British Cabinet, as opposed to the pro-India group, were very concerned that the Pakistan might collapse and if it did collapse after independence, then that would have serious strategic issues for Britain. And also, of course, you could say that the original intention for common defense of the subcontinent by India and Pakistan was again, perhaps a response to an awareness that in future, there might be a problem either under the subcontinent as a whole, needed to be strong and to be stable. So, I think that's where it comes into it, you know, in terms of British diplomacy and strategic thinking but certainly Sarila is off the off the mark in terms of arguing that Pakistan was deliberately designed by Britain in order to be a bastion of its influence. I think it was more the fact that once the British had conceded the notion of partition that they wanted some defense link up between India and Pakistan. I think that's important.

Dr. Leaning: Thank you both. Another question starts at a level of generality that I'd like you to dive into quickly and deal with. Ian, I'll start with you on this, is what motivated people in Pakistan and India to migrate? I don't think it's an uninformed question. I think it is the point that there are a lot of people that didn't and certainly, if you go out of the Punjab, there are a lot of people that didn't move. There are a large number of Muslims in India and in Pakistan, certainly as Jinnah was proceeding, there was going to be room for a very diverse number of different kinds of people initially. So, with that as the background, we all three of us know, and I'm sure the person asking the question, knows that there was enormous violence and fear. But, could you say something, each of you, that is a little bit more fine-grained than that, what motivated people to leave what is now Pakistan and vice versa? What motivated people to leave for what is now India?

Ian Talbot: I think, I mean if you're looking just at the Punjab region of course, the two states virtually through the military evacuation organization, orchestrated an exchange of population, which I think Yaqoob mentioned earlier, meant that people like the Sikh colonist in Lyallpur, who didn't really want to move necessarily had no choice but to. So, it's in a sense after the chaos of the first two or three weeks and the massacres and the failure of the boundary force to maintain order, then the two states as far as Punjab a concern, try and organize population movements in order to ensure both the safety of minority population, but once these get underway, it's an order to move people out to provide accommodation, businesses, land the incomers, refugee incomers are able to take up. That's the Punjab situation, in Bengal, it was a very different process. I mean, migration doesn't happen in either acute circumstances of violence or orchestrated State act actions. Both the Government of India and the government of Pakistan, you can see this in the archived Nehru pact in 1950 really didn't want people to migrate in that part of the sub-continent and wanted them to return if at all possible, and that creates a very different context.

But of course, there are, whenever there are sort of communal riots, whenever there's tension between India and Pakistan, that certainly raises concerns of the Hindu population of East Pakistan. So, you have this sort of wave after wave that goes on for a decade or more two decades of migration in Bengal. And, it's often not even the results of violence, but more the threat or fear of violence, all the fact that they feel that their status has been undermined and they can't maintain a respectable life anymore in the way that they wanted to. So, I'm talking about the bhadralok class in East Bengal, so that they might consider moving. So, I think you've got to look at this in terms of different regions. We go to Sindh, also, again, there's a very different migration pattern there than in Punjab, with certainly throughout all the violence in Punjab, there's still a large Hindu-Sikh population in Sindh and I think Yaqoob mentioned earlier in one of his comments, it's often the arrival of refugees that actually disturbs these quite settled populations, you may not want to move as such. So, you have to look at different regions and see different motivations. On the whole, obviously, there were some people who wanted to move, who are drawn by the Pakistan ideal to move to Pakistan, but I think for many communities their identity was vested in their ancestral land village. So, they wouldn't leave that behind easily, they would only do this under some kind of duress, whether it's the state organizing an exchange of population, whether it's violence, or whether it's the threat of violence or status reversal and all of those things come into play.

Dr. Leaning: Fear was a very big motivator for a lot of the Muslims across northern India and Jinnah didn't want all the Muslims who were coming from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, because he was aware of the resettlement problem very much. And, Nehru was astonished and hated the idea, but they couldn't stop it really. It was so, but I think you did a very fine-grained way of lining the range of the categories of motivation. Yaqoob, from your perspective.

Yaqoob Bangash: Yeah. Just to add to what Ian has said, I think if you compare the Punjab and Bengal, I think one big factor, and I think that's where squarely the blame perhaps comes to on Mountbatten, is the fact that he did not consider the big sort of problem on the Punjab side, the Sikhs. He just completely ignored it, didn't think that they were a big issue, didn't think they'll actually blow up as a community, and that's exactly what happened. I think that was the main distinguishing factor between the Punjab and Bengal that whereas in Bengal, it was Hindu and Muslim, in the Punjab, there was a big community that was dissatisfied, that was going to be dissatisfied, regardless of what the boundary, where the boundary was going to be. And that, I think remains a very, that remains one of the big indictments of Mountbatten that he just did not take that into consideration, you had the governor of Punjab repeatedly writing to him and saying the Sikhs are arming themselves, Muslims are arming in return, the RSS is actually doing things, what do you think we should do? And Mountbatten is very nonchalant about the whole thing, saying well, it will be taken care of at some point or the other. And I think that's one big thing. I'll just give you one example of how the Sikhs were actually thinking about it, just a couple of, just last, Pakistan opened this big Kartarpur Corridor, linking the last resting place of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism with India. Now, I went there a couple of years ago, and again, I was fascinated that it's only about, two and a half miles from the border, and it's only farmland. So, I wondered why didn't the Sikhs say just cut it across a little bit and get some farmland on the other side and then take it. The reason they didn't do it or didn't really care about it was because they wanted the Chenab as the boundary. So, the question of Kartarpur just didn't emerge because their boundary was hundreds of kilometers on the other side. So, you had this community that had this bizarre idea that somehow Chenab is going to be the boundary and all these colonists were actually going to be in East Punjab, and no indication was given to them that that's never going to be the case.

And that is why they actually blew up, and I think that's the big failure of Mountbatten. And I would really, personally I think, a lot of the thing is this person who ignored this, who ignored the warnings of the deputy commissioners, the superintendents of police, the governor. All of them were writing to him saying, this is going to blow up, and this and then it did blow up, and that is what actually led to a lot of the violence. And, I think that's one side of it. The other side is, a lot of it was actually sort of settling of old scores and everything that Ian he talks about but here I also want to plug in the work of Ian Copeland, where he's worked, where he showed that in places like the princely states of Patiala, and Alwar and all these other places, it was a very planned execution of Muslims. That was very well planned, they really wanted most Muslims either dead or outside their princely states. And, I think that's another gap that no one really thought about, oh, they are all these princely states like Patiala and Kaputla and Kaputla at least escaped Malerkotla completely but then there were all these other Sikh states that had large number of Muslims in them. What is going to happen happened there, and it's really led by the Maharaja of Patiala that actually

a real pogrom happens against the Muslims. And so, you know, in those small bits, that's really a very planned and in some ways, a very efficient ethnic cleansing religious cleansing, and then that's, it's a whole chain of emotion, and I think that kind of one thing adds over the other.

And as Ian very aptly said that by October-November, when the MCO, the military evacuation comes up, then they have no choice. You have to just clean both sides because you know people are coming across. And I would say that what distinguishes the Punjabi mohajer, so to speak, from UP one, is that the UP one actually moved for ideological reasons to what is now Pakistan. They wanted to come to this Pakistan with whatever however they imagined it but the Punjabis actually thought, well, maybe it's for a short time, maybe we will come back. None of them I think really thought that this was going to be a permanent thing. So, I think there are all these distinctions that are that are there, and of course, the violence was taking place, as I said earlier, under the nose of the governments because after a while you need space for all the incoming refugees on both sides. So, then it becomes kind of fait accompli after a couple of weeks. And by that time, is it motivated, is it not really doesn't, those kinds of combinations and permutations, I think change to a large extent.

Dr. Leaning: So, thank you both. Now, we're going to have to be very brief because we've got only six minutes left. And there are a number of good questions. So, one question is, were there gender dynamics to this whole migration, the killing, the ways in which it was viewed from the authorities. This is a vast question, there have been many books, but two sentences in from you, in two sentences from Yaqoob on this question about gender dynamics.

Ian Talbot: Yes, I mean, I think obviously Urvashi Batalia's pioneering work brought out the gender dimension and then writers like Ritu Menon and other in terms of how women were particularly vulnerable at this time, because they were seen as the upholders of community honor and that they could suffer not only assault from rival communities, but even from their own families, in order to protect the family honor. So, the vulnerability of women, I think, is important. I think another thing which has come out in the literature is that perhaps the way women remember, their testimonies are different perhaps to men. They may talk more about family issues rather than about the bigger political picture, that's one of the things that came out in some of the interviews that I was conducting way back 15-16 years ago, that there's a different voice coming across. So, there's a gender dimension, how partition is represented, it's different perhaps for women than men, their vulnerability is also, I think, very different. And then the final thing is that when we're talking about opportunistic violence as opposed to politically motivated violence, then seizing women from the other community as well as land, was a big motivating factor, and of course that then led to what we recognize as 100,000 women abducted. And then, there's the whole business about bringing them back and what that says about the way in which they are viewed in the patriarchal society, but I'll pass over to Yaqoob.

Dr. Leaning: Yeah, they became political pawns.

Ian Talbot: Yes, they did.

Dr. Leaning: Yaqoob, please but briefly.

Yaqoob Bangash: Yeah, I think Ian has said this mostly, but one edition that I'd just like to make is that, going through those piles of documentation, we actually found a very interesting collection of letters that were sent by the abducted women back home. And of course, as we know from the work of Urvashi Batalia and Ritu Menon and others, that a lot of these recovered, so to speak, recovered, again all this terminology is also very interesting, their own families refused to accept them. And then a lot of them ended up in brothels and, street prostitution and all these kinds of things. So, there was a lot of fallout with what was happening at that time, but I think again, the whole process, and then again, a lot of them just converted and remained as Muslims and Hindus or whatever on either side. And, I think so, that's again, something that, we know the general narrative, but I think, again, the locality level work would be very interesting there.

Dr. Leaning: Thank you. Thank you both for that. I mean the gender dimensions are present in every instance and of course migration and they reflect the societies from which people are moving and the women in partition were as

you both know that were ironically treated as precious vessels that had to be saved and that meant sometimes the husbands would put the women down the hill, down a well before they fled, so that they would not be raped. And, then you had women who had a sense of agency or practicality, who would say I don't want to go back. I'm settled, it's been two years I'm here, it's over. So, it's a very complicated and fascinating story. So, there's one dimension we haven't talked about, and I'm going to now lead to the summation and just, I know you both agree because you've hinted at it, which is that this debacle is tragedy. I mean, the pity of partition is that it didn't need to have happened and that there were a large number of British authorities on both sides of what turned out to be the, I'm talking now about the western border, who were writing to each other, speaking about the rising tide of distress and violence and this whole notion of what the British commissioners would be looking at which they would call criminality, it was various terms, they missed the ethnic dimension as it began to become inter-communal rather than a threat to their own authority and Mountbatten completely missed what was going on. I mean it, and he really lost interest in the Indian subcontinent by May of 1947 and that is, in retrospect, a criminal failure of leadership because you had very good British authorities and Indian authorities, I mean now subcontinent Indian authorities, saying this is going to be a nightmare unless you can control it, you can stop it, and he didn't. So, I feel that the culpability, if there is one, for such a huge massive event and for historians, that's not a very good way of looking at it, you know culpability, I respect both of your points, but that the British need to own up to a great deal of responsibility, and not collectively, but the leader they've chosen and some of his advisors, not all of them were excellent, but some of them, allowed this to take place, and so it is enacted in action that is an important thing for us to recognize.

So, all of you have had, I think, a pretty good insight in some of the major historical issues. The news of what is now we have in front of us, in terms of the 75th anniversary and what things to look for some deep history, some general trends and themes, both of our historians today are really steeped in the documents, the oral narratives, and the history in more general of the subcontinent. And I want to thank them extremely for their contributions and your energy and their engagement and their alacrity in responding to different shifts and what the program is going to be. And, I want to thank you as listeners and members of the audience for participating with us for this period of time and for the excellent questions that you asked, and I apologize in advance for not getting too many of the very good ones, but this is now time to sign off, and I thank you Professor Talbot, I thank you Professor Bangash, for your wonderful participation today and I respect greatly the work that you both are doing, in the past, now, and into the future. So with that, I would like to say goodbye to the audience, goodbye to the both of you, and we look forward to engaging on this topic, perhaps not in this exact venue, but this is something the Mittal Institute is very interested in for the longer term as you both know. So, thank you, and thanks to the audience for joining us. Goodbye.