Seventy-two years after the event the causes and consequence of the partition of India are still very poorly understood. Subaltern studies, postcolonial theory and feminist studies have provided new ways to locate the human experience of the partition, but we are no closer to a more meaningful appreciation of what led up to 1947 and its aftermath. This lecture will evaluate the division of India, in particular, the Punjab, through the lens of the Sikh political leadership which offered a radically different vision of postcolonial Punjab and India. The lecture will focus on the Sikh case and how it problematised the colonial state’s preference to transfer of power to the two dominions of India and Pakistan, and how the marginalisation of Sikh demands by the colonial state ultimately contributed to the partition violence in which over 1 million people were killed. These two processes, it will be argued, were intimately related: the failure to negotiate a comprehensive postcolonial agreement that accommodated the aspirations of regional minorities laid the foundations of a highly centralised nation- and state-building in South Asia. The lecture will conclude by reflecting on how the partition of the Punjab was a critical juncture in the making of the modern Sikh community and the diaspora.