Contesting Khalistan:
The Sikh Diaspora and the Politics of Separatism

by

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Dedication

For Ammie and Thathie, with love and gratitude.

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Felix Frankfurter once remarked that "gratitude is one of the least articulate of the emotions, especially when it is deep." During the past few years, I have greatly benefited from the love, support, and guidance of numerous individuals without whom this project would not have been possible. I am deeply grateful to all of them, and given the intensity and depth of my feelings I will attempt to be as articulate as possible.

The challenges associated with writing a dissertation are always great but become further amplified when working away from one's committee. Being part of the graduate student "diaspora," I was exceedingly fortunate to have an outstanding supervisor who closely monitored my progress, provided me with prompt and insightful feedback, and gently pushed me towards meeting self-imposed deadlines. My dedicated advisor Dr. Robert Hardgrave was a constant source of encouragement and support and played a variety of roles during this long and arduous process—He was simultaneously my teacher, critic, editor, mentor, friend, and most vocal cheerleader. His astute comments and criticism were always tempered by a genuine compassion and kindness, and have been instrumental in refining and enhancing my work. Having always been awed and inspired by the breadth and depth of his knowledge, I am now deeply indebted to him for his mentoring and friendship.

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mitigate my frequent bouts of self-doubt and anxiety, and his unique sense of humor, irreverence, and appreciation of the absurd helped sustain my optimism. I am a better person for knowing him and continue to be amazed and inspired by his creativity and brilliance.

Finally, mere words cannot express the deep gratitude that I feel toward my beloved, long-suffering parents, Ira and Denzil Gunawardena. Their unwavering love and support have sustained and continue to sustain me through all life's challenges. Although we were separated by great distance, they were both with me every step of the way and supported me financially, emotionally, and spiritually. Without their unconditional love, unstinting generosity, and unrelenting faith in me, this dissertation would never have been embarked on or completed. It is to these two exceptional people that I dedicate this work.

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This dissertation examines the Sikh diaspora's role in the effort to carve a separate Sikh state—Khalistan—out of territory that presently constitutes the Indian Punjab. While many scholars note the involvement of overseas Sikhs in the Khalistan movement, the campaign for Sikh sovereignty has not been universally endorsed and a broad continuum of opinion exists within the diaspora regarding self-determination. Moreover, there have been various disputes regarding ideology and strategy even between pro-Khalistan factions that share the common goal of secession. Internecine conflict within the pro-Khalistan bloc has thus served to undermine its legitimacy within the larger diasporan Sikh community and in the international political arena.

This raises the following inter-related questions that form the focus of this study: Why is the Khalistan coalition so weak, given its constituent members' consensus on the ultimate goal of secession? Why do pro-Khalistan groups that possess a common adversary (the Indian state) choose competition over

cooperation given that the latter would be more expedient in realizing their political objectives?

In addressing this, I draw upon the literature on exile politics and formulate a social movement type that I classify as a Separatist Diasporan Movement (SDM). I define an SDM as a coalition of political organizations comprising coethnics of migrant origin that: 1) sustains a strong attachment to their homeland, 2) maintains numerous networks among coethnics in other countries, and 3) seeks to create a separate homeland out of territory that forms part of an existing state because of real or imagined feelings of persecution. I further argue that because they lack institutionalized legitimacy and the instruments of state power, SDMs are intrinsically unstable entities whose authority is contested and re-contested from both within and without.

In supporting my argument, I examine the rhetoric and political tactics employed by Khalistani groups in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. Data was obtained through fieldwork in the three countries, a variety of primary sources, and pro-Khalistan websites. My findings indicate that the schisms that emerged within the Khalistan SDM result from this absence of a unanimously-recognized authority and the persistence of conflicting pre-coalition identities.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1: Introduction: The Dilemma of "Diaspora"

The greatest adversary of the rights of nationality is the modern theory of nationality. By making the State and the nation commensurate with each other in theory, it reduces practically to a subject condition all other nationalities that may be within the boundary. It cannot admit them to an equality with the ruling nation which constitutes the State, because the State would then cease to be national, which would be a contradiction of the principle of its existence. According, therefore, to the degrees of humanity and civilization in that dominant body which claims all the rights of the community, the inferior races are exterminated, or reduced to servitude, or outlawed, or put in a condition of dependence.

Lord Acton, *Essays in the Liberal Interpretation of History*

Introduction

In the last ten years, the concept of "diaspora" has recaptured some of its old theoretical currency within the new discourse on globalization and its attendant impact on state sovereignty.[1] Additionally, the proliferation of secessionist movements that rapidly followed the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and other parts of the Eastern bloc a decade ago demonstrated in stark terms the tenacity of ethnic ties that transcend state boundaries and the belief evinced by many ethno-national groups that political maps should coincide with ethnic ones. This view resonates with Ernest Gellner's assertion that "nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones" (1983, 1). Numerous ethno-separatist movements in various regions of the world have been bolstered by support from coethnics living abroad. Diasporan support has encompassed a wide range of activities: remitting arms and financial contributions to sustain and reinforce the movement, providing

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[1] Paralleling this development, there is a general resurgence in examining non-state actors and challenging the dominant status that state-centered approaches enjoyed in the 1970s and 80s. For example, see Tarrow (1998) and Smith et al. (1997).

humanitarian assistance to refugees rendered homeless by the conflict, and lobbying in the international arena for recognition of the legitimacy of the separatist cause (Wallace 1997; Helweg 1989). Arjun Appadurai further suggests that in several contemporary ethnoseparatist struggles, "the dormant threads of a transnational diaspora have been activated to ignite the micro-politics of a nation-state" (1990, 304).

This dissertation adds to the growing literature on diaspora by investigating the activities of Sikhs in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain and their efforts to create a sovereign state of Khalistan carved out of territory that presently constitutes the Indian Punjab (see map in illustration 1.1).
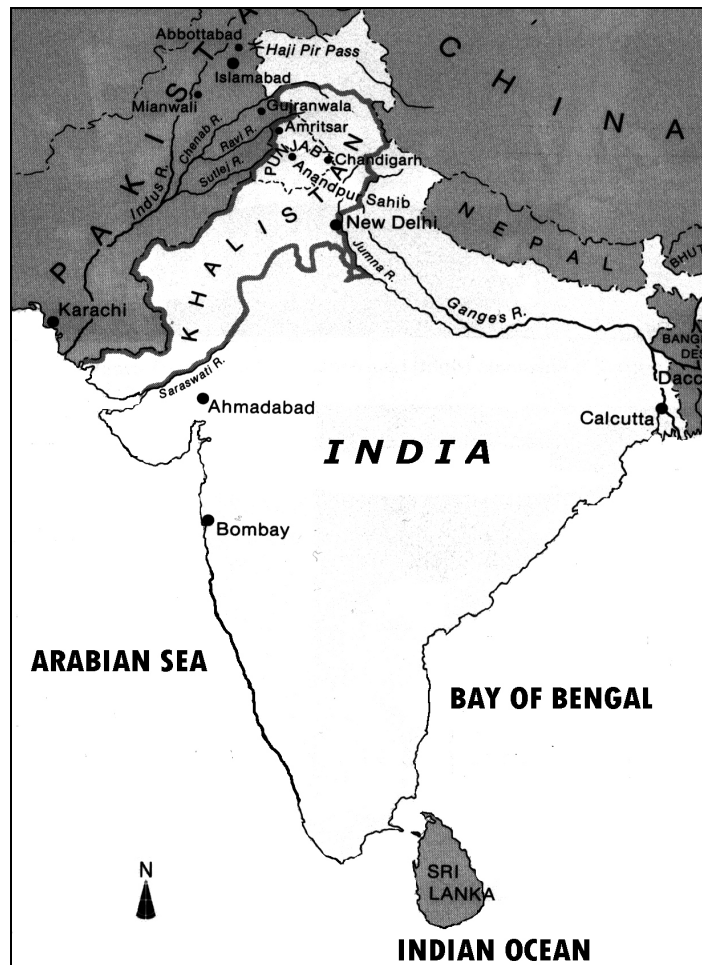
Illustration 1.1. Map of Indian Sub-Continent that Depicts the Proposed Territory
of Khalistan. Map by the author.

The agitation for a separate state of Khalistan (meaning "the land of the
pure, the nation of the Khalsa") was accorded negligible attention before 1984.
However, the Indian army's invasion of the Sikh's holiest shrine on June 3 that
same year contributed to a dramatic rise in support for Sikh separatism. Moreover,
while the historical demand for Sikh autonomy may be traced to the aftermath of
Indian independence, the immediate antecedents to the expansion of the Khalistan

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movement for an independent Sikh state lie rooted in events that transpired in the Punjab during the early 1980s. Until then, the Khalistan issue was unknown to most Indians, including to most Sikhs. The select few who were aware of the existence of an incipient separatist faction, generally regarded it with varying degrees of derision. If the trajectory of Punjabi politics had taken an alternative route, then the agitation for a separate Sikh state could have been dismissed as the clamoring of a few hyper-nationalist demagogues. Khalistani activism would have continued in its original inconspicuous form and the movement would have been considered no more than a minor footnote in history. However, actions taken by the Indian government, particularly during the 1980-1985 period, led to the movement gaining mass support and transmogrifying into a guerilla insurrection that was framed in ethnoreligious terms.

During the post-1984 period, the Sikh diaspora was quick to rally around the separatist cause and contributed to the armed struggle in a number of important ways (which are described in the chapters that follow). Such active involvement in homeland politics, as illustrated by the Sikh case, raises compelling questions about the sensibilities and motivations of diasporan groups. In what ways do factors or conditions in the homeland affect the development and survival of diasporan consciousness? What is the nature of the role that diasporan groups play in ethnoseparatist movements in their homelands? What kinds of strategies do they adopt in their host countries to achieve their overall political objectives in their countries of origin? What kinds of challenges do diasporas pose to state sovereignty, if any? And finally, is a diaspora *as* important a transnational actor as some scholars purport? While these questions broadly frame the material presented in this thesis, the specific problem that this study explores is described below.

Statement of the Problem

Although I had initially intended to limit the scope of this study to a survey of Sikh diasporan political mobilization strategies, another interesting puzzle emerged during the early phase of my fieldwork. While elites of various pro-Khalistan factions repeatedly assured me that all "real" Sikhs supported separatism and that the Khalistan movement was strongly united, they simultaneously belied this by emphasizing the numerous differences they had with each other. Many claimed either implicitly or explicitly that *their* respective organization constituted *the* "authentic voice" of "the entire Sikh people." Moreover, a recurrent theme that surfaced from discussions regarding Khalistan centered on the divisiveness within the Sikh community, both between the pro and anti-Khalistani factions and *within* the pro-Khalistan movement at large. Several of my interlocutors stated, on the one hand, that "most or all Sikhs support Khalistan" and, on the other, that "the problem with the community is that there is no unity." While there are no precise data measuring levels of support, anecdotal and journalistic accounts suggest that diasporan support ranges widely with regard to the issue of Khalistan. In 1998, out of 450 participants who responded to an informal poll conducted by the Sikhnet website, 47 percent said that they supported Khalistan while 52 per cent said they opposed it.[2] Given the wide spectrum of political and ideological opinion that exists within any diasporan community (the Sikh diaspora being no exception), this variation in support is not surprising. The question, that remains, however, is what causes the fissures that exist *within* the Khalistan movement at large.

Why are the sub-groups that comprise the Khalistan movement disunited, given its constituent members' agreement on the ultimate political goal, i.e., secession? What kinds of disparities exist between the pro-Khalistani factions in terms of the types of tactics, propaganda, and rhetoric employed? Why do pro-

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[2] See<http://www.sikhnet.com/Sikhnet/opinion.nsf/WebResults?OpenForm&PollID=000017>.

Khalistani groups that possess a common adversary (the Indian state) choose competition over cooperation, given that the latter would more easily realize their larger political objective of self-determination? This dissertation attempts to understand these questions by examining the differences that exist within the diasporan Khalistani community. For ease of analysis, I term the Khalistan movement a "Separatist Diasporan Movement" (SDM),[3] which I define as a broad coalition of overseas ethnic migrant groups whose *raison d'être* is the establishment of a separate homeland created out of territory administered by an existing state. As recent political developments suggest, intra-diasporan differences affect the ways in which diasporan groups mobilize, frame their objectives, and in certain cases present their grievances to the international community. Thus, understanding the schisms that exist within Separatist Diasporan Movements (SDMs) may afford us the opportunity to effectively evaluate the ways in which diasporan groups challenge state sovereignty and affect international politics.

While migration *per se* is not a new phenomenon,[4] the accelerated speed at which these "new" migratory movements occur and the relative ease with which ethnic groups in different countries now forge and maintain strong ties to

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[3] A more comprehensive description of what constitutes a Separatist Diasporan Movement (SDM) is provided in chapter two.

[4] As numerous scholars note, human beings have migrated across political boundaries since the beginning of recorded history. Incidentally, one of the largest migrations occurred in the late 19th and early 20th century from Europe to North America. However, as Robin Cohen notes, in the "Prologue" to *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (1995), current migration flows are more global in scope and more complex and diverse in character and, thus, have hitherto unanticipated social, political, and economic implications. Additionally, the post-Cold War period saw an eruption of ethnoseparatist movements that triggered mass movements of displaced peoples and refugees on an unparalleled scale since the Second World War. Contemporary migrations differ with prior migratory patterns because of the ethnic/racial/religious composition of the migrants and the increasingly advanced technological environments they inhabit. At present, migration flows occur predominantly from poor "Eastern" regions to the wealthier, industrialized "West." The majority of current immigrants to Western Europe, North America, and Australia are non-white and this has further significance for issues pertaining to identity politics, assimilation, and multiculturalism. For an indepth analysis on some of these issues, see Milton J. Esman, "The Political Fallout of International Migration" (1992).

each other and to their homeland results in it acquiring new contours. This dissertation, therefore, casts a new look at a centuries-old phenomenon and examines it within the newer context of ethnonationalism. An investigation into diaspora networks also reveals the ways in which the traditional boundary between the political science sub-fields of International Relations and Comparative Politics has become increasingly blurred. Although diasporas have a long history of being involved in the political fortunes of their homelands, the forces of globalization[5] now greatly expand the scope of their influence and enable them to affect home country politics and to some extent the foreign policies of their hosts. To quote James Clifford, "The nation state, as common territory and time, is traversed and, to varying degrees, subverted by Diasporic attachments" (1997, 286). As the hegemony of the nation-state as political unit is increasingly being challenged on a number of different fronts, there is a growing need to conceptualize other forms of political organization. Diasporan movements constitute such an alternative sociopolitical formation that affords potentially rich avenues for further scholarly inquiry. By examining the complex trans-state relations that are engendered between diasporas, their homelands, and their host countries, this study offers some tentative conclusions regarding the form that ethnonationalist movements will assume in the future. Such an analysis has significant theoretical and policy-relevant implications for both scholars and practitioners of international politics, as the issues central to immigrant politics, nationalism, foreign policy, and international/regional security become irretrievably intertwined.

The Re-emergence of "Diaspora"

In a seminal work titled *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (1986), editor Gabriel Sheffer writes that the volume's mission is "to contribute

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[5] Some of the effects of these "globalizing" factors are described in Sassen (1999); Wellman

meaningfully and systematically to a new field of study: the study of networks created by ethnic groups that transcend the territorial state" (1986, 1). Sheffer stresses the importance of applying scholarly approaches to elucidate the "complex triadic relations between ethnic diasporas, their host countries and homeland" (1986, 1). He further describes trans-state networks as "structured connections established by groups, institutions and corporations across national and state boundaries, that evoke loyalties and solidarities inconsistent with and sometimes even contradicting the traditional allegiances to territorial states" (Sheffer 1986, 1). Networks created by ethnic diasporas are becoming an important force in the international arena because they are part of these complex triadic relations between ethnic diasporas, their host countries, and their countries of origin. Due in large part to their organization and determination, ethnic diasporas play a significant political role both domestically and in shaping the foreign policies of their host country (see for example, Shain 1999; Constas and Platias 1993; Esman 1992, 1986).

In the same introductory chapter, Sheffer maintains that "the motivation to focus on this subject stems from the observation that while these triadic relations are becoming an *integral* and, moreover, *permanent* feature of current national and international politics, they have not been studied adequately. Until now research in the field of trans-state networks has been primarily conducted in regard to other political and economic relations" (1986, 1 [emphasis mine]). *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (1986) comprises a series of articles focusing on various theoretical and policy-relevant aspects of the "new" diasporas by a group of eminent social scientists including Walker Conner, Milton Esman, Dan Horowitz, and Myron Weiner. The volume's theme resonates with the prescient statements made by historian Arnold Toynbee in his final volume of the *Study of History* (1961, 484-518). In this work, Toynbee suggests that trans-state

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(1999); Featherstone (1990);

movements have the potential to eclipse local nation states and become an important political force in the international arena.

While Toynbee recognized the latent political power of diasporas in 1961, it took political scientists almost three decades to publicly acknowledge the growing salience of diasporan groups and their impact on both intra- and inter-state politics.[6] Khachig Tölölyan claims that, "though aspiring to authoritative completeness, the 1968 *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* fails to find 'diaspora' a category useful to social science and does not list it" (1996, 9). However, he notes that the earlier 1931 edition of this reference text contains a comprehensive description of diasporas authored by Simon Dubnow who focuses mainly on the Jewish experience as the archetypical case[7] (1996, 9). According to Tölölyan, "the cunning of history arranged matters so that just as the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* was dropping the term 'diaspora' in 1968, the use of this and related expressions, such as 'transnational,' began to increase" (1996, 9). To paraphrase Tölölyan, it is interesting to observe how the pendulum has swung from Dubnow, through the silence of the encyclopedias, to our own present situation (1996, 10).

A post-Cold War world in which ethnic conflicts routinely spill over state boundaries has highlighted the inadequacy of the state-centric Realist paradigm,[8] which dominated the field of International Relations during the height of the Cold War. Civil wars now exponentially outnumber inter-state wars and have become pervasive features on the contemporary international political landscape. In 1991,

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[6] At least in the sub-field of International Relations, this has been largely due to the hegemonic position accorded to the state-centric Realist model.

[7] According to Tölölyan, Simon Dubnow also claims that the Greek colony-cities of Antiquity and the Armenians who began to disperse in the middle of the eleventh century constitute "typical" diasporas. See, Kachig Tölölyan, "Rethinking *Diaspora*(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment" (1996).

[8] A theoretical framework that has been dominant in the political science sub-field of International Relations for the past forty years. It acquired a hegemonic status within the IR field during the height of the Cold War and one of its main premises is that states are the only consequential actors in international politics. The book, *Theory of International Politics* (1979) written by one of

thirty-five of the thirty-seven major armed conflicts in the world from Northern Ireland to Sri Lanka could plausibly be classified as ethnic conflicts (Eriksen 1993, 2). Furthermore, a December 1997 study conducted by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict reports that in January 1997 alone, there were over 35 million internally displaced persons and refugees around the world as a result of armed conflict[9] (1997, 3). Many of the more protracted conflicts are being battled out, not between aliens from distant lands, but, as Stanley Tambiah suggests, between "enemies intimately known" (1996, 3). The Sikhs, the Tamils[10], the Basques, the Chechens, the Kashmiris, and the Kurds, with their extensive transnational networks, exemplify this new political genre of "nations in search of states."[11]

Scholars have thus been compelled to devise alternative explicatory models in explaining why such conflicts arise. Responding to these challenges, several theoretical and empirical works (Tatla 1999; Cohen 1997; Sheffer 1995; Van der Veer 1995; Constas and Platias 1993; Vertovec 1991; Helweg 1986a) have examined the growing importance of diasporan movements and their attendant trans-state networks on both the sending and receiving countries. In 1991, the University of Toronto Press, under the sponsorship of the Zoryan Institutue of Canada and Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the editorial guidance of Tölölyan,[12] began publishing the interdisciplinary journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*. The journal's website states that

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Realism's most illustrious proponents, Kenneth Waltz, expounds upon the theory's assumptions and claims in detail.

[9] These numbers are considerably higher at the current time, given the recent armed conflicts in Kosovo and Chechnya.

[10] In this dissertation, the term "Tamils" refers exclusively to Tamils of Sri Lankan origin because they comprise the group that is waging the separatist armed struggle in Sri Lanka. I do not include Tamils from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu in this category.

[11]A phrase used by Arjun Appadurai, in "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy" (1990, 304).

[12] Incidentally, Tölölyan is a member of the Armenian diaspora in the United States.

> *Diaspora* is dedicated to the multidisciplinary study of the history, culture, social structure, politics and economics of both the traditional diasporas—Armenian Greek, and Jewish—and those transnational dispersions which in the past three decades have chosen to identify themselves as 'diasporas.' These encompass groups ranging from the African-American to the Ukrainian-Canadian, from the Caribbean-British to the new East and South Asian diaspora.
>
> the journal welcomes studies of specific diaspora communities, whether past, existent, or emerging. We solicit essays on all aspects of the subnational and transnational phenomena that now challenge the nation-state and supplement the international order, including migrating cultures, nomadic ideas and works of art, and mass media productions that traverse frontiers <http://www.utpress.utoronto.ca/journal/diaspora.htm>.

Other pioneering work in the diaspora studies sub-field has been produced by scholars (De la Garza and Pachon 2000; De la Garza and Velasco 1997; Shain 1999, 1996, 1995a, 1995b, 1994, 1989) who have investigated the particular strategies that diasporan groups adopt in order to politically mobilize and shape their host country's foreign policy towards their respective homelands. The scholarly treatment of diaspora has raised a number of important issues that are considered in the remainder of this chapter.

Nomenclature Debates

An inquiry that claims to investigate the political activities of the Sikh "diaspora" demands a specification of the term diaspora. The problem with the notion of diaspora begins with definition. What is a diaspora? In reviewing the existing literature on the phenomenon, it soon becomes apparent that the reason that diasporan political activity has not received the rigorous scholarly treatment it deserves is in large part because of the underlying problem of definition. Steven Vertovec (1997, 1996), in trying to excavate the latent meanings embedded in diaspora, identifies three distinct meanings in recent academic writing: (1) diaspora as social form, (2) diaspora as type of consciousness, and (3) diaspora as

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mode of cultural production. While numerous arcane debates abound regarding the "primacy" or "legitimacy" of these analytical categories, diaspora as social form has generated some of the more rigorous arguments. The following section provides an overview of some of these discussions.

(i) "Diaspora" as Social Form
Beyond the Jewish Experience

As Gérard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau assert, the term diaspora evokes no ambiguity when it is applied exclusively to the Jews (1995, xiii). However, disputes ensue when its usage is extended to include other religious or ethno-national groups. The challenge then becomes one of delineating clear boundaries between migrant groups and diasporas, and between ethnic minorities and diasporas.[13]

In attempting to unravel some of the threads of the nomenclature debates that surround the concept of diaspora when employed beyond the Jewish case, it is necessary to first examine points of consensus within the scholarly community. The question of which groups do *not* constitute a "diaspora" is more readily agreed upon than those that do. While there is some common ground regarding "exclusionary" definitions, "inclusionary" definitions tend to be fraught with controversy. Many authors (Chaliand and Rageau 1995; Esman 1986) agree that the notion of "diaspora" *excludes* migrants who take over or form a state and become its dominant group. Thus, they argue, the British and their descendents who predominate in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States do not constitute a diasporan community.[14] Additionally, there appears to be agreement among many writers that groups such as the Afrikaners in South Africa

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[13] For an examination of some of these taxonomical debates, see Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" (1991).

and the German communities established in central and eastern Europe and Latin America that have severed their sentimental and economic ties with their land of origin are not diasporas (Chaliand and Rageau 1995; Esman 1986). Esman further contends that the term "explicitly excludes ethnic groups whose minority status results *not from migration* but from conquest, annexation, or arbitrary boundary arrangements" (1986, 333 [emphasis mine]). For this reason, he states that irredentist movements such as the Somali in Ethiopia "differ from diaspora politics and require separate treatment" (1986, 333). National groups under occupation are also outside the purview of the term. For example, by most scholars' definitions, the Poles under German occupation would not constitute a diaspora (Safran 1991, 85). However, disagreement remains even with regard to who is excluded; for example, while William Safran (1991) does not include Mexican-Americans in his diasporan equation, many others such as Shain (1999) do. The variance that exists among scholars regarding which groups are "in" and which groups are "out" is further captured in Safran's discussion:

> Not all "dispersed" minority populations can legitimately be considered diasporas. Contrary to the opinion of Richard Marienstras, the Flemish-speaking Belgians who live in their own communities in Wallonia, surrounded by French speakers, or vice versa, are not, simply by virtue of their physical detachment from a particular linguistic center, a diaspora. They have not been exiled or expatriated, and their condition is the result of demographic changes around them. They are, in short an enclave enjoying full linguistic autonomy and political equality. Similarly, the Magyars of Transylvania cannot be regarded as living in a diaspora. Despite the fact that (under the dictatorship of Ceausescu) they did not enjoy full cultural autonomy, the Magyars of Romania were not dispersed; rather, their communities were politically detached from the motherland (Safran 1991, 86).

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[14] To confound matters, however, Robin Cohen devises a classificatory system in which he categorizes the British as an "imperial diaspora. " See, Robin Cohen, "Chapter 3 – Labour and imperial diasporas: Indians and British," in *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (1997).

The Roots of "Diaspora"

The term's etymological origins are rooted in Greek. *Diaspeirein* was originally "an abrupt but natural process, the fruitful scattering away of seeds from the parent body that both *dispersed* and *reproduced* the organism" (Tölölyan 1996, 10 [emphasis mine]). One of the first usages embodying this meaning of dispersion is found in Thucydides' chronicles of *The Peloponnesian War* (II: 27), where he uses the term to describe the exile of the population of Aegina following its destruction (Tölölyan 1996, 10; Chaliand and Rageau 1995, XIII). However, as Tölölyan (1996) notes, a certain ambiguity colored the term even in this earliest usage. According to him, "The Aeginetan case was a scattering that did not produce a new city whose collective identity was the 'true' progeny of the old polity, and hence was not 'diasporic' in the organic sense then prevailing, which required rupture, scattering *and* reproduction. It was a dispersion engendered by violence to the parent body" (1996, 10).

For centuries, the notion of "diaspora" has been applied to the Jews (the "paradigmatic" case), with their dispersal from their homeland of Palestine following their defeat by the Romans in 70 A.D (see, for example, Sachar 1985; Levine 1983; Keller 1969). The condition of Jewish exile is made clear in the biblical passage: "And the Lord shall scatter you among the people, and ye shall be left few in number among the nations" (Deuteronomy 4: 27).[15] The expulsion of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion to distant lands epitomizes the state of exile with all its attendant oppression and alienation. The symbol of the "wandering Jew,"[16] representing the two thousand year episode of the Jewish exile, has colored the artistic and literary imagination of western artists, writers, and poets throughout the ages. In the writings of Ovid, Dante, and

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[15] Quoted in Keller (1969).

[16] The notion of displacement is also suggested in the labels "The People of the Book in the Diaspora" and "The People Without History," that were routinely applied to the Jews.

elsewhere, the pain and meaning specific to the Jewish diasporan condition has become a poignant metaphor for the displacement and catastrophic loss associated with individual exile (Tölölyan 1996, 12). According to Tölölyan,

> The destruction of Judea by the Romans, the loss of the homeland and the ethnocidal violence of the Roman legions gave the term 'Jewish diaspora' its full and painful meaning. Specifically, the Jewish predicament included the loss of redemptive proximity to the religious center of Jerusalem. In time, the concept of 'diaspora' became suffused with the suffering that accompanies many sorts of exile (1996, 12).

The Hebrew term *Galut*[17] (broadly translated into English as "exile") expresses the feeling of living as a relatively defenseless minority group in an alien land subject to routine injustice if not to outright persecution. Inherent in this concept of the classic diaspora phenomenon are images of banishment, collective trauma, lamentation, a place where one dreams of home but lives in exile (Cohen 1997, ix). Underlying this nostalgia is a persistent ideology of return: there will be an eventual return to a mythic or "imagined" homeland. According to Tölölyan,

> In the strictest definition shaped by the Jewish paradigm, the desire to *return* to the homeland is considered a necessary part of the definition of "diaspora," though this theoretical insistence is at odds with the past—it is by no means clear that "next year in Jerusalem" was always taken literally to mean an intent to return—and the present, when Israelis emigrate even as a minority of Western Jews perform *"aliyah"* and return to settle in Israel, or to colonize Palestine. Today, when even ardent Zionists acknowledge that return to Israel is not a choice most Jews of the "western" diaspora will ever make, it makes more sense to think of diasporan or diasporic existence as not necessarily involving a physical return but rather a re-turn*,* a repeated turning to the concept and/or reality of the homeland and other diasporan kin through memory, written and visual texts, travel, gifts and assistance, et cetera. (Tölölyan 1996, 14-5)

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[17] According to Richard Marienstras, the term *galut* implies that the homeland has been conquered and that the migrations and displacements were enforced. See, Richard Marienstras' " On the Notion of Diaspora," (1989). Additionally, the terms *golus* and *galuth* are also used to signify exile.

As Tölölyan (1996) suggests, rather than being a "real" physical return to the homeland, the orientation towards the land of origin may be symbolic, based on ritual, tradition, and collective memory. It may manifest itself in philanthropic concern for the welfare of kin left behind and a desire to influence the political and cultural landscape of the homeland (specifically, by influencing the government of the hostland in favor of the homeland). Walker Connor echoes Tölölyan's emphasis on the importance of the subjective component that shapes diasporan identity when he states that "The ethnic homeland is *far more than territory*. As evidenced by the near universal use of such emotionally charged terms as the motherland, the fatherland, the native land, the ancestral land, land where my fathers died, and not least the homeland, the territory so identified becomes imbued with an emotional, almost reverential dimension" (1986, 16 [emphasis mine]). This "ideology of return" to the "homeland," whether grounded in material reality or embedded in the group's collective memory, is a key factor, therefore, in distinguishing a diaspora from an ethnic minority group.

According to Tölölyan, "an ethnic community differs from a diaspora by the extent to which the latter's commitment to maintain connections with its homeland and its kin communities in other states is absent, weak, at best intermittent, and manifested by individuals rather than the community as a whole" (1996, 16). Given his criteria, Italian-Americans would comprise an ethnic group rather than a diaspora, because *as a group* (the operative phrase) they lack a well formed collective memory of homeland and ideology of return; moreover, they rarely act in consistently organized ways to create an agenda for self-representation in the political or cultural arena of the hostland (Tölölyan 1996, 16). However, as several scholars (Tölölyan 1996, 17; Safran 1991) caution, the lines separating ethnic groups from diasporas are not always clearly demarcated and are in constant flux due to a combination of factors.

Some writers unwilling to extend the concept of "diaspora" argue that the diasporic condition is unique to the Jews and represents an almost mythical experience of Jewish exile. However, as Safran (1991, 83) points out, a unique phenomenon does not permit analytical comparison and is of little value to social scientists attempting to discern patterns and draw broad generalizations. Other scholars (Chaliand and Rageau 1995; Chaliand 1989, xiv; Chaliand and Ternon 1983) contend that the term should be reserved for groups who are *forced* to disperse due to genocide or political persecution and who subsequently suffer the collective traumas of separation and dislocation.[18] According to Chaliand, "A minority is not automatically a diaspora, although diasporas are *always* minorities. There are, in fact, very few diasporas. Born from a forced dispersion, they conscientiously strive to keep a memory of the past alive and foster the will to transmit a heritage and to survive as a diaspora. We could add more recent examples, as *time is an important factor….*" (1989, xiv [emphasis mine]). However, the notion of "coercion" which these authors view as essential to the diasporic condition is itself plagued with ambiguity. While there is little doubt that coercion was instrumental in the creation of the African "diaspora" in the Americas, the role it plays becomes more ambiguous in the mass exodus of Indian indentured labor to Fiji, Trinidad, Guyana, Mauritius and various part of East Africa during the colonial period. The migration of Indian indentured labor was largely propelled by factors rooted in economic imperatives (although the specter of imperial force loomed ubiquitously in the background). Even Chaliand and Rageau (1995), somewhat reluctantly,[19] accept that these early Indian settlements

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[18] For an account of the creation of the Armenian diaspora, see Chaliand and Ternon, *The Armenians: From Genocide to Resistance* (1983).

[19] In an earlier work, Chaliand unequivocally refers to "the Indians in the Indian Ocean, South Africa and the West Indies" as a diaspora. See, "Preface," in *Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation-States* (1989).

constitute a "diaspora" or what they refer to as a "semi-diaspora."[20] Conversely, Richard Marienstras states that

> 'Diaspora' (from a Greek word meaning dispersion) presumes that there exists and independent or heavily populated Jewish political 'centre'. Some writers only use it to describe the communities that left *Eretz Israel* at times when such a center did exist, that is the period of the first Temple and the second Temple as well as the period since the creation (in 1948) of the state of Israel. This term is then distinguished from 'Galut' (a Hebrew word meaning exile) which describes the communities at times when then centre did not exist broadly speaking, the period between the destruction of the second Temple in AD 70 and the creation of the state of Israel). *Diaspora implies voluntary and free migrations*. 'Galut' implies that the home territory has fallen under domination, that the migrations and settlements were forced (Marienstras 1989, 120 [emphasis mine]).

Thus, it becomes apparent that the specifics of whether migration is "coerced" or "voluntary," and by extension whether the migrants constitute a "diaspora" or an "ethnic group," is one that is highly subjective and contingent upon historical circumstance.

Some scholars (Sheffer 1995, 1986; Esman 1986) argue that while certain groups (e.g., the Armenians, the Palestinians, and even the Sikhs) strongly identify with feelings of alienation and dislocation, most modern diasporas are not primarily the products of persecution or banishment. Rather, they are the result of the accelerated migratory movements that have emerged as the result of vastly improved communications and transportation technology. Moreover, the trauma, displacement, and sense of permanent alienation that is traditionally associated with those groups that are "forced" to flee their homelands feature prominently in the collective consciousness of contemporary "voluntary" migrant formations. The Turkish community in Germany and other parts of Western Europe is an illustrative case in point. Recruited by the German government as guest workers (*gastarbeiter)* during the 1950s and 1960s, Turkish immigrants and their progeny

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[20] They also apply the term to the Chinese.

have been subject to decades of nativist hostility and a series of xenophobic laws that have served to ensure their continued marginalized status as a group.[21] The anti-immigration ethos that is manifest in German law governing naturalization, in which citizenship was until recently based on the notion of blood right (*jus sanguinis*) rather than birthplace/residency (*jus soli*) heightened the awareness among many German-born Turks that they did not belong to "mainstream" German society.[22] This has consequently led to a highly developed Turkish diasporic consciousness, characterized by a strong collective memory and orientation to the homeland. Thus, while proponents of the traditional concept of diaspora focus on the conditions of *departure* as the litmus test in determining a group's "diaspora-worthiness," I posit that the conditions of *settlement* form an equal, if not more crucial, marker in connoting diasporan identity.

As Sheffer (1995, 1986) describes, at the end of the twentieth century, new large-scale diasporas have proliferated in Europe, in North America, and in the oil-producing Gulf countries. The settlement of Hispanics in the United States, Indians in Great Britain, Pakistanis in the Gulf region, and Turks in Western Europe has largely been driven by economic imperatives. While these groups may harbor feelings of displacement, nostalgia, and longing for their homelands, they are not (at least theoretically) precluded from returning to their countries. I would argue, therefore, that the modern concept of diaspora is one that does not need to necessarily encapsulate the aspect of permanent banishment or enforced exile. Following Cohen's (1997, ix) analysis, I suggest that it can be more widely applied to any group that resides outside its natal (or imagined natal) territories and continues to identify with the customs, traditions, and institutions of the "old" country. This issue is explored more thoroughly later in this chapter. However, as

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[21] For a description on Germany's traditional position towards immigration, see Saskia Sassen, "Chapter 6: Patterns, Rights, Regulations" in *Guests and Aliens* (1999).

indicated earlier, there are numerous debates over whether it is "appropriate" to use "diaspora" to encompass all contemporary migrant communities.

As the preceding discussion reveals, the narrow usage of "diaspora" versus the broader application of the term forms one of the main bases for disagreement among migration scholars. There exists a kind of "inclusionary-exclusionary" continuum, represented at one end by scholars such as Chaliand who argue for a restrictive application of "diaspora," and at the other by writers such as Connor who employs an all-encompassing definition as "that segment of a people living outside the homeland" (1986, 16). In assessing whether there are certain agreed upon common criteria that need to be present before a group may be "legitimately" classified as a diaspora, the next section reviews some of the taxonomical systems that have emerged in recent scholarship.

Characteristics of Diaspora

As stated previously, disagreement concerning semantics colors any discussion regarding "diaspora." Moreover, there are as many schemas of classification as there are scholars studying the phenomenon. The following section surveys the criteria compiled by several noted migration scholars.

According to William Safran (1991, 83-4), expatriate minority communities may be classified as a "diaspora" if

1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions;
2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland–its physical location, history, and achievements;
3) they believe that they are not–and perhaps cannot be–fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it;

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[22] For a discussion on the debates surrounding German citizenship, see the articles by Mary Fulbrook, "Germany for the Germans?: Citizenship and Nationality in a Divided Nation" (1996) and Karen Schönwälder, "Citizenship, Nationality, and Migration in Europe" (1996).

4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendant would (or should) eventually return–when conditions are appropriate;
5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity;
6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.[23]

Building on Safran's list, Robin Cohen's table highlights the common features of a diaspora:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
4. an idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlements; and
9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.[24]

Khachig Tölölyan (1996, 12-5) further identifies conditions that are essential to "the detailed and 'stringent' paradigm" understanding of diaspora. According to him, the Jewish-centered definition that prevailed from the second century until

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[23] Taken from Safran (1991, 83-4).
[24] Taken from Robin Cohen, Table 1.1 – Common features of a diaspora (1997, 26).

around 1968 (and that has since been displaced) contained the following elements:

1. The paradigmatic diaspora forms due to *coercion* that leads to the uprooting and resettlement outside the boundaries of the homeland of large numbers of people, often of entire communities. . . .
2. In the pre-1968 definition, a diaspora results from the departure of a group that already has a clearly delimited identity in its homeland. . . .
3. Diasporan communities actively maintain a *collective* memory that is a foundational element of their distinct identity. . . .
4. Like other ethnic groups, of which they may be a special and distinct case, diasporas patrol their communal boundaries, either of their own volition; or at the insistence of the ruling majorities of the host countries, who do not wish to assimilate them; or due to a combination of the two. . . .
5. Diasporan communities care about maintaining communication with each other. . . .
6. Diasporan communities maintain contact with the homeland when it persists in identifiable form. Lacking that, they exhibit a communal will to loyalty, keeping faith with a mythicized idea of the homeland. . . .[25]

In their discussion on diaspora, Gérard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau (1995, xiv-vii) stipulate the following conditions:

1. A diaspora is defined as *the collective forced dispersion of a religious and/or ethnic group*, precipitated by a disaster, often of a political nature. . . .
2. A diaspora is also defined by the role played by *collective memory, which transmits both the historical facts that precipitated the dispersion and a cultural heritage (broadly understood)*–the latter often being religious. . . .
3. Even more important among the factors that go to make up a diaspora is the group's will to transmit its heritage in order to preserve its identity, whatever the degree of integration. What characterizes a diaspora, as much as its spatial dispersion, is *the will to survive as a minority by transmitting a heritage. . . .*
4. Finally, then, what in the last analysis makes it possible to assert that a given group is or is not a diaspora is *the time factor.* Only time decides whether a minority that meets all or some of the criteria described above, having insured its survival and adaptation, is a diaspora. . . .[26]

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[25] Extracted from Tölölyan (1996, 12-5).
[26] Extracted from Chaliand and Rageau (xiv-vii, 1995).

Finally, Steven Vertovec (1997, 278-9) identifies several "traits" of diaspora:

1. specific kinds of *social relationships* cemented by special ties to history and geography. These see diasporas as broadly created as a result of voluntary or forced migration from one home location to at least two other countries;

   a) consciously maintaining collective identity, which is often importantly sustained by reference to an "ethnic myth" of common origin, common historical experience, and some kind of tie to a geographic place;
   b) institutionalizing networks of exchange and communication that transcend territorial states and creating new communal organizations in places of settlement;
   c) maintaining a variety of explicit and implicit ties with their homelands;
   d) developing solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement;
   e) being unable or unwilling to be fully accepted by the "host society"–thereby fostering feelings of alienation, or exclusion, or superiority, or other kind of "difference."

2. tension of *political orientations*, given that diasporic peoples are often confronted with divided loyalties to homelands and home countries. . . .
3. economic strategies that represent an important new source and focus in international finance and commerce. . . .[27]

Although the precise criteria cataloged by Safran, Cohen, Tölölyan, Chaliand and Rageau, and Vertovec vary, certain common key elements emerge. First, all of the authors concur that in order for a group to be considered a "diaspora," some kind of *dispersion* (coerced or otherwise) is required. There is also consensus regarding the critical role played by *collective memory* in creating and maintaining the group's identity. Third, there is agreement that the group must possess a *strong ethnic consciousness* that is rooted in a sense of

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[27] Extracted from Steven Vertovec, "Three Meanings of 'Diaspora' Exemplified Among South Asian Religions" (1997, 278-9).

distinctiveness (whether tangible or perceptual). Finally, all the writers (with the exception of Chaliand and Regeau) highlight the importance of the *homeland myth* in sustaining and consolidating ethnocommunal consciousness. At a very broad level it is, possible, therefore, to discern four key constitutive elements of "diaspora":

    (i) Dispersion

    (ii) Collective memory

    (iii) Ethnocommunal group identity/consciousness

    (iv) Homeland myth.

Milton Esman's succinct characterization of "diaspora" as "a minority ethnic group of migrant origin which maintains strong material or sentimental ties with its land of origin" (1986, 333) tacitly encompasses all four components. While fully cognizant that a loose application of the term "diaspora" is fraught with controversy, my own working definition of a modern diaspora is, nevertheless, broad. Following Esman, I use the term to mean a group with migrant roots that has been dispersed, shares a collective memory, has a keen sense of ethnic identity, and possesses a strong homeland myth. Since the concept of diaspora is employed as "social form" in this dissertation, the greater part of the chapter has focused on its use in this capacity. However, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the other two meanings of "diaspora" that have emerged in recent post-modernist scholarship: diaspora as type of consciousness and diaspora as mode of cultural production[28] (Vertovec 1997, 1996).

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[28] In his entry on "diaspora" in the *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations* (1996), Vertovec also describes a fourth way, in which the term is employed: "as a new kind of problem." Vertovec states that, "According to this line of thinking—typically associated with right-wing groups— transnational communities are seen as threats to state security and potential sources of international terrorism. In this view too, people's links with homelands and with other parts of a globally dispersed community raise doubts about their loyalty to the 'host' nation-states. Hybrid cultural forms and multiple identities expressed by self-proclaimed diasporic youths, too, are viewed by 'host-society' conservatives as assaults on traditional (hegemonic and assimilitative)

(ii) "Diaspora" as Type of Consciousness

A relatively recent conceptualization of "diaspora" that has arisen out of the Cultural Studies field focuses on the fluid nature of the "form" and "space" in which "displacement," "dislocation," "rupture," and "relocation" occur.[29] Various post-modernist scholars (Shankar and Srikanth 1998; Puar 1996; Brah 1996; van der Veer 1995; Clifford 1994; Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1994, 1992; Hall 1990; Rutherford 1990; Appadurai and Breckenridge 1989) emphasize the fluctuating cultural contexts, dynamic "hybridized" identities, liminal subject positions, and multifarious processes and "sites" of negotiation and re-negotiation that together transmogrify into diasporan "consciousness." Avtar Brah captures this notion of diaspora in the following passage:

> The concept of diaspora space is central to the framework I am proposing. It marks the intersectionality of contemporary conditions of transmigrancy of people, capital, commodities and culture. It addresses the realm where economic, cultural, and political effects of crossing/transgressing different 'borders' are experienced; where contemporary forms of transcultural identities are constituted; and where belonging and otherness is appropriated and contested. My point is that *diaspora space*, as distinct from diaspora, foregrounds what I have called the *'entanglement of the genealogies of dispersal'* with those of 'staying *put*'. Here, politics of location, of being situated and positioned, derive from a simultaneity of diasporisation and rootedness. The concept of diaspora space decentres the subject position of 'native', 'immigrant', 'migrant', the in/outsider, in such a way that the diasporian is as much a native as the native now becomes a diasporian through this entanglement (Brah 1996, 242).

James Clifford's (1994) sees "diaspora consciousness" as a distinct kind of sensibility, specific to contemporary transnational communities. In Vertovec's view, this distinctiveness is characterized by a "dual" or "paradoxical" nature that

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norms. Such appraisals are countered by persons who see strong transnational networks as unsurprising features of globalization (particularly involving the enhancements of telecommunications and the ease of travel) who welcome the construction of new compound identities and hybrid cultural forms by way of valuing cosmopolitan diversity" (Vertovec 1996, 101).

[29] For an interesting collection of essays on the subject, see Bammer (1994).

is intrinsically volatile; it is "constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion, and positively by identification with a historical heritage. . . . " (Vertovec 1997, 281). Brah states that "diaspora" embodies a notion of a center, a locus, a "home" from where the dispersion occurs and simultaneously invokes images of multiple journeys (1996, 181). Diasporan journeys, in this depiction, are not defined or unidirectional—"migration to" or "return from"—but rather, iterative, "asynchronous, transversal flows" that result in multiple, constantly shifting, and sometimes contradictory relationships with both the host- and homelands (Cohen 1998, 127-8). In Angelika Bammer's (1994, xii) articulation, they are characterized by multiple ruptures between "here" and "there."

Vertovec (1997, 282) claims that the consequent awareness of multi-locality that emerges from this representation of "diaspora," also fuels "the need to conceptually connect oneself with others, both 'here' and 'there,' who share the same 'roots' and 'routes.'" This heightened sense of multi-locality and "decentered attachments" (of feeling that "one is *neither* here nor there" or simultaneously that "one *is both* here and there") also serves to create "fractured memories" of diaspora consciousness and "new maps of desire and attachment" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1989, i). According to Appadurai and Breckenridge,

> more and more diasporic groups have memories whose archeology is fractured. These collective recollections, often built on the harsh play of memory and desire over time, have many trajectories and fissures which sometimes correspond to generational politics. Even for a apparently well settled diasporic groups, the macro politics of reproduction translates into the micro-politics if memory, among friends, relatives, and generations (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1989, i).[30]

The splintering of collective memory, in turn, engenders the production of a multiplicity of ambiguities, histories, communities, and selves that are

constantly contested and reconstituted (Vertovec 1997; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992). In his book *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), renowned author and exile Salman Rushdie describes the diasporic condition in this fashion:

> . . . I'm not gifted with total recall, and it was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains; *fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities.* There is an obvious parallel here with archeology. The broken pots of antiquity, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of the most quotidian objects . . . [emphasis mine].

> But let me go further. The broken glass is not merely a mirror of nostalgia. It is also, I believe, a useful tool with which to work in the present.

> John Fowles begins *Daniel Martin* with the words: 'Whole sight: or all the rest is desolation.' But human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to death. . . . (Rushdie 1991, 11-2)

In Rushdie's portrayal, the fragmentation of diasporic consciousness is not necessarily a negative phenomenon and sometimes serves a useful function in re-evaluating homeland myths and memories. Echoing Rushdie, another noted Indian diasporan writer, Bharathi Mukherjee, reminisces, "It was hard to give up my faintly Chekovian image of India. But if that was about to disappear, could I not invent a more exciting—perhaps a more psychologically accurate—a more precisely metaphoric India: many more Indias?"…"writers are free to demolish and reinvent" (Blaise and Mukherjee 1995, 297).

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[30] Quoted in Vertovec, (1997, 282).

Many of the authors who adopt the notion of "diaspora as type of consciousness" in their writings provide useful interpretations regarding the ambiguity inherent in the contemporary diasporan predicament and its relation to the dynamics of migration politics. Undisputedly, these ideas have important sociological and political implications. However, in their haste to abandon what they perceive as the constraining essentialism of the "old" social typologies, they conflate "diaspora" as a discrete social category with a manifestation of that very same category ("diasporan consciousness") that ultimately threatens the term's analytical usefulness. For example, Homi K. Bhaba (1994, 264) writes that

> The move away from the singularities of "class" or "gender" as primary conceptual and organizational categories has resulted in a useful awareness of the multiple subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the (post) modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the necessity of thinking beyond initial categories and initiatory subjects and focusing on those *interstitial* moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of "differences." These spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood and communal representations that generate new signs of cultural difference and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation. It is at the level of the interstices that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.

My dispute with post-modernist writings that employ semantic analysis such as Bhaba's is that language becomes so nebulous that discussion at a certain point becomes futile and even impossible. A linguistic impasse in reached, beyond which scholarship can contribute nothing to explaining the phenomenon in question. Paraphrasing Cohen (1998, 129), it may be argued that while the old essentialisms[31] no longer hold, identity, for the purposes of analysis, is predicated on a number of analytical building blocks such as race, gender, religion, etc. Like

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[31] Such as the Marxist notion that social identity could be reduced to class identity, etc.

Cohen, I presuppose that some solid, useful structures of identity can or will emerge, and it is at this juncture that I am compelled to part methodological company with the post-modernist school.

(iii) "Diaspora" as Mode of Cultural Production

Intimately allied with the concept of *"diaspora" as consciousness* is the notion of *"diaspora" as mode of cultural production,* which has gained prominence, most notably, within the field of cultural anthropology. It is frequently used in this form by critical social theorists in their discourse on culture and globalization (see for example, Wellman 1999; Baumann 1996, 1990; Hall 1991a, 1991b; King 1991; Appadurai 1990; Featherstone 1990; Gillespie 1989). These scholars focus on globalization "in its guise as the worldwide flow of cultural objects, images, and meanings, resulting in a variegated process of creolization, back-and-forth transferences, mutual influences, new contestations, negotiations, and constant transformations" (Vertove 1997, 289). In this approach, "diaspora" is viewed as the catalyst in the iterative process of producing and reproducing transnational social and cultural phenomena[32] (Vertove 1997, 289). The ensuing multiple, dynamic identities and "styles" that are created and recreated in the interstitial moments or spaces[33] constitute the foci of cultural studies (see for example, Diken 1998; Shankar and Srikanth 1998; Brinkler-Gabler and Smith 1997; Ang-Lygate 1996; Chow 1993). These styles and identities that are fluid and constructed are variously referred to as "syncretic, creolized, 'translated,' 'crossover,' 'cut 'n mix,' hybrid or 'alternate'" (Vertove 1997, 289).

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[32] For interesting analyses on how Punjabi arts and culture are reinvented within diasporan communities, see Marie Gillespie's *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change* (1995) and "Technology and Tradition: Audio-Visual Culture Among South Asian Families in West London" (1989): 226-40; Gerd Baumann,s "The Re-invention of *bhangra.* Social Change and Aesthetic Shifts in a [sic] Punjabi Music in Britain"(1990).

[33] In many of these discussions time and space are conflated.

With regard to issues of globalization, widespread attention to "diaspora" within the anthropological field has coincided with the discipline's move towards an "anti-essentialist, constructivist, and processual approach to *ethnicity*" (Vertove 1997, 289). Cultural anthropologist Stuart Hall provides the following description of the dynamic and hybrid nature of diaspora:

> Diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other peoples into the sea. This is the old, the imperializing, the hegemonized form of "ethnicity."…The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined not by essence of purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are *constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference* (Hall 1990, 235 [emphasis mine]).[34]

Both Appadurai (1990) and Hall (1990) detect a strong link between the development of hybridity and the dynamism that is characteristic of the diasporan condition. In their view, contemporary society is shaped by two broad contradictory tendencies—cultural homegenization and cultural heterogenization. At one level, the drift of globalization is towards homogenization and assimilation. At another level, there is a concerted backlash against globalization and the reassertion of a reactionary localism—most visibly in the revival of hitherto dormant ethnic identities and religious fundamentalism.

According to this view, in "post-migration" societies, new modes of cultural production that sustain the creation of "new ethnicities" are constantly innovated by second and subsequent generations. Diasporic youth whose socialization and identity-formation have been suspended "between cultures" are important contributors to the production of this new "hybrid cultural phenomena" (Vertove 1997). As several ethnographers (Baumann 1997, 1991; Gillespie, 1995,

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[34] Quoted in Vertovec (1997, 287-8).

1989; Drury 1991) describe, members of the younger generation select and syncretize aspects of their multiple cultural heritages, which, taken together, constitute their "new" identity.[35] As many authors note, while younger members of diasporan communities recognize that they are different from the dominant host society, this recognition is simultaneously accompanied by a new-found and unequivocal defiance—"We are British and we're here to stay" is a common mantra voiced by many young South-Asians in Britain today (Ballard 1994a, 34).

Although post-modernists correctly emphasize the dynamic nature of diasporas, they do not possess exclusive rights to the notion that diasporan cultural practices are constantly innovated, contested, and transformed. Several migration scholars with non-post-modernist methodological leanings such as Muhammad Anwar (1998), Roger Ballard (1994a, 1994b), and James Watson (1977) have meticulously detailed the cultural commingling that prevails within various diasporan communities. For example, in his discussion on young British Punjabis, Ballard observes that

> Young British Asians may indeed be just as much at home in their parents'
> world as they are among their white peers, but at the same time they are
> actively and creatively engaged in carving out *new* styles of interaction
> among themselves. Thus it is also apparent that members of the rising
> generation are best understood as extremely mobile in linguistic, religious,
> and cultural terms, and often taking delight in drawing eclectically on every
> tradition available to them. In this respect the musical inventiveness of
> Apache Indian, the Birmingham-born pop star whose ironic lyrics seamlessly
> mixing English with Punjabi are declaimed rap-style against a beat which
> itself weaves *bhangra*[36] with reggae, may well be a pointer to the future.

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[35] A young British Sikh (whom I met during the course of my fieldwork in England) used a descriptive Indian culinary term to illustrate this hybridized set of cultural practices and traditions. He said "We young people, we live in a *masala* culture that's all mixed up—it's a little bit British, a little bit Punjabi—the rest, we just have to make it up as we go along, don't we?" (Interview with author, July 9, 1998).

[36] A traditional Punjabi dance that has been "modernized" and is immensely popular among South Asian diasporan communities.

With the younger generation bringing further layers of differentiation over and above those introduced by the first generation of migrants, any attempt to present a general overview of current developments is hazardous. Yet there is one point on which we can be clear. Most of the rising generation are accurately aware of how much they differ from both their parents *and* from the surrounding white majority, and as a result they are strongly committed to ordering their own lives on their own terms (Ballard 1994a, 34).

The methodological difference between authors such as Ballard (with whom I agree) and scholars within the field of cultural studies may be reduced to a different conceptualization of semantics. Again, I posit that conflating social categories with cultural processes ultimately renders such categories useless for any type of systematic social science inquiry.

Conclusion

As previously stated, this dissertation employs the concept of diaspora *as social form* to examine the political activities of overseas Sikhs in their agitation for a separate homeland. The first of the six chapters that follow (chapter two), discusses the research design and methodology employed in this study and provides a detailed description of Separatist Diasporan Movements (SDMs). Additionally, this chapter highlights some of the processes and challenges associated with conducting ethnographic research on politically sensitive topics. To this end, considerable emphasis is accorded to issues such as research ethics and data collection.

Chapter three focuses on the origins and development of a distinct Sikh identity and its subsequent politicization. It considers and evaluates the historical accuracy of the religious argument promulgated by separatists in their defense of a separate Sikh homeland. In so doing, this chapter explores the historical roots of the Sikh tradition, the gradual codification of its institutions, the manner in which colonialism shaped its development, and the ways in which these have influenced contemporary separatist discourse. Existing intra-Sikh doctrinal disputes,

particularly as they manifest themselves within the Khalistan movement, are also afforded a comprehensive examination in this chapter.

The next chapter chronicles the Sikh migrant experience in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States and delineates the ways in which settlement patterns have affected the caste, sect, and class composition of the diasporan community. Chapter four further analyzes the ideological and political differentiation that predictably develops from such a highly differentiated society and situates it within the debates that surround the issue of Khalistan. It also underscores the important role played by events in both the "homeland" and the "hostland" in forging a discernible diasporan consciousness.

Chapter five traces the origins of the Khalistani ideology and examines the role played by the diaspora in advancing the separatist agenda. Special attention is accorded to Operation Bluestar (the "critical event"[37]), which served as the catalyst for diasporan political mobilization. In highlighting the factionalism that exists within the Khalistani community, this chapter surveys the main Khalistan organizations that emerged in Britain, Canada, and the United States during the post-1984 period. It also illustrates the ways in which competing factions within the Khalistan movement battled for leadership and influence within the larger Sikh community, supplanting the long-term goal of Sikh sovereignty with the short-term objective of organizational preservation.

Chapter six examines the ways in which "new technologies" such as the Internet have opened up a fresh "space" for ethnonationalist discourse. It evaluates the phenomenon of "cybernationalism" and considers the modes by which communication technologies facilitate kinship and solidarity among physically estranged groups. In particular, this chapter focuses on how a Sikh "nationalist imagination" is cast in cyberspace, by reviewing the content on

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[37] Phrase attributed to Tatla (1999).

Khalistan web sites and the debates that take place in electronic discussion groups.

Finally, chapter seven, the conclusion, summarizes the findings that emerge from the Khalistan case and assesses the overall impact of Separatist Diasporan Movements (SDMs) in ethnoseparatist conflicts. This chapter also provides some tentative suppositions about the contours that ethnonationalist movements will acquire in the future.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Research Methods: In Pursuit of the Puzzle

If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.

Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 1605

Introduction

When I embarked on this project in the summer of 1996, there were few scholarly analyses of diasporan Khalistani activism apart from scattered articles in a few edited volumes and journals (see for example, Dusenbery 1995; Helweg 1989) and chapters in books (Goulbourne 1991). However, two recent works, Cynthia Mahmood's (1996) *Fighting For Faith and Nation: Dialogues With Sikh Militants* and Darshan Singh Tatla's (1999) *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood,*[38] constitute important first steps in filling this gap. Mahmood's meticulous dialogical ethnography presents the oral histories of Khalistani militants in the United States. Tatla's comprehensive study (which he describes as "mainly empirical" [1999, 9]) contains an impressive volume of primary data and makes extensive use of the vernacular media in the United States and Great Britain.[39]

The existing literature on diasporan Khalistani political activity has converged on the causes driving diasporan involvement in homeland politics. Several hypotheses have been put forward regarding diasporan Sikh support for a

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[38] This book was a culmination of research conducted for his University of Warwick doctoral thesis, "The Politics of Homeland: A Study of Ethnic Linkages and Political Mobilization Amongst Sikhs in Britain and North America" (1993a).

[39] Given my linguistic inability to directly access Punjabi sources, I draw heavily from Tatla's work. Additionally, both these books have served as important sources of auxiliary data and corroborative evidence for this project.

separate state of Khalistan. These studies can be broadly classified into two categories—the first concentrates on the instrumentalist motivations driving diasporan activity, while the second emphasizes the psychological aspect of the migrant "condition." Verne Dusenbery's analysis, which falls under the former rubric, focuses on what he refers to as "the dialectical linkages between (1) Sikh notions of collective identity and personal honor, and (2) the sociology and politics of ethnic representations in those countries with significant Sikh populations" (1995, 30-1). In Dusenbery's (1995, 33-4) view, diasporan support for Khalistan is strongly shaped by the politics of multiculturalism and ethnic representation in the pluralist West. Because the logic of Western multiculturalism is predicated on the idea of a distinctive "source culture" derived from a recognized country of origin, then Sikhs who believe their religion, culture, and politics to be intrinsically inseparable will attempt to supply the territorial foundation for their distinct identity as Sikhs. Dusenbery contends, therefore, that the notion of Khalistan appeals to many diasporan Sikhs because it would provide a publicly acknowledged "country of origin" that would accord them the requisite legitimacy and leverage when negotiating for public support for cultural diversity in their host countries.

Shinder Thandi's (1996a) study of diasporan support for Khalistan within the Sikh community in Coventry, England, focuses on the dynamic social, economic, cultural, and political linkages between Sikhs in the Punjab and Sikhs in Great Britain. Following Dusenbery's approach, Thandi frames the issue of diasporan separatist support primarily in instrumentalist terms. He contends that notwithstanding the fact that the Sikh presence in Britain spans more than forty years and that many Sikhs are British-born or naturalized British citizens, strong material ties continue to link diasporan Sikhs to the Punjab. According to Thandi, given the various types of strong individual and collective interests that are created by such links, rationalist self-interest governs support for Khalistan. His

reasoning is that the political future and economic prosperity of the Punjab have tangible "real" effects for overseas Sikhs.

In contrast, Arthur Helweg attributes diasporan sympathy for Khalistan to the "psychological and cultural framework of the overseas community" (1989, 331). In his analysis, both the alienation that Sikhs experience with regard to host society and the opportunity for unfettered political expression they enjoy within the democratic polities of their adopted countries of residence, result in their active support of a separate state. Helweg claims that feelings of displacement typical of the diasporan predicament, perceptions of becoming extinct as a group, and a desire for honor (*izzat*), together contribute to Sikh support of a nationalist agenda. Likewise, in his study of Sikh nationalism in post-imperial Britain, Harry Goulbourne (1991, 126-69) focuses on the psychological component of diasporan involvement. He views diasporan Sikh mobilization being driven by two complementary, mutually sustaining forces: marginalization from the British national community and political developments in the Punjab. His account emphasizes the disenchantment of the community with British society and interprets support for Khalistan as a manifestation of this insecurity and the traditional migrant "yearning" to be elsewhere. Goulbourne suggests that an independent homeland represents a potential refuge in the case of possible future repression in the host country, and underscores its importance as a religious safe haven to Sikhs who comprise a religious minority in Great Britain (Goulbourne 1991, 152).

These two aspects of Goulbourne's analysis are reflected in Darshan Singh Tatla's (1999) study and Mark Juergensmeyer's (1988) work, respectively. Tatla notes that Sikh nationalist sentiments became heightened only after the "critical event" when the Indian military raided the Sikhs' holiest shrine, the Golden Temple, in 1984. In his analysis, diasporan agitation emerged mainly as a corollary of the repressive measures implemented by the Indian government.

Juergensmeyer, on the other hand, argues that diasporan Sikhs have actively promoted Khalistan because their status as emigrants made them socially marginal to the home community in Punjab. Like Goulbourne, he argues that the creation of Khalistan would provide the global Sikh diaspora with a religious center that would grant them a much longed for sense of belonging and religious security.

Such analyses constitute insightful, albeit inchoate, explications of the motivations driving overseas Sikhs to support self-determination. Moreover, with the exception of Tatla (1999) and Dusenbery (1995), these authors tend to portray the Sikh diaspora as an undifferentiated, coherent entity that is united in its political goals. For the most part, they ignore the disputes that exist between the pro- and anti-Khalistan factions and make no effort to investigate the fissures that exist *within* the separatist camp. This dissertation addresses this gap in the literature by focusing on the schisms that exist within the Khalistani diasporan community. I do this by analyzing the debates and conflicts that are generated among Khalistani groups in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, and in this process simultaneously illustrate the ways in which diasporan identities are contested and re-created by the exigencies of "pragmatic" politics. The following section formulates a broad theoretical framework within which to locate and examine some of these issues.

Theoretical Framework

Case Selection

This case was selected for both practical and analytical reasons. I had originally intended to study the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka but this was not feasible due to a number of logistical factors. Upon conducting a preliminary literature review of the conflict in the Punjab, however, I discovered

that the Sikh and Tamil secessionist movements had many commonalities. I thus decided to focus on the Sikh case, as my initial research into ethnic conflict and separatism was easily transferable. Moreover, the fact that I was not Sikh, Punjabi, or of Indian origin (and by extension, that I did not constitute a threat as a member of the "other side") conferred upon me the status of a "detached" observer that would have been practically unattainable in my earlier research.[40] Related to this point was that despite my lack of an Indian heritage, I shared a "common" South Asian identity with the communities that I researched. However, this was to prove to be simultaneously an asset and a liability, as becomes evident later in this chapter. The third reason for choosing the case of diasporan Sikhs was mainly practical. Given the reluctance of many South Asian governments in permitting academics to travel to areas deemed "volatile" (such as the Punjab, Kashmir, Jaffna etc.), focusing on an external element of a separatist movement affords a researcher an expedient mode of data collection. Giving credence to this view is that eight to ten percent of the total Sikh population of approximately sixteen million live outside India and are politically well organized (particularly in the West). Moreover, out of those who live abroad, about one million people are concentrated in just three countries—Great Britain, Canada, and the United States (Tatla 1999). Finally, the Sikh secessionist struggle constitutes an especially interesting case within the genre of separatist movements because the most vocal demand for Khalistan first originated from within the

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[40] While I am sympathetic to the Sikh plight, my feelings remain mixed regarding separatism in South Asia, given my personal background and commitment to pacifism. Studying separatism does not make one a supporter of separatism, and talking to "militants" does not necessarily translate into condonation of their actions. However, to paraphrase Mahmood, no matter how vociferously we scholars of militant movements assert our commitment to maintaining an ultimate intellectual distance from our research participants, we all suffer the accusation of partisanship from their enemies (Mahmood 1996, 272). This work is not intended as an advocacy of separatism; neither is it intended as support for the Khalistan movement's detractors. It is intended as a study of a diasporan separatist movement that might enhance our understanding in dealing with separatism more generally.

emigrant community and, as some authors (Goulbourne 1991; Helweg 1985) contend, continues to be primarily a diasporan endeavor.

The rationale for choosing to concentrate on Khalistani Sikhs living in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States was based on the large size of the Sikh populations resident there. Additionally, all three states are liberal democracies, which while permitting free political expression also differ in their institutional arrangements and commitments to multiculturalism. This latter factor was important because it would enable me to gauge whether state institutional arrangements affect the ways in which diasporan groups mobilize and interact with each other. Finally, the practical consideration of language figured prominently into the research process. Having focused my attention on the Sri Lankan case during my first three years in graduate school, I was linguistically ill-equipped to undertake research in an environment where Punjabi would be the primary medium of communication. The three countries that form the locus of this study are all countries that use English as an official language and I correctly assumed that conducting research in such an environment would bridge a linguistic chasm that would otherwise be impossible to traverse. In summary, the selection of the case was based on the scholarly grounds of academic relevance and representativeness and the practical considerations of accessibility, safety, and convenience.

Research Question
As stated previously, while there are numerous heated debates within the larger Sikh community between the pro- and anti-Khalistani factions, equally vociferous disputes abound *within* the Khalistan movement regarding ideology, strategy, and tactics. As the following chapters demonstrate Khalistani groups that comprise the larger separatist movement have frequently behaved in an adversarial manner towards each other. Moreover, even within individual pro-Khalistan organizations, bitter disputes have ensued among the leadership, which

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ultimately contributed to the organization's disintegration. As an elderly British Sikh Khalistan supporter wryly declared, "the only definite thing about this whole Khalistan business is that everyone disagrees about everything with everybody"[41] (interview with author, June 12, 1998). This leads to the dissertation's main research question, which may be summed up as follows: What are the bases of factionalism within the diasporan Khalistani community?

Separatist Diasporan Movements (SDMs)

In order to investigate and understand the underlying causes of fragmentation within the Khalistan movement, I conceptualize a type of social movement that I label a "Separatist Diasporan Movement" (SDM). As stated in chapter one, my working definition of "diaspora" is borrowed from Milton Esman (1986), who describes it as a minority ethnic group of migrant origin who preserve strong material and emotional ties to their lands of origin. According to Ishtiaq Ahmed, "separatism" may be defined as

> a tendency present among members of a cultural group who come to feel that their objective identity markers—race, skin color, language, religion or some other such ascriptive factor—render them extraneous to mainstream society, which thereby allegedly treats them in a prejudiced and anomalous manner. In essence it is indicative of an apprehension of a real or perceived threat to the well-being of the group posed by other groups, usually those superior or in numbers or holding dominant positions in the state (Ahmed 1996, 56).

In the final analysis, the power of the state and the separatist faction to effectively combat each other is contingent upon their ability to sustain violent action. According to several scholars (Ahmed 1996; Oberst 1996; Singh 1996; Stavenhagen 1996; Eriksen 1993; Phadnis 1989; Tambiah 1986; Horowitz 1985), separatist movements tend to acquire a rigid, uncompromising character only *after* the state engages in systematic repression against them. Illustrative of this is

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[41] I heard numerous variations of this statement throughout the course of my fieldwork.

that the movement for Khalistan is routinely justified as a defense against "Brahminical tyranny" (Mitra 1996, 23). It is the experience of state tyranny that permanently marks alienated cultural groups and forges a collective memory based on hatred and vengeance against the state. Consequently, this provides the group in question with a rationalization for its own acts of violence and militancy.[42]

Donald Horowitz states that "whether and when a secessionist movement will emerge is determined mainly by domestic politics, by the relations of groups and regions within the state. Whether a secessionist movement will achieve its aims, however, is determined largely by international politics, by the balance of interests and forces that extend beyond the state…. Secession lies squarely at the juncture of internal and international politics…." (1985, 230). Moreover, the expression of symbolic or material support by neighboring countries and peoples may serve as the catalyst in organizing disparate sub-nationalist elements into a cohesive movement (Mitra 1996, 24). Diasporas play important roles in many civil conflicts because they constitute perhaps the most powerful force that *sustains* separatist/insurgent movements, through arms, money or political action in the hostland. Because they have political and economic opportunities that their compatriots in the homeland lack, they are able to raise monies, lobby in the international arena, and form alliances with similar disenfranchised groups (Wallace 1998; Marcum 1991; Rubin 1991; Tölölyan 1991).[43] Given that diasporan political activity is accorded virtually free reign in most Western countries, overseas groups linked to ethnoseparatist movements play a crucial role

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[42] It may be argued that state-sponsored violence served as the catalyst in the ethnic conflicts in Punjab, Kashmir, and Sri Lanka.
[43] One such international organization is the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) founded in 1991, which comprises approximately fifty members and observer nations and peoples who represent over one hundred million persons.
<http://www.unpo.org/maindocs/0201what.htm>.

in determining whether a conflict is resolved through peaceful negotiation or whether it continues in its armed form.

The discussion up to this point has focused on the role played by diasporan groups in determining the outcome of ethnonationalist conflicts. However, given that these groups are composed of human beings who are not always rational or consistent in their choice of behaviors, diasporan movements as collectivities (like other organizations) tend to act inconsistently in ways that ultimately serve to undermine their overall political objectives. In a Separatist Diasporan Movement (SDM), this element of inconsistency is particularly amplified because there is no agreed-upon legitimate overarching authority.

A distinct set of common criteria may be identified in what I classify as an SDM. In this definition, an SDM is a coalition comprising groups of minority coethnics of migrant origin that:

1. sustains a strong attachment to their homeland;
2. maintains numerous networks among coethnics in other countries;
3. seeks to carve out a separate homeland out of territory that forms part of an existing state because of real or imagined feelings of persecution;
4. is organized and engages in lobbying and other strategies to attain its political objectives;
5. is linked to the separatist struggle at home; AND
6. contains members, who although sharing the broader ethnic label, also possess other affiliations that vary, e.g., caste, class, sect, origin (urban/rural) etc.

It must be stressed that *not* all members of a diaspora belong to an SDM. In the case of the Sikh diaspora, for example, Khalistan supporters comprise a fraction of the larger diasporan population. This population is represented in the venn diagram in figure 2.1.
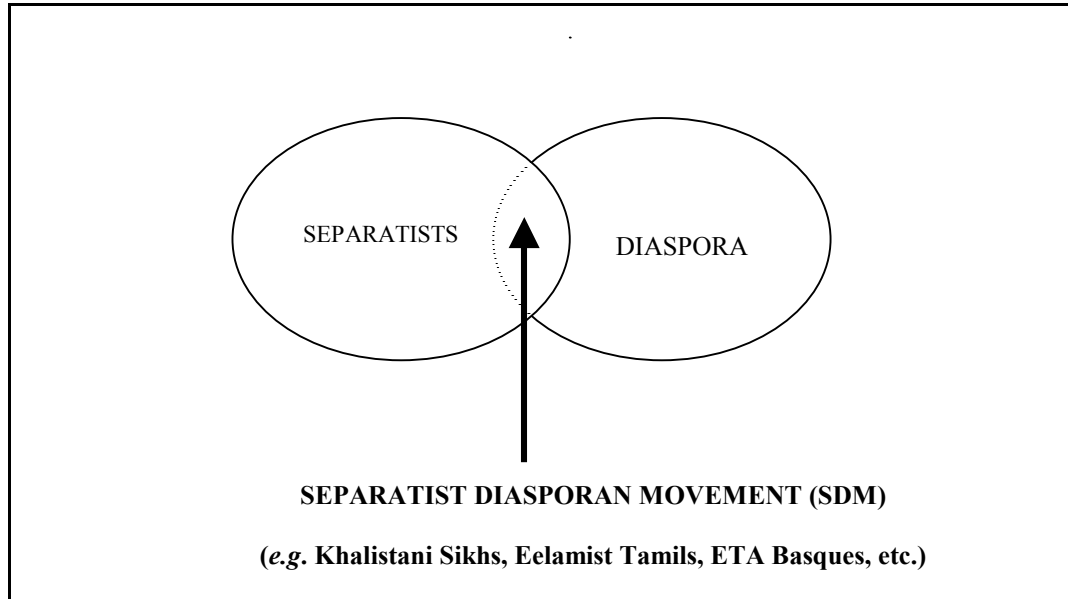
Figure 2.1. Venn Diagram of a Separatist Diasporan Movement.

Separatist Diasporan Movements Versus Exile Groups

    While SDMs and exile movements exhibit numerous common characteristics, the boundaries of the two are not coterminous. Although an SDM may encompass exiles within its domain, the concept of "political exile" does not *necessarily* embody the notion of separatism. Most exile movements generally agitate to overthrow and replace their home countries' autochthonist regimes (Marcum 1991; Rubin 1991; Tusell and Alted 1991). Ousting the status quo in the mother country and replacing it with a favorable regime has been the motivation behind the mobilization of such exile groups as the anti-Franco Spanish, anti-Castro Cubans, and anti-Khomeini Iranians. However, an SDM's paramount goal, its *raison d'être*, is *secession*: a claim to special rights over territory and the recognition of that group as a separate nation. Additionally, membership in an

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SDM extends beyond mere political exiles. As represented in the composition of the Khalistan and Tamil Eelam[44] movements, members include second and third generation members in the diaspora, whose diasporan status is a result of voluntary migration rather than exile.

The Fragmentary Nature of SDMs

SDMs have a propensity to be riven by internal competition, schism, and rivalry. Why is this the case? In attempting to address this issue, I draw extensively on Yossi Shain's (1991a, 1991b, 1989) incisive work on exile politics. According to Shain (1989), during the inception of an exile political movement diverse factions may realize the advantages of appearing as a unified entity in the eyes of prospective supporters and, therefore, form alliances. A unified front enhances the prestige and credibility of the movement and enables the leadership to effectively present its grievances to both international and coethnic supporters. Coalitions are also created as a result of dramatic internal changes in the home country and/or by events within the international system. Additionally, as Shain (1989) observes, resource-sharing is a powerful incentive that draws various groups together. Access to shared resources of power, including financial and military capital, forms a compelling push towards solidarity. As he posits, "Such exile coalitions often preempt the labels 'government-in-exile,' 'national committee,' or other titles designed to symbolize overall national representation" (1989, 41). [45]

However, a number of factors conspire to engender the deep division and internal dissent that are endemic to SDMs. While SDMs enjoy political freedom relative to their kin in the home country, they are simultaneously reliant on the

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[44] An ethnoseparatist movement whose main faction, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), has been waging war in the South Asian island nation of Sri Lanka.
[45] For a discussion on the legalities that shape the formation and operation of exile governments, see Michael Reisman's, "Governments-in-Exile: Notes Toward a Theory of Formation and Operation" (1991).

largesse of both their host state and international patrons and are, therefore, forced to operate under conditions of uncertainty. Moreover, the authority and legitimacy of an SDM's leadership is extremely limited in scope. Power cannot be imposed from above, and in the absence of any kind of coercive apparatus, acceptance of its governance is solely dependent on the genuine consent of its supporters. In attempting to garner a broad spectrum of support for their respective faction, intense conflicts may erupt between subgroups that comprise an SDM. The schematic representation provided in figure 2.2 on the following page depicts some of the numerous factions that comprise the Khalistan SDM.

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │   KHALISTAN SDM     │
                        └─────────────────────┘
              ┌───────────────────┼───────────────────┐
              ▼                   ▼                   ▼
      ┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
      │ Great Britain│    │   Canada     │    │United States │
      └──────────────┘    └──────────────┘    └──────────────┘
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| KC | BK | ISYF | WS | BK | ISYF | C of K | WS | ISYF |

| Dal Khals | Other | | Other | | | BK | Other | |

┌───┐
│ **Legend**[46]   │
│   │
│ **BK – Babbar Khalsa**   │
│   │
│ **C of K – Council of Khalistan**   │
│   │
│ **ISYF – International Sikh Youth Federation**   │
│   │
│ **KC – Khalistan Council**   │
│   │
│ **WSO – World Sikh Organization**   │
└───┘
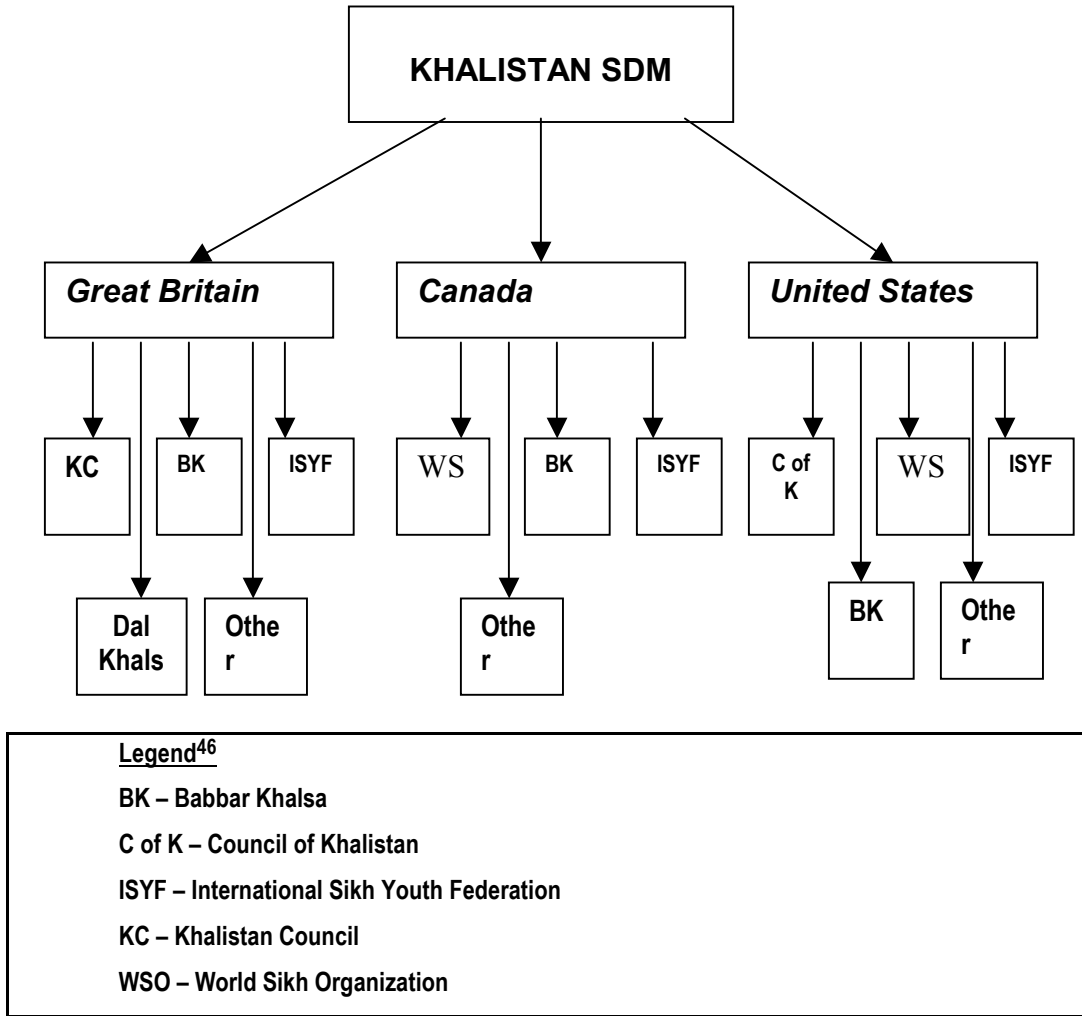
Figure 2.2. Schematic Representation of the Sub-groups that Comprise the Khalistan Separatist Diasporan Movement (SDM).

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[46] These organizations will be described in detail in chapter five.

Generally, the primary source of conflict is centered on the issue of which organization is the authentic representative of the "national" interest. Other issues that were initially sources of unity can also be swiftly transformed into sources of disunity—subgroups within an SDM often disagree over the means of allocating resources and may challenge the other's contribution and commitment to the joint struggle. Additionally, previously existing rivalries and animosities get imported into a new environment. Because of these factors, the factions that comprise an SDM frequently are suspicious and jealous of each other and highly protective of their pre-coalition identities.

Intense battles also ensue from disagreement regarding modes of leadership, political strategies, and ideology. In his discussion on exile politics more generally, Shain states, that

> in a situation of prolonged exile, which is often characterized by political sterility, ideological gratification serves as an essential mechanism to perpetuate loyalties. Exile leaders must appeal to some set of moral and political principles that their prospective and active followers acknowledge as having universal validity. But if devotion to principles is not followed by substantive accomplishments, loyalties can be preserved only for a limited amount of time. Defeatism and dissension may grow, even extremism and political blindness (Shain 1989, 40).

Also, by its very nature,

> exile politics has a strong ideological component. Moreover, under exile conditions, especially in times of operational void and lack of control over developments at home, ideologies meet social, psychological, and tactical needs of the exile rank and file. Ideology helps to protect organizational identity, defining who you are (or, more importantly, who you are *not*) and who you can appeal to. Ideology also serves to define loyalists' responsibility, enabling exiled followers to see their struggle as a sacred mission to bring about national salvation. Ideologies can then provide exile leaders with a body of doctrine by which to justify and protect their position against the threats arising out of any operational stalemate or internal dissent (Shain 1989, 44 [emphasis mine]).

A fundamental ideological issue faced by many SDMs face centers on the question of whether violence is justifiable in the struggle against the governing home regime—a question that often leads to irrevocable splits. Ideology also serves as a mechanism to suppress opposition from within and ferret out dissidents while simultaneously ensuring that the status quo is maintained. Ideological differences also manifest themselves with regard to the kind of political and social system to be established upon the eventual creation of a separate state. Additionally, political stagnation serves to produce further fragmentation (Shain 1989, 38-49).

Applying James Q. Wilson's observation about organizations in general, Yossi Shain claims that in the final analysis, exile organizations seek above all to preserve their own individual survival (1989, 39). This claim could also be extended to the subgroups that comprise an SDM. In describing this survivalist tendency that characterizes exile organizations, Shain further states that "their limited ability to assure control over developments either in their home nation or among their followers and prospective followers abroad often engages *all their energy in guaranteeing the survival of their organization*" (Shain 1989, 39 [emphasis mine]). Because of the uncertain environment in which they must operate and, more importantly, because of their overwhelming desire for organizational survival, some of the SDM's constituent groups adopt adversarial strategies that ultimately serve to undermine their larger political objective. According to Paul Lewis, many of the theoretical disagreements within and among exile organizations are simply "glitter to distract attention from the real battles over some narrower concern—such as disputes over tactics or personal feud" (cited in Shain 1989, 45). When applied to SDMs, this disunity, whether theoretical or practical, has significant implications for the movement's ability to maintain its status as a legitimate political entity. As Shain suggests,

> The limited ability of exile organizations to determine their own political future often makes theoretical questions central to their lives. Adherence to

subtleties of theory—especially when it serves as a refuge from political realities—often seems to work against the exile's objectives. Prospective national and international supporters may withhold or withdraw their support upon noting the exiles' lack of leadership and political experience. Moreover, the home regimes may try to exploit and encourage the exiles internal divisions for propaganda uses. They will portray any exile schisms as proof of extremism and the narrow political interests that these exiles represent. A failure to present a unified exile leadership indicates, according to the home regime, an inability to lead the nation. For this reason, many home regimes do all in their power to induce schism and splits among exiles groups (Shain 1989, 48).

Louise Fischer characterizes the exile condition as "a hothouse where conflicts grow and hairsplitting dogmatists luxuriate" (cited in Shain 1989, 38). As suggested in Fischer's pithy depiction, the very nature of an SDM also fuels some of these conflicts. Separatist groups operating within the boundaries of the home country face numerous hardships and such shared challenges tend to forge a strong *esprit de corps*.[47] Conversely, sub-groups that form an SDM are free from any real physical threat and do not experience the adversity or state repression suffered by their compatriots back home. This freedom grants them license to risk engaging in intra-movement factionalism—what Shain refers to as "the politics of schism" (Shain 1989, 38-49).

Diasporan nationalism forms a unique strain of the ethnonationalist project because of the absence of "real" sacrifice in the battlefield. Benedict Anderson (1992) characterizes this phenomenon of political rebellion without political consequence as a new "mutation" of nationalism, what he terms "long distance nationalism." Anderson argues that in the present age of globalization, nationalist activities are increasingly being conducted via e-mail and other technologies. He recounts the case of a diasporan Sikh who supports Khalistan thus,

> His political participation is directed towards an imagined *heimat* in which he does not intend to live, where he pays no taxes, where he cannot be arrested,

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[47] It must be noted, however, that there exist numerous divisions even within groups that form the domestic component of the movement.

where he will not be brought before the courts – and where he does not vote: in effect, a politics without responsibility or accountability. Yet it is just this kind of politics, with its ersatz aura of drama, sacrifice, violence, speed, heroism and conspiracy, that contributes so substantially to making "being Sikh" in Toronto a serious affair. Nor, it should be added, does the existence of such "true Sikhs," in a multifarious world-wide diaspora, escape the attention of extremist Khalistanis in the Punjab and of their emissaries overseas. Indeed, they expend much effort to exploit the identity-crises, the uneasy consciences, the ambition, and the economic success of out Toronto Sikh and his like, for their own political purposes" (Anderson 1992, 18-9).

According to Anderson, such "long distance nationalism" waged by numerous SDMs constitutes a safe mode of engaging in nationalist activities in which the danger and threat to one's person remains absent (1992, 18-20). Echoing this, Ujjal Dosanhj,[48] an outspoken anti-Khalistani Canadian Sikh, describes recent immigrants who support the militant wing of the Khalistan movement as follows:

> They're worse than the militants in the Punjab, because they are waging a long-distance battle without commitment and without suffering any physical consequences. They enjoy the adrenalin but suffer no pain. They have no commitment here and no commitment there. But all the same they feel fulfilled. They have the best of both worlds (quoted in Blaise and Mukherjee 1987, 211).

The factors highlighted thus far, which are rooted in the diasporan nature of an SDM, together contribute to its propensity towards fragmentation. First, groups that comprise an SDM possess strongly embedded pre-coalition identities, which emerge as soon as the external threat begins to recede. Thus, in the Sikh case, as becomes evident in chapter five, while diasporan Sikhs of disparate religious and political orientations banded together in the immediate aftermath of Operation Bluestar, as time progressed their initial solidarity was supplanted by a growing awareness of their sharp ideological differences. Related

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[48] He is currently the premier of British Columbia and has the distinction of being Canada's first non-white provincial premier.

to this point is that organizations compete over a limited number of resources, funds, and support, and in order to ensure organizational survival are compelled to engage in intense competition with ostensibly cooperative groups. Moreover, the uncertain conditions under which diasporan groups operate serve to underscore feelings of insecurity, and this further exacerbates rivalries as individual groups fight to consolidate their respective positions. This phenomenon clearly manifests itself in the battles waged by Khalistani organizations to gain control over *gurdwaras* (Sikh temples), [49] which is described in detail in chapter three. Additionally, as Shain (1989) and Anderson (1992) observe, oppositional groups (such as the organizations that form an SDM) that function outside the homeland are not subject to its sanctions or restrictions. Such "politics without responsibility," therefore, affords them the opportunity to indulge in protracted conflicts over relatively trivial matters. In sum, it may be argued that because they lack institutionalized legitimacy and the instruments of state power, SDMs are intrinsically unstable entities whose authority is contested and re-contested from both within and without.

Research Methods and Data

Data Collection and Interpretation

According to Robert Putnam, "the prudent social scientist, like the wise investor, must rely on diversification to magnify the strengths, and to offset the weaknesses, of any single instrument" (1993, 12). In order to gain as comprehensive, rich, and nuanced an understanding as possible of the phenomenon under study, a variety of research techniques need to be adroitly deployed. Particularly, when researching a subject as controversial and complex as separatism (and one that is further convoluted by the diaspora dynamic), the

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[49] All Punjabi words are italicized when they first occur in the main text. If used subsequently, they are printed in normal typeface.

researcher is faced with the messy task of unraveling complexities that resist facile treatment. While social scientists such as Pennings, Kemman, and Kleinnijenhuis (1999) and King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) advocate developing a rigorously conceptualized, parsimonious, and elegant research design that can be applied to the comparative project, the actual "real life" field experience rarely conforms to this ideal. Certain data that would elucidate an analytical point are often times incomplete, biased, unverifiable, or just plain unobtainable due to various practical considerations. King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) do concede, however, that

> nothing in our set of rules implies that we must run the perfect experiment (if such a thing existed) or collect all relevant data before we can make valid social science inferences. An important topic is worth studying even if very little information is available. The result of applying any research design in this situation will be relatively uncertain conclusions, but as long as we honestly report our uncertainty, this kind of study can be very useful (1994, 6).

In an effort to achieve a modicum of the transparency called for by King, Keohane, and Verba (1994), I would like at the outset to state that the hypotheses offered in this dissertation are tentative and require further verification. While under ideal conditions the research design would have incorporated two or more similar groups (for example, separatist Tamils and Kurds) in order to provide a systematic case comparison and buttress the theoretical framework, this was infeasible given a number of financial, logistical, and temporal constraints. The "problem" of the small *n,* which has been the focus of considerable debate within the field of Comparative Politics, is one that remains problematic, given the practical considerations outlined above.

When gathering data for this study I employed several methods in my attempt to negotiate the analytical chaos that is intrinsic to such a project. In my capacity as researcher, I wore various hats: political scientist, investigative

journalist, anthropologist, sociologist, historian, diplomat. Sometimes these were worn simultaneously; in other instances I was compelled to switch hats at a moment's notice. As becomes evident later in this chapter, I was also hemmed in by certain ascriptive factors. Given the sensitive nature of the topic being researched, my disciplinary obligations to Political Science were also tempered by a humanistic commitment to the communities that I studied. Thus, although I tried to adhere to the principles of disciplined field observation, the modes of inquiry I adopted were sometimes haphazard, idiosyncratic, and contingent upon the specifics of the situation.

The empirical findings presented in this dissertation are based on four main sources: 1) fieldwork comprising (a) structured interviews and informal meetings and conversations with Sikhs active in the Khalistan movement in select cities in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain and (b) attendance and observation at Khalistani rallies, protests, marches, and governmental meetings in Great Britain; 2) examination of a variety of internal and external English language documents published by overseas Sikh and Khalistani organizations, including memoranda, correspondence, meeting minutes, manifestos, charters, press releases, newsletters, brochures, newspapers, magazines, tracts, and miscellaneous audio-visual materials; 3) content analysis of information available on both Sikh and Khalistan internet web sites and electronic discussion groups;[50] and 4) examination of other primary English language data sources such as newspapers (*Times of India, The New York Times, The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star* etc.) and magazines (*India Abroad, India Today, Frontline* etc.). In addition, a wide range of data was gathered from online resources and, given the contemporary nature of the study, data collection continued until the final stages of writing.

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[50] These are almost exclusively in English and, therefore, easily accessible.

Ethnographic Research and its Challenges

As many researchers note, in attempting to test hypotheses and confirm theoretical speculations there is no substitute for physically "getting out into the field" and "personally experiencing" the social phenomena that are under evaluation. This "soaking and poking," as Robert Putnam describes it, "requires the researcher to marinate herself in the minutiae of an institution—to experience its customs and practices, its successes and failings, as those who live it every day do" (1993, 12). Immersion in the community provides the researcher with invaluable opportunities to observe firsthand whether intuitive guesses have any factual basis while delineating incipient patterns in the behaviors encountered. The fieldwork stage, in many cases, forms the starting point at which theoretical assumptions initially thought robust are exposed in all their analytical inadequacy. The challenge of encountering data that refuse to adhere to parsimonious analytical frameworks compels a researcher to continually evaluate and reevaluate the assumptions on which his or her theory is based.

While fieldwork and ethnography underpin the bulk of Comparative Politics research, there has been, within the discipline (and within the larger field of Political Science itself), remarkably little reflective discussion or self-conscious evaluation of the practical challenges and existential dilemmas associated with the technique. Anthropologists, on the other hand, have begun in recent years to publicly address this issue and have striven to engage in a more critically reflective, self-aware and "ethical" ethnography (see, for example, Mahmood 1996). However, even within a relatively introspective discipline such as anthropology, the issue has and continues to be subject to vigorous debate (Smith 1999; Gellner 1995; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Bell, Caplan, and Karim 1993; Whitehead and Conway 1986; Rynkiewich and Spradley 1976). Michael H. Agar captures some of the difficulties inherent in ethnographic research when he states that

ethnography as a general process, has proved notoriously difficult to talk about. Little wonder. On the one hand, it enjoys the status of a mystical experience within anthropology, and not without reason, for mysterious things happen on the way to understanding an alien way of living. In apparent contradiction to its mystique, ethnography is "just there," the taken-for granted ocean in which anthropologists swim. Whether mundane or mysterious, however, it is a rich and complicated experience, less concerned with "scientific control" than with the learning of pattern in activities controlled by others. *Ethnography mixes science and art, analysis and intuition, detachment and intimacy in ways that call to question the value of those distinctions characterizing the experience* (Agar 1986, ix [emphasis mine]).

Margaret Mead once remarked that as an ethnographer, one must first "know thyself" (quoted in Bell, Caplan, and Karim 1993, 4). In my own case, fieldwork constituted not only a central phase in my research, but also an opportunity for critical self-analysis of both my personal and professional selves. Gavin Smith, an anthropologist, captures my feelings when he writes that his work

arises from reflections of a problem encountered while doing ethnography. 'Doing' ethnography in at least two senses. First in the sense of observing, listening, reading, ancient handwriting in archives, scrawling notes, eating drinking, getting sick, being puzzled and feeling somewhere 'else' than the university or the study in my house. Second in the sense of doing pretty much the same things while 'writing' up back at my place of work—on campus or at home. I'm aware that I cannot locate myself very perfectly in the labyrinth of assumptions and purposes that constitute my particular perspective on the world; but it's fair to say that the puzzlements I have felt arise from a twofold commitment: to study contemporary society ethnographically and to do so from the perspective of historical realism (1999, 1).

Given a highly sensitive issue such as Khalistan, whose advocates are commonly perceived as being "violent," "militant," or "terroristic," the task for the researcher, of being simultaneously compassionate, ethical, and detached, becomes a daunting challenge. In conducting research on a community whose

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members comprise both victims of state violence and perpetrators of guerilla violence, I was compelled to engage in intense introspection.[51] How does personal and professional integrity inform my research findings? When do personal lives and scholarly concerns become entangled in ethnographic work? How is fieldwork affected when interlocutors not only appeal to ethnographers for compassion but also for collaboration and even complicity? What happens to the dialectic of empathy and detachment when victims and perpetrators of violence engage in a battle for "the truth" and attempt to make ethnographers accept their accounts as the only "authentic" version?[52] These questions, while not easily resolved, have profound implications on the kinds and quality of data that are gathered and the ways in with this information is subsequently employed.

Fieldwork and Data Collection

One of the primary methods in which data was collected for this study was through intermittent fieldwork conducted between 1996-1998 in the United States, Canada, and England. Three research trips were taken during this period to Washington, D.C., where the Council of Khalistan is located. The summer of 1998 was spent in London, England, with the greater part of the time spent in the predominantly Punjabi West London town of Southall. Another two months (October and November 1998) were spent in Toronto, Canada, which is home to a large Sikh population. Given the limited research travel budget under which I operated, additional information was gathered through telephone interviews and e-mail correspondence with Khalistani activists in the cities of Birmingham,

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[51] For an excellent discussion on the complex role of scholar in conducting research on separatist movements, see Joseba Zulaika's essay "The Anthropologist as Terrorist" (1995), which recounts his study of the Basque separatist ETA movement.
[52] The last four questions are emphasized in Antonius C. G. M. Robben's and Carolyn Nordstrom's Introduction to *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival* (1995).

Coventry, Leicester (England); Vancouver and Ottawa (Canada); and New York, Yuba City, and Stockton (the United States).

My gender, ethnic origin, and age also played significant roles in shaping the way my fieldwork developed.[53] In the introduction to *Gendered Fields: Women, Men, and Ethnography*, Diane Bell asks, "Why has mainstream anthropology been so recalcitrant in acknowledging that gender makes a difference to ethnography? Why have the practitioners clung so tenaciously to a gender–neutral neo-positivist paradigm or jumped on the post-modern bandwagon? Why has it been so difficult for feminists to be heard?" (1993, 3). This resonates with Mary Ellen Conaway's assertion that in spite of the efforts of many noted anthropologists in the late 1960s, "the concept of acting neutrally is still presented as a viable option, implicitly and explicitly, to graduate students in anthropology (and in other fields)" (1986, 61).

Overseas Sikh communities (like many South Asian and other societies) continue to lean strongly towards patriarchy and this tendency colors social relations between men and women.[54] Given that most Khalistani activists are men,[55] this factor affected the way in which communications were established and conversations were structured in certain instances.[56] Although the treatment I was accorded was extremely hospitable, as a researcher, I was received with varying degrees of seriousness. Tony Larry Whitehead and Mary Ellen Conaway state that "*Gender identity*, or *gender self*, emerges as a result of socially significant

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[53] Ironically, until this point I had always identified with white male scholars from whom I was, and am, separated by numerous factors: history, geography, culture, and gender. For an experience paralleling my own, see Kamala Ganesh's "Breaching the wall of difference: Fieldwork and a personal journey into Srivaikuntam, Tamilnadu" (1993).

[54] As far as doctrine is concerned, Sikhism is an extremely egalitarian religion and accords full status and equal rights to women. However, due to the pervasive cultural influences of both Islam and Hinduism in South Asia, this is not always the case in practice.

[55] Most nationalist movements have tended to be male-dominated.

[56] For further exploration of the role of fieldworker gender identity and its impact on the research process, see Tony Larry Whitehead's and Mary Ellen Convay's introductory chapter in *Self, Sex, and Gender in Cross-Cultural Fieldwork* (1986).

experiences in which the individual is categorically responded to on the basis of his or her sex and the gender ascriptions associated with it" (1986, 5). In my case, the issue of gender was further accentuated by my ethnicity.

Whereas a "white" female researcher would be partially immune from indigenous gender-based norms, a "native" scholar is subject to more extensive and rigorous scrutiny. I am not "white," and although not "technically" of Indian origin, possess physical attributes that visibly mark me as having origins in the Indian subcontinent. Additionally, although I was in my late twenties when I undertook the fieldwork, I was generally perceived within the community as being a "young girl." My status as a "young," "westernized," female, "ambiguous non-white" researcher generated considerable curiosity regarding my personal background, political beliefs, and professional motives.[57] An outcome of my mostly Western education was that I had unquestioningly accepted the long-established concept of the unidirectional researcher-subject relationship, in which the former asks the questions and the latter submissively responds. As an uninitiated graduate student, I had originally thought that I could "study" Khalistani communities and that they would passively allow themselves to be studied. However, what I encountered in the field was starkly different. My "interviewees" were simultaneously my "interviewers" who wanted to know about *me*—who I was as a person, what my background was, what my aspirations were, whether I could be trusted or not, whether in fact I was "sincere."[58] As the research progressed, there was a gradual realization that even "formal interviews" were becoming increasingly more bi-directional and conversational.

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[57] Questions ranged from the purely personal (Was I married? Did I have children? Was I planning to have children in the near future? Was my husband accompanying me on this trip? Did he approve of me obtaining an advanced degree? Were my parents supportive of my educational ambitions?) to the political (Why did I focus on Sikhs? Did I support the Tamil separatists? Did I feel that the Sri Lankan/Indian states were fascist? What was my position on Khalistan? What would I do with my findings?).

[58] For a discussion on the importance of "sincerity" within the Sikh community, see Mahmood (1996).

Formal interviews and informal talks were conducted in English[59] on both a one-on-one and group basis. While I used a tape recorder in my first few interviews, I found it to be both obtrusive and distractive and, therefore, decided to discard it and rely exclusively on written notes.[60] The vast majority of the individuals[61] interviewed were all Sikhs of Indian origin[62] (mainly from the Punjab and some from East Africa), with most being self-proclaimed supporters of Khalistan. Most of my interlocutors were citizens or possessed permanent resident status in the countries in which they resided. The remainder was composed of students, visitors, political refugees and a few illegal immigrants. The ages of those interviewed ranged from 18-75, with about half the individuals being second or third generation immigrants (designated as those who were born in or who arrived in their respective "host" countries before the age of five) and the other half being first generation immigrants (and a few others including students and visitors). As stated previously, the majority of those interviewed were male; out of approximately one hundred individuals interviewed, about fifteen were women. In terms of religiosity, there existed a broad continuum— from "very religious" (strict adherence to Sikh religious symbols, weekly attendance at the gurdwara etc.) to "somewhat religious" (selective adoption of Sikh religious symbols, erratic attendance at religious services). Class composition and level of education ranged widely among the interviewees, with the "middle class" group comprising doctors, barristers/solicitors (lawyers), academics, engineers, computer/technical personnel, entrepreneurs, students, *gyanis* (priests) and other professionals, several who possessed multiple degrees. The rest included factory workers, laborers, and some unemployed individuals

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[59] In the few instances when an interlocutor spoke Punjabi exclusively, there was always an English-speaking Sikh present who served as interpreter

[60] Given the controversial nature of the topic being discussed, this also served to put people at ease.

[61] A few non-Sikh Khalistan supporters were also formally interviewed.

[62] For obvious reasons, I exclude Western Sikh converts or "*gora*" Sikhs from this study.

who possessed the equivalent (or less) of a high school education. Moreover, although Khalistani Sikhs formed my main focus, during the course of conducting fieldwork and writing the dissertation I also serendipitously encountered numerous anti-Khalistani Sikhs who willingly shared their views on the movement.

Meetings took place in homes, offices, and gurdwaras, coffee shops, restaurants and pubs. A few informal discussions took place during a protest march and before and after a governmental meeting. The pattern of interviewing took the form of "chain dialogues"—in which one contact would invariably lead to another and this sequence repeated itself even at the transnational level.[63] While I encountered some initial suspicion regarding my motivation for studying this topic (despite my unmistakably Sri Lankan Sinhalese[64] last name I was asked a couple of times whether I was an "Indian agent"), most Khalistani Sikh activists were exceedingly hospitable, patient, and forthcoming. Numerous individuals graciously took time from tight schedules to respond to my endless probing and sometimes disconcerting questions. Many of them put themselves under considerable risk in discussing the issue of Khalistan—discussions which have the potential of jeopardizing them in very real and tangible ways.[65] In consideration of their privacy, I have elected to keep their identities concealed when citing interviews in this dissertation. The only exception to this is the case of highly prominent Khalistani leaders in which the issue of anonymity is moot. While I have consistently tried to corroborate all verbal information by verifying these

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[63] The movement is highly transnational and most of the key activists in the three respective countries are closely connected with each other. Thus, many of my contacts in London and Toronto were obtained through earlier contacts that I had made in Washington, D.C.

[64] Incidentally, Khalistani activists sometimes greeted me with the proclamation "*Eelam zindabad!"* (long live Eelam).

[65] In our discussions, certain individuals admitted to entering the West as illegal immigrants because they had been charged with engaging in militancy in the Punjab.

accounts with other sources, it has not always been possible to determine the accuracy or veracity of every episode.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the research process and laid out the analytical framework for the chapters that follow. Key characteristics of a Separatist Diasporan Movement have been identified, and it has been further contended that these factors contribute to its inherently unstable nature. The material presented in the following chapters thus focuses on the lines on which groups that comprise the Khalistan SDM are divided and illustrates the ways in which these divisions serve to jeopardize the movement as a whole. To this end, the next chapter examines the origin and development of a distinct Sikh identity and investigates the way in which its evolution has laid the foundations for current disputes within the Khalistani community.

Chapter 3: Inventing Identity: The Politics of Memory and Sikh Separatism

> Time consecrates;
> And what is grey with age becomes religion.

> Frederich von Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*

Introduction

As stated in chapter two, several factors conspire to produce schisms within a Separatist Diasporan Movement (SDM) that threaten to jeopardize the attainment of its ultimate political objective, i.e., the creation of a separate state. According to Yossi Shain, differences in ideology constitute one of *the* most potent bases for division within diasporan political movements. In his view, political exiles "are more prone to engage in ideological debates that produce factionalism, splinters, and in extreme cases, even killings.…" (1989, 44). The ideological divisiveness that Shain identifies is readily discernible within the diasporan Sikh community more generally, and among the groups that form the Khalistan movement more specifically. As one of my interlocutors (a self-described "moderate") quipped, "the only thing we Khalistanis can agree on is that we disagree about everything" (interview with author, June 24, 1998).

In exploring some of the underlying causes of this pervasive factionalism, chapter three examines the evolution of what is now putatively thought of as "Sikhism" and its impact on contemporary strains of ethno-separatist Sikh ideology. In the first section of the chapter, consideration is given to the argument put forth by separatists in defense of their demand for a sovereign state. Second, a summary of the historical development of Sikh ideology and institutions in their various permutations is presented within the larger political context. Finally, I attempt to trace existing intra-Sikh doctrinal disputes, particularly as they

translate into cleavages within the Khalistan movement, to the ambiguity and diversity that are inherently part of the Sikh tradition.

The Justification for a Sovereign State

A Separate State for A Separate Nation

The argument for the creation of a separate state of Khalistan is anchored on the assumption that the Sikh "*quam*"[66] ("nation" or "community") requires a sovereign homeland in order to ensure the preservation of its culture and the protection of its religious liberties. This demand stems from the frustration orthodox Sikhs feel *a propos* Article 25 Section 2b of the Indian Constitution that classifies Sikhs, (along with Jains and Buddhists) as part of a broader "Hindu" category (Oberoi 1993, 270). In the 1980s, angered by the Constitution's negation of their religious heritage, Sikh elites held protest rallies and publicly defaced copies of the document. According to Harjot Oberoi (1993, 1988), the roots of this antipathy may be traced to the long quest for formal recognition of Sikh institutional separatism. In a conspicuous re-enactment of events from more than a century ago (that will be discussed later in this chapter), numerous Khalistani organizations have, in recent years, published pamphlets, brochures, and tracts that are variations on the same theme: *"Ham Hindu Nahin"* ("We are not Hindus").[67] Given the recent rise of a palpable Hindu chauvinism in India, Sikh insecurities about being subsumed under a larger Hindu identity are not entirely

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[66] There is no precise English translation of this word, whose etymology is rooted in Arabic and Persian. It corresponds closely with the notion of "community" and is sometimes used to convey the idea of "nation." For an illuminating discussion on the way the term is employed in the discourse on Punjabi/Sikh identity, see Ballard (1999, 24-31).

[67] See for example, articles in the pro-Khalistan publication, *The Sikhs Past and Present* (Dilgeer 1993). Also, various issues of the British-published magazine *Khalistan Deeyan Goonzan*.

without merit.[68]

Orthodox Sikh sentiment manifests itself in the 1986 *Declaration of Khalistan*, which proclaims that: "The Sikh religion will be the official creed of Khalistan. Further, it will be a paramount duty of the Government to see that Sikhism must flourish unhindered in Khalistan" (cited in Oberoi 1993, 270). This echoes Khalistan activist Ganga Singh Dhillon's 1985 speech in which he declares,

> We are not just looking for a piece of land. We are looking for a territory where Sikhs can protect their women and children. Where a Sikh can become a master of his own destiny—where our religious shrines are not allowed to be run over by army tanks. You can call it an independent Punjab, a sovereign state, or Khalistan. What we are asking for is *a homeland for the Sikh nation* ([emphasis mine] cited in Tatla 1993, 278).

Dhillon's now famous pronouncement, which emphasizes the notion of a safe haven for Sikhs, was expressed almost fifteen years earlier by Jagjit Singh Chohan, one of the earliest campaigners for Sikh separatism. In 1971, Chohan placed a half-page advertisement in *The New York Times,* in which he claimed:

> At the time of partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 it was agreed that the *Sikhs shall have an area in which they will have complete freedom to shape their lives according to their beliefs*. On the basis of the assurances received, the Sikhs agreed to throw their lot in with India, hoping for the fulfillment of their dream of an independent, sovereign homeland. The Punjab ([emphasis mine] cited in Tatla 1993, 176).

More recently, in 1996, noted Khalistan leader Simranjit Singh Mann stated that the Khalistan movement was not merely a rebellion against the Hinduization of Indian politics but a struggle to "protect the Sikh community"

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[68] For a general examination of the recent rise in Hindu nationalism, see Nandy et al (1995). Between April 1999-April 2000, the period in which Sikhs celebrated the tercentenary celebrations of the founding of the Khalsa, the Hindu ultra-nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) launched a concerted effort to antagonize the Sikhs by holding conventions in Amritsar and proclaiming that Sikhs are a sect of Hinduism.   See "A Crisis of Identity" in *The Hindustan Times* online, May 7, 2000, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/nonfram/070500/

from secular influences (cited in Juergensmeyer 2000, 88). Other Khalistan activists and supporters that I interviewed during the course of my fieldwork also maintain that their involvement in the Khalistan movement is largely motivated by their desire to "protect the Sikh faith from Brahminical tyranny."[69] Variations of this leitmotif also figure prominently in numerous Khalistan publications and media releases. Such rhetoric rests on the unquestioned premise that there *is* a "Sikh nation" and that this "nation" *has* a corresponding "historical homeland." Terms such as "Sikh faith," "Sikh nation," and "Sikh homeland" are regarded as irrefutable givens—they constitute unproblematic, natural, fixed categories in the separatist vocabulary.

However, several scholars (Talbot 1996; Oberoi 1995, 1994, 1993, 1987; Goulbourne 1991, 126-69; McLeod 1989; Cole 1988; Kapur 1986; Fox 1985; Juergensmeyer and Barrier 1979) contend that the consideration of exactly *what* constitutes these particularistic "religious beliefs and cultural traditions" that Dhillon, Chohan, Mann, and other champions of Khalistan wish so vehemently to safeguard is complex and resists facile treatment. As the diagram in figure 3.1 portrays, a continuum of "Sikh-ness" exists within the community at large and this internal differentiation has posed a challenge to the more orthodox faction of the Khalistan movement.

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detFEA01.htm> and Praveen Swami's (2000) "RSS Forays into Punjab."
[69] In addition to the expression "Brahminical tyranny," the term "Hindu chauvinism" figures prominently in separatist publicity materials, correspondence, electronic mail, and on pro-Khalistan websites.

Sahaj-dhari Sikhs*	Kes-dhari Sikhs*	Amrit-dhari/Khalsa Sikhs*
Not baptized	Not baptized	Baptized
Shorn hair/clean shaven (*Mona*); observes Khalsa symbols selectively	Unshorn hair/beard; observes most other Khalsa symbols	Unshorn hair/beard; observes all five Khalsa symbols
Self-described as "moderates;" other-described as "moderates"/ "non-Sikhs"	Self-described as "moderates;" other-described as "moderates"	Self-described as "orthodox;" other-described as "fundamentalists"/ "extremists"

Degree of Adherence to Khalsa Identity

←——————————————————————————————→

Degree of Support for the Creation of Khalistan

←——————————————————————————————→

Oppose Khalistan	Oppose Khalistan	Support Khalistan but do not support violence	Support Khalistan employing violent means if necessary
Support Indian government	Alienated from Indian government	Oppose Indian government	Oppose Indian government
Self-described as "moderates;" other-described as "moderates"/"traitors/" "Indian agents"	Self-described as "moderates;" other-described as "moderates"	Self-described as "moderates;" other-described as "moderates"/"militants"/ "extremists"	Self-described as "separatists/"freedom-fighters,"/ "militants"; "other-described as "extremists"/"militants"/ "terrorists"

Figure 3.1. Chart Representing Correlation Between Degree of Adherence to Khalsa Identity and Degree of Support for the Creation of Khalistan.

*These labels will be defined more thoroughly in a later section of this chapter.

In an attempt to provide a background to those uninitiated into the specifics of Sikh identity politics, the diagram in figure 3.1 sketches a broad

pattern between the degree of adherence to Khalsa identity and the degree of support for Sikh separatism. I employ the terms "self-defined" versus "other-defined" to highlight the degree of complexity inherent to the processes of classifying identity. Additionally, several caveats must be borne in mind. The section depicting "Degree of Support for the Creation of Khalistan" in figure 3.1 is not supported by any statistical evidence and is by no means conclusive. The chart merely represents a rudimentary depiction of my observations of the diasporan Sikh community. There are, as always in the case of generalized categories, frequent exceptions to the rule. For example, I know of several *Mona* (clean shaven) Sikhs who are ardent supporters of Khalistan. Conversely, some orthodox Amrit-dhari (baptized) Sikhs oppose the idea of Khalistan and continue to support the territorial integrity of the Indian state. In addition, the line delineating "moderate" Khalistanis from "militant" Khalistanis remains amorphous. Such identities are not fixed, are constantly shifting, and, this mutability further contributes to analytical clumsiness.[70] Illustrative of this is that during my fieldwork in London, for example, I met a westernized, Mona (shorn hair and clean-shaven) Sikh barrister who described himself as a "moderate" Khalistani. On condition of anonymity, he informed me that even so-called moderates (himself included) had been involved in arming the insurrectionists in the Punjab during the mid-1980s and early 1990s. Finally, while the media and even eminent scholars such as Harjot Oberoi[71] (1993, 1991) adopt the label "fundamentalist" to describe Sikh religious conservatives, I opt to employ the phrases "militants," "orthodox Sikhs" or alternatively "militant orthodox faction" when describing this group. My choice of vocabulary is determined by the pluralist framework inherent to the Sikh tradition which renders the term "Sikh

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[70] For an interesting discussion on employing such labels, see Major (1987).
[71] To his credit, Oberoi (1993) provides a rigorous and well-thought out argument in defending his use of the term "fundamentalist."

fundamentalism" somewhat oxymoronic.[72]

Who is a Sikh?[73]

In his seminal (and controversial, as becomes evident later in this chapter) book, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition,* Harjot Oberoi (1994) states:

> In conventional histories of the evolution of Sikh tradition it is common to treat the rise, spread, and consolidation of Sikhism as a single unitary whole. Such a narration, like much else in academic discourse, seeks to dispel disturbing contradictions and synthesizes Sikh experience in order to give it coherence. By this means the Sikh past, to use Nietzsche's illuminating term is made 'painless' for the minds of those who seek to live by it (1994, 47).

However, as this chapter demonstrates, the development of what is now conventionally regarded as "Sikhism" was by no means a smooth or "painless" process.

The term "Sikh" (a term whose etymology is rooted in the Sanskrit word *sishya* or "disciple"[74]) may be regarded as a religious classification.[75] Sikhs view themselves as being ethnically and linguistically "Punjabi" (one whose ancestral roots may be traced to the Punjab[76] and who claims Punjabi as his/her mother tongue). The ethnic "Punjabi" moniker subsumes the religious categories of Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims. Thus, one could be ethnically Punjabi and religiously Sikh, ethnically Punjabi and religiously Hindu, or alternatively ethnically Punjabi and religiously Muslim. However, as is inevitably the case with

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[72] This logic could also be applied to the phrase "Hindu fundamentalism."

[73] For a more comprehensive analysis than the one provided here, see McLeod's (1989) work of the same title.

[74] Definition provided in Patwant Singh (2000, 25) and Grewal (1990, 8).

[75] The effectiveness of the claim that the "pan-Sikh community needs a homeland in which to protect the Sikh faith" is diluted further when western Sikh converts (*Gora* Sikhs) are entered into the equation. For a comprehensive discussion on the differing sensibilities and conflicting assertions of Sikh identity of gora and "Punjabi diasporan" Sikhs, see Dusenbery's (1990; 1988) seminal research.

issues relating to identity and taxonomy, the issue is much more convoluted than these definitions initially imply (see for example, Helweg 1999). According to Peter Goulbourne (1991, 148), there are two facets of "Sikh" identity—origin and development—and they have both been marked by intense political contestation. Owen Cole further maintains that "It may be debated whether there is such a thing as 'Sikhism,' it being argued that there are only Sikhs and Sikh communities, individuals and groups of men and women who follow the revelation given to Guru Nanak and his nine successors as laid down in the Guru Granth Sahib" (1988, 388). Echoing Cole's observation, Mark Juergensmeyer and N. Gerald Barrier posit that

> just as there is no clear consensus on how a Sikh is defined, there is no clear consensus on what comprises the body of Sikh beliefs. Not only is there diversity within the present community of Sikhs, there has been a great diversity of belief and practices over time, as the history of the community has unfolded. The term, "Sikhism" has come into common usage as a way of identifying a religious tradition distinctly different from Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. But one might more accurately speak of the "religion of the Sikhs," to identify the diversities within the tradition (1979, 3).

Further compounding the elusiveness of the term "Sikhs" as a conceptual category, Robin Cohen (1997) defines the Sikhs as an "ethnoreligious" group analogous to the Jews. Moreover, in Cohen's articulation, Sikhs are "ambiguously a nation, a people, an ethnic group and a religious community" (1997, 107). Cohen's inclusion of "ethnicity" as a component in his definition of "Sikh" is significant to this discussion on the issue of collective self-definition. Many Khalistan advocates employ the term "Sikh" with varying degrees of the vagueness that Cohen's definition encompasses. These lexical complexities are further complicated by the fact that many Khalistan supporters and groups employ the term to *mean different things at different times in different contexts*. For

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[76] The Persian term "Punjab" literally translates into the "land of five rivers." However, as

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example, in certain instances, the term is used to describe a person who strictly adheres to the teachings of the ten Gurus. In others, it is used as a coterminous term for "Punjabi" and used simultaneously and interchangeably, e.g., "the Sikhs and their need to have a separate Punjabi homeland in which to preserve their Punjabi culture."[77] In still others, it is used to define a group of people who are not particularly religious but strongly identify with their Sikh "heritage." The politics of definition that emanate from this semantic confusion is succinctly captured in the following exchange between Alice and Humpty Dumpty in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

> "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more or less."
> "The question is, said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty," Which is to be master—that's all."[78]

The preceding semantic debates serve to shape two inter-related pragmatic political questions that are fundamental to the discourse on Khalistan: (1) What shape will the proposed state of Khalistan take? (i.e. will it be a theocratic state such as Iran or a more "secular" state modeled after Israel?) and (2) Who will be eligible for citizenship in this aspirant state? ("Religious" Sikhs? "Semi-religious" Sikhs? All "Sikhs" regardless of religiosity? All "Punjabis" regardless of religious affiliation?) Such issues of self-definition and identity form the nexus of the debate between many Khalistan groups and have at times served to create bitter divisions between ostensibly "cooperative" factions. Moreover, it is consistent with Oberoi's (1990, 19) observation to note that when invoking history to buttress the notion of Sikh separatism, many proponents of Khalistan are selective

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Oberoi (1987, 29) notes, the region that constituted the territory before the 1500s had six rivers.
[77] Conversation with author, June 24, 1998.
[78] Oberoi (1993, 275) employs this quotation somewhat differently in his work.

in what they choose to remember and what they choose to forget. The role that this politics of memory plays in the construction of history is revealed most clearly in issues relating to Sikh identity and orthodoxy. What is "Sikhism?" Who is "a Sikh?" What forms "the Sikh nation?" Is there "a Sikh homeland? Who is to be included and who is to be excluded in the proposed nationalist equation? Present-day answers to these questions are not incontrovertible historical "givens" as many Khalistani activists purport, but rather, have emerged, and continue to emerge, as a corollary of intense political contestation and negotiation (Oberoi 1994, 1993, 1987; McLeod 1989; Kapur 1986; Fox 1985). Illustrative of this is that while more "moderate" separatist groups such as the Council of Khalistan have in recent years employed a more inclusive, "pan-Punjabi" identity in attempting to garner support for a separate state, more "orthodox" organizations such as the Babbar Khalsa rigidly adhere to a more restrictive interpretation of Sikh identity. These two views form the antipodal points that bracket a range of opinions on the form that the envisioned Sikh state should take. Predictably, the existence of such disparate definitions of Khalistan's aspirant citizenry has resulted in considerable internecine conflict.

In an article exploring the role of history as it has been employed in the discourse on Khalistan, Robin Jeffrey (1987) maintains that "History" may be classified into three distinct analytical categories. The first is Popular History or Folk History, namely, personal narratives and stories passed down from generation to generation. The second variant that Jeffrey identifies is Rhetorical History or Politician's History, which is akin to political mythology. The third type, Academic History or Scientific History, was developed in the last two hundred years in Western Europe and constitutes the bedrock of academic scholarship. Jeffrey's classificatory scheme is intended to highlight the fact that in the arena of contemporary Sikh politics, the second type, Rhetorical History, has acquired a hegemonic status and continues to co-opt the other two. While

Jeffrey's taxonomy is somewhat prosaic and open to challenge from several intellectual quarters, the larger point that he makes concerning the role of Rhetorical History in the post-Independence politics of Punjab deserves further consideration. The next section examines some of the claims made by those who employ this brand of Rhetorical History, and, to this end, traces the evolution of a Sikh orthodoxy, identity, and homeland. I thus attempt to illustrate that the "politics of schism"[79] that presently characterize the Khalistan SDM are deeply embedded within the annals of the Sikh tradition.

The Evolution of Sikh Identity

Guru Nanak and Early Sikh Tradition

W. H. McLeod suggests that "in a strict sense there can be no such thing as a perceptible beginning to Sikh history, for like all religious systems Sikhism has antecedents which defy ultimate scrutiny" (1996). However, it is generally acknowledged that Nanak Dev[80] founded the Sikh tradition some time in the late fifteenth century during the period bracketing the collapse of the Lodi Sultanate and the establishment of Mughal rule (McLeod 1999, 1-5). According to McLeod (1999; 1996), Guru Nanak's precise biographical details remain obscure, mythologized in the narratives and stories of the *Janam-sakhis[81]* (hagiographic literature). However, there is scholarly consensus (Singh, Patwant 2000; Thursby 1992; Grewal 1990; McLeod 1989; Duggal 1987; Cole and Sambhi 1978; Singh 1969; Court 1959; Macauliffe 1909) that he was born around 1469 to a Hindu *Khatri* (urban based ruling/mercantile caste) family in the Punjabi town of Talwandi near Lahore. Nanak's group of early followers would subsequently

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[79] Term coined by Shain (1989, 38-49).
[80] Lived: 1469-1539 (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 8).
[81] For an exegesis of the janam-sakhis, see McLeod (1999, 1996, 1980, 1968).

form the *Nanak-Panth*[82] ("community of Nanak's disciples") and be known as *Nanakpanthis* (McLeod 1989, 7). As the succession of Gurus became longer and new moral codes and institutions were introduced into the movement, Nanak's name was dropped and Sikhs increasingly referred to themselves simply as the *Panth.*

The reformist doctrine Nanak propounded strongly rejected the rigid system of caste hierarchy, veneration of idols, and focus on pantheism that is central to the Hindu tradition (Singh, Patwant 2000; Cole and Sambhi 1978; Singh 1969). His credo centered on a simple and strict monotheism in which God was *Sat*, both truth and reality. In his articulation, God was *Nirankar* ("formless") and could only be approached by regular prayer and contemplative meditation on the natural world.[83] Nanak's strong emphasis on egalitarianism also manifested itself in two important Sikh institutions. The first is the development of a common form of worship in the *Sangat*, ("religious congregation") where all disciples regardless of caste or social background assemble. The second is the establishment of the *Guru-Ka-Langar* (also referred to as *Langar*) or free community kitchen in which all partake of food, regardless of caste, gender, social, ethnic, or religious affiliation. Both institutions demonstrate Nanak's strong commitment to eradicating caste barriers and pollution inhibitions (Sikh

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[82] According to Ballard (1999, 15-7) and McLeod (1989, 7), although the word *panth* is a common term in vernacular Punjabi, where it refers to followers of a particular spiritual preceptor, it defies an accurate English translation. The term "community" approximates only some of the connotations of the term in its original form.

[83] While Guru Nanak stressed the fundamental role of spiritual introspection and meditation, he did not intend it as an approbation of asceticism. To the contrary, living a pious, contemplative life within the constraints of society forms one of the central tenets of his philosophy. Nanak possessed a pragmatic view of the physical world and believed that the path to salvation could be pursued while living the normal life of a householder (*Grihastha Dharma*). He intended his doctrine of "disciplined worldliness" to elucidate the way in which religious obligations would be complemented by corporeal duties. His teachings accord considerable import to both the spiritual and temporal aspects of human existence. Thus, in the creed promulgated by Nanak, living pure among the impurities of attachment constitutes something that is both noble and spiritual (Thursby 1992; Sikh Missionary Center 1990).

Missionary Center 1990).

As many scholars (Oberoi 1994; McLeod 1989, 1980; Kapur 1986) persuasively argue, early Sikh tradition, as promulgated by Nanak, was not demarcated by clear-cut boundaries and was, at least initially, a syncretic doctrine that combined new teachings with the residuum of Hindu and Muslim custom. However, many Khalistan advocates select to ignore this phase of early Sikh history (Oberoi 1987). Instead, they argue, that in criticizing certain aspects of prevailing Hindu and Muslim practice, Nanak was, in essence, condemning the two religions outright and advocating the establishment of a new and distinct "third way." In an attempt to bolster their position and its concomitant claim for Sikh sovereignty, numerous Khalistan publications routinely employ the following lines, attributed to Guru Nanak:

> I am not a Hindu nor a Mussalman.
> I accept neither the Ved nor the Quran.
>
> God is neither Hindu nor Mussalman.
> I follow God's right path
>
> I accept the Path of truth
> I reject all other ways

> Guru Nanak, *Janam-Sakhi*[84]

However, the "spirit" embodied in Nanak's verse may be more ambiguous than is generally acknowledged by orthodox Sikhs. For example, W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi assert that

> From the janam sakhi episodes it is possible to argue that Guru Nanak was a reformer speaking and acting against the caste system and working to improve the status of women. Equally it can be asserted that he was a religious synthesiser attempting a blend of Hinduism and Islam in his own

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[84] Cited in Singh (1994, 36).

cult, or that he was a defender of pure religion against superstition, or that in saying 'there is no Hindu and no Mussalman' he was condemning their faiths as ultimately futile. A more satisfactory evaluation of Guru Nanak is probably to regard him as a mystic not in an other-worldly sense but as a person who, through his experience, perceived an ultimate unity in existence…. With regard to Hindus and Muslims he can be seen as encouraging them to perceive the truth which existed within themselves. It was the obscuring emphasis upon ritual which he deplored and condemned (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 12-3).

Moreover, when Nanak died in 1539, the Sikh doctrine that he had propounded was still in an inchoate form with few of the symbolic accoutrements that would distinguish it in later years (Oberoi 1994; McLeod 1989). Capturing the fluid and mutable nature of early Sikh tradition, Oberoi states:

For much of its early history the Sikh movement in line with indigenous religious thinking and practices—with the exception of an understandable emphasis on the soteriological teachings of Guru Nanak—had shown little enthusiasm for distinguishing its constituents from members of other religious traditions or for establishing a pan-Indian community. Sikh notions of time, space, corporeality, holiness, mythology, kinship, social distinction, purity and pollution, gender, sexuality and commensality were firmly rooted in Indic cultural thinking. The territories in which the Sikhs lived, the languages they spoke, the agrarian festivals in which they participated, the ritual personnel they patronized and the symbolic universe of their rites of passage—all these were shared by numerous other communities in Punjab (Oberoi 1994, 47-8).

The Evolution of the Sikh Panth

Before his death, Nanak disinherited his two sons from succeeding him in the guruship. Instead, he selected as his successor a loyal disciple, Lehna, a member of the Khatri caste, whom he named Angad[85] (meaning "part of me"). Upon Nanak's death, his eldest son Sri Chand, contravening his wishes, defended his hereditary right to the guruship and founded an order of ascetics known as the

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[85] Born 1504; Guruship 1539-52 (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 18).

Udasis ("those who renounce"). Refusing to acknowledge the authority of Angad as the rightful guru, Sri Chand erected a religious monument on the site on which his father was cremated and proclaimed himself as the true spiritual heir. During this time, according to J. S. Grewal, "the followers of Guru Angad were not thus the only followers of Guru Nanak" (1990, 48).

Angad and his immediate successors continued Nanak's teachings and retained the fundamental elements of his original philosophy. Like Nanak, Angad chose to bypass his sons,[86] and selected as the third Guru, a disciple named Amar Das[87] who was also a member of the Khatri caste. According to Rajiv Kapur (1986, 4), by the third Guru's term, a large proportion of his followers were drawn from the *Jat* caste (a Punjabi rural/agrarian/"peasant farmer" caste). In 1556, four years into Amar Das' guruship, the Mughals consolidated their position in the Punjab under Emperor Akbar's dominion. Akbar was widely regarded as a benevolent ruler whose active patronage of non-Muslims and tolerance of diverse religious practices greatly contributed to the stability and prosperity of his administration (Grewal 1990, 44; Bannerjee 1985, 4-5). During Akbar's reign, which coincided with the tenure of the third, fourth, and fifth Gurus, the Sikh movement flourished and its practices became increasingly codified.

The custom of langar that Nanak had initiated became formally institutionalized under the stewardship of Amar Das (Singh, Patwant 2000; Sikh Missionary Center 1990; Sambhi and Cole 1978). Guru Amar Das is also regarded as the first Guru to conceptualize the creation of a physical center for

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[86] Recalling events that had taken place earlier, Angad's sons, Dasu and Datu, asserted their claim as their father's rightful spiritual heirs and established a religious center in the city of Khadur. Guru Amar Das moved from Khadur and founded a new spiritual center a few miles away on the river Beas.

[87] Born 1479; Guruship 1552-74 (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 20).

Sikhism (Singh, Patwant 2000, 30).[88] Before his death, Amar Das selected as his successor his son-in-law, Jetha, who adopted the name Ram Das (meaning "servant of God). Guru Ram Das[89] developed his predecessor's vision of creating a geographical center for Sikhism by founding the city of Amritsar[90] which became an important pilgrim destination. In addition, the fourth Guru is credited with reuniting with the disaffected Sri Chand and bringing the breakaway Udasi sect back into the spiritual fold (Sikh Missionary Center 1990, 95). When Guru Ram Das died in 1581, the state of the embryonic faith may be summarized as follows:

> Numerically the panth was not large, probably being counted in tens of thousands rather than hundred of thousands. However, it was growing steadily and beginning to attract the Jat peasantry, especially after Guru Amar Das had emerged as their champion. Almost all its members were Hindus. Geographically its strength still lay in the Punjab where it was always to remain. A sense of distinctiveness and self-awareness was developing, fostered by adherence to a living Guru, the exclusive use of the vernacular hymns in congregational worship and the use of Hindu festival occasions for the assembly of Sikhs (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 23).

Before his death, Guru Ram Das bypassed his first son Prithi Chand and selected his third son Arjan Dev as his spiritual successor.[91] Guru Arjan Dev[92] possessed the distinction of being the first Guru to be born a Sikh and the faith was further consolidated during his guruship. The fifth Guru compiled the

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[88] Several accounts (Singh, Patwant 2000, 30; Grewal 1990, 52) maintain that in an effort to insulate the emergent religious community from what he perceived as the regressive influences of Hinduism, the third Guru instituted several social reforms including the prohibition of female infanticide, *Sati* (the Hindu ritual of widow-immolation), and *Purdah* (the Muslim practice of veiling).

[89] Born 1534; Guruship 1574-81.

[90] Meaning "nectar of immortality."

[91] The first three Gurus had looked beyond their own line in conferring the guruship to a successor. The appointment of Arjan Dev, thus, hailed a new system of succession based on the principle of heredity, though not of primogeniture.

[92] Born 1563; Guruship 1581-1606 (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 23).

writings and sermons of the first four gurus, his own compositions, the hymns of various Hindu and Muslim mystics, and combined them to form the earliest version of the *Adi Granth*[93] (the "original edition" of the Sikh scriptures). Guru Arjan also initiated the first phase of the construction of the *Harmandir Sahib*[94] ("House of God"). It would henceforth serve as a repository for the teachings of the gurus that were codified in the Adi Granth.

While the faith enjoyed rapid expansion under Guru Arjan, Sikh identity during this period was by no means fixed or permanent (Oberoi 1994). However, many contemporary separatist champions evoke Guru Arjan's writings to buttress their separatist claims. They argue that Sikhism was a distinct religion from the time of the early Guru period, and frequently cite in their defense, the following hymn attributed to Guru Arjan:

> I neither keep the Hindu fasts nor the Muslim Ramadan.
> I serve him alone who in the end will save me.
> My master is both the Muslim Allah and the Hindu Gosain,
> And thus have I finished the dispute between the Hindu
> and the Muslim
> I do not go to pilgrimage to Mecca
> Nor bathe at the Hindu holy places;
> I serve the one Master, and none beside Him.
> Neither performing the Hindu worship nor offering Muslim
> Prayer,
> To the formless One I bow in my heart.
> I am neither Hindu nor Muslim.
>
> -- Guru Arjan *Adi Granth*, p.1136 (cited in Oberoi 1994, 57).

The last line in particular has been invoked by orthodox Sikhs (and

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[93] Which would become known in its completed form as the Guru Granth Sahib.

[94] In its completed form known as the "Golden Temple." Many also refer to it is as the *Darbar Sahib* ("Divine Hall of Audience"). Unlike the temples of the time, which had only one entrance, the Harmandir Sahib contained four entrances, one on each side. This revealed Arjan's belief that

numerous Khalistan groups) as conclusive proof of Sikhism as a markedly separate doctrine even during its early phase. Oberoi (1994, 56-7) counters this claim, however, arguing that the hymn comprises a response to an earlier composition by Sufi poet, Kabir, which is included in the Adi Granth. Thus, according to Oberoi, the ostensibly separatist stanza does not necessarily confirm "Sikh separateness" and must be interpreted within its corresponding historical context.

The death of Akbar and the establishment of his son Jehangir as Emperor marked the beginning of Sikh-Mughal hostilities that would continue into the next two centuries (Singh, Patwant 2000, 37-9; Cook 1975, 11-23). Political intrigue[95] within the imperial court made Jehangir hostile towards Guru Arjan and culminated in the latter's arrest, torture, and execution. While the precise details surrounding his death remain a mystery,[96] he is widely acknowledged by Sikhs as their "proto-martyr" (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 29). Guru Arjan's martyrdom marks the end of the peaceful early phase of the Sikh panth. The religious repression that characterized Jehangir's reign played a significant role in transforming the movement from one that had been fundamentally pacifist to one that was increasingly militant. The purported date of Guru Arjan's martyrdom, May 30, 1606, would acquire a deep significance more than three hundred years later when the Indian army attacked the Golden Temple on June 3rd 1984. Additionally, Guru Arjan's torture and death created an ethos of martyrdom (*Shahidi)* within Sikhism that would subsequently shape the militant faction of the

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God existed in all directions and that "the four castes of *Kshatriyas, Brahamins, Shudras* and *Vaishyas* are equal partners in divine instruction" (cited in Singh, Patwant 2000, 34).

[95] Some accounts (Sikh Missionary Center 1990; Cole and Sambhi 1978) suggest that his disenfranchised elder brother Priti Chand colluded with Arjan's enemies in the Mughal court to turn Emperor Jehangir against him.

[96] According to one account (Sikh Missionary Center 1990, 120-1), when Arjan became aware that he was to be sewn up in a fresh cowhide and suffocated to death, he made a final request, to swim in the Ravi river. His wish granted, he submerged himself into the water and subsequently disappeared. Following his disappearance, no body was recovered.

Khalistan movement in profound and enduring ways.[97] In the 1980s, during the height of armed violence in the Punjab, several gurdwaras in the west displayed portraits of Khalistan militants "martyred" for the sake of Sikhism.

The Advent of Militancy

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Sikh movement began to distance itself from its pacifist roots and acquired a more militant tone. It is alleged (Grewal 1990; Kapur 1986; Cole and Sambhi 1978) that when Har Gobind[98] heard news of his father Guru Arjan's murder, he responded by girding two swords, which represent the corresponding concepts of *Miri* and *Piri,* ("spiritual authority" and "temporal power"), and enjoined his followers to take up arms against the aggressor. While the early Gurus had emphasized the spiritual aspect of the movement, Har Gobind placed equal emphasis on his newly assumed temporal power, viewing it as an essential prerequisite to continued spiritual authority. According to McLeod, "The Panth was to become more than an assembly of the devout, and its Guru was thereafter to wield an authority more expansive of his predecessors" (1989, 24).

In order to strengthen his temporal authority, the sixth Guru fortified Amritsar, armed his followers, and developed the distinct *Nishan Sahib* (Sikh flag) for his troops of *Sant-Sipahis* ("saint-soldiers"). During this time, Emperor Shah Jahan (Jehangir's son) initiated a process of Islamisation which led to a rise in Sikhs-Mughal hostilities. It was also during Har Gobind's guruship that the

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[97] The Sikh museum at the Golden Temple and numerous gurdwaras across the world have vibrant iconographies depicting the martyrdom of key Sikh figures (see Juergensmeyer 1988, 73-5). More recently, life-size photographs of Khalistan militants who were "martyred" during the separatist insurrection have supplemented these historical pictorials. For a fascinating study on the ideational role of the martyr in the contemporary Khalistan militant movement, see Pettigrew (1992).

[98] Born 1539; Guru 1606-44 (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 29).

gurdwara[99] (Sikh temple) became formalized as an institution (Singh, Patwant 2000, 41-2). Additionally, Guru Har Gobind constructed the *Akal Takhat[100]* ("the throne of the timeless one") opposite the Harmandir Sahib. It would serve as the primary temporal center where major decisions concerning the Path would be made and would simultaneously complement the Harmandir Sahib's spiritual proceedings. In institutional terms, the establishment of the Akal Takhat symbolized the notion that material or temporal power was critical to the preservation and continued expansion of the faith (Singh, Patwant 2000, 39-40; Pettigrew 1987).

Guru Har Gobind was succeeded by his fourteen year-old grandson Har Rai. The guruship of Guru Har Rai[101] was relatively undistinguished and the institutions established by his grandfather continued largely unaltered. Before his death, Har Rai appointed his younger son, Har Krishnan[102] who was only five years old when he inherited the guruship and died shortly after at the age of eight.[103] Despite forceful opposition from his elder brother, Guru Har Krishnan nominated his great uncle Tegh Bahadur as his successor.

Tegh Bahadur[104] acquired the guruship during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, who implemented his father, Shah Jahan's, Islamisation campaign in a more brutal form. Aurangzeb's reign saw mass forced conversions, the torture and killing of "infidels," and the demolition of Hindu temples and subsequent

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[99] Literally means "doorway to the Guru." Sometimes spelled as "gurudwara."

[100] The Akal Takhat is one of five takhats ("thrones'). However, its location in Amritsar confers on it a preeminent status and the decisions made here affect the entire Sikh community. The other takhats include, the Kesgarh Sahib at Anandpur, the Harmandir Sahib in Patna, the Hazur Sahib in Nander, and the Damdama Sahib in southern Punjab (McLeod 1995, 206)

[101] Born 1630; Guruship 1644-61 (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 32).

[102] Born 1656; Guruship 1661-4 (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 33).

[103] During Guru Har Krishnan's tenure, his older brother Ram Rai continued to assert his claim to the guruship and appealed to Emperor Aurangzeb for support. Har Krishnan was sent to Delhi, so that the Emperor could made his decision regarding the most suitable candidate for guruship. While in Delhi, Guru Har Krishnan contracted smallpox and died at the age of eight.

erection of mosques on their sites (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 34). The ninth Guru became one of Aurangzeb's most vociferous critics and was consequently summoned to appear before the Emperor in Delhi. His intercession on behalf of a group of Kashmiri Hindu *Brahmins* (upper caste of holy men) under the threat of religious conversion and his own resolute refusal to convert to Islam led to his public execution.[105] The ninth Guru's martyrdom is viewed by many Sikhs not only as the act of a man dying in defense of his own beliefs, but on behalf of religious liberty as a principle (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 34). Tegh Bahadur's death would have far-reaching implications for the future trajectory of Sikhism. The element of militancy that had crept into the movement during Guru Har Gobind's tenure would visibly culminate in the doctrine espoused by the tenth and final living Guru, Gobind Rai, Tegh Bahadur's son and successor.

The Evolution of the Khalsa Panth

Like his illustrious forebear Har Gobind, Guru Gobind Rai's[106] spiritual outlook and teachings were largely shaped by the martyrdom of his father. As the last and most influential Guru after Nanak, he is regarded as instrumental in consolidating the fledgling religion that was under persistent threat from the Mughals (Singh, Patwant 2000; Sikh Missionary Center 1990; Cole and Sambhi 1978, 35-8). His guruship marks a watershed point within Sikhism, in which the tradition crystallized and rituals became formally institutionalized. One of the most important facets of this institutionalization was the founding of the *Khalsa Panth* ("the community of the pure"), the military fraternity of Sikh saint-soldiers established in 1699 to protect and defend the faith. The details surrounding its creation, have been popularly mythologized as follows:

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[104] Born April 1621; Guruship 1664-75 (Cole and Sambhi 1878, 33). He had at an earlier time been bypassed for the guruship by his father, Guru Har Gobind.
[105] The Mughals persecuted Hindus and Sikhs alike, and this served to bring the two communities closer together.

To instil [sic] in them a spirit of courage and brotherhood, he chose the day of the Baisakhi, the Hindu new year festival, when his followers had gathered in large numbers at Anandpur Sahib. The guru, having concealed himself, emerged when the fair was in full swing. With sword aloft he demanded the head of a loyal Sikh as a sacrifice to the guru. An awestruck hush fell upon the gathered Sikhs. The guru repeated his demand, and on his third call a single Sikh volunteered his life to the guru. The guru led him into a nearby tent and emerged a few moments later with blood-stained weapon. He demanded another follower to sacrifice his life similarly for the guru. Initially there was no response. On his third call, another Sikh stepped forward and was led into the tent, and once against the guru emerged with blood dripping from his sword. The process was repeated until five Sikhs had thus volunteered their lives to the guru. The guru then returned with the five Sikh volunteers and revealed the five dead goats that lay in his tent. He addressed the astonished gathering saying 'In the time of Guru Nanak there was found one devout Sikh, namely Guru Angad. In my time there are found five Sikhs totally devoted to the guru. These shall lay anew the foundations of Sikhism' (Kapur 1986, 3).

The disciples who had been willing to sacrifice their lives and thereby demonstrated their unfailing trust and loyalty were referred to as the *Panj Pyaras* ("five beloved ones") and were the first initiates of the new military fraternity. Proclaiming the now ritual Sikh salutation, "*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Weheguru ji ki Fateh!*" [107] ("hail to the Guru's Khalsa, hail to the Guru's victory"), the Guru administered the rites of *Pahul* ("baptism") and proceeded to formally initiate the five chosen ones into the Khalsa. The baptismal ritual of the Panj Pyaras entailed the drinking of *Amrit* (a nectar made from water and sugar crystals that had been stirred with a double-edged sword in an iron bowl) and the application of Amrit to the face and hair. The freshly ordained Panj Pyaras were then enjoined to baptize the Guru with the same solution of sweetened water. According to Kapur (1986, 4) this last act symbolized the spiritual commingling of the Guru and the Khalsa

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[106] Born 1666; Guruship 1675-1708 (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 35).

that would henceforth become a cornerstone of the faith.

Sikhs who desired to become part of the Khalsa order were required to relinquish ties to their old castes, deities, and scriptures and unequivocally commit themselves to the veneration of one immortal God. In order to downplay caste differences and emphasize Khalsa unity, all initiated Sikh males were given the last name *Singh* ("lion") and all women were instructed to take the surname *Kaur* ("princess"). Henceforth, the Guru, named Gobind Rai at birth, would come to be known as Gobind Singh. *Amrit-dhari*[108] ("baptized" i.e., one who has taken amrit) Sikhs were enjoined to observe five material articles of faith, commonly referred to as the *panj kakkes* or "five Ks." They include *kes*, unshorn hair; *kanga*, comb; *kachha*, breeches worn under clothing; *kara*, steel bangle worn on the right hand; and *kirpan,* sword.[109] The five "Ks" thus formed conspicuous markers that would serve to easily delineate Khalsa members from the general populace.[110] According to Kapur,

> Ideologically, the creation of the Khalsa aimed at a combination of spiritual excellence and militant valor of the highest order. The Sikh conception of divinity was reinterpreted, laying stress on the martial attributes of the divine being. The supreme being was seen not only as protecting the good, but as a destroyer of evil. The Sikhs were thus exhorted to sacrifice their lives for the faith if necessary. The adoption of the name Singh, or lion, the use if the double-edged sword in the *pahul*, and the wearing of arms, or *kirpans*, were intended to stress this spirit of militancy in the cause of the faith (Kapur

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[107] Both McLeod (1995, 216) and Thursby (1992, 12) provide this translation, which varies slightly in other accounts. For example, Patwant Singh (2000, 56) translates it as "the Khalsa belongs to God, and God's truth will always prevail."

[108] Also commonly and somewhat inaccurately referred to as Kes-dhari ("one who has unshorn hair"). All Kes-dhari Sikhs have not been formally initiated into the Khalsa. Therefore, while all amrit-dhari Sikhs are Kes-dhari, *not all* Kes-dhari Sikhs are amrit-dhari. For an in-depth analysis of the five external Khalsa symbols and their impact on identity, see McLeod (1989, 99-121).

[109] Additionally, Guru Gobind Singh exhorted Khalsa members to distance themselves from sects formed by individuals who had at some time disputed the succession of a guru.

[110] Some accounts (Mahmood 1996) suggest that by making Khalsa members instantly recognizable, Guru Gobind strove to ensure that his disciples would never be able to shirk their religious duty by taking refuge in anonymity. It should be noted that in the aftermath of the events of 1984, many Sikhs started wearing saffron turbans, saffron being the color associated with martyrdom.

1986, 4-5).

The denouement of the formalization of the Khalsa was accomplished by one other important step. Guru Gobind Singh ended the reign of temporal gurus by transferring spiritual authority to the Adi Granth which was henceforth referred to as the *Guru Granth Sahib* ("the sacred volume which is the Guru"). From this point forward, the twin doctrine of *Guru-Granth* and *Guru Panth* would embody the authority and wisdom of the ten previous gurus. The Guru Granth Sahib would be considered the supreme spiritual authority, while the guru's temporal power would be vested in the collective wisdom of the Khalsa Panth. While there is disagreement among scholars about the precise motivation behind the founding of the Khalsa, there is consensus that it constitutes one of the most important transformative phases in Sikhism (Oberoi 1994; McLeod 1989). According to Oberoi, "one thing was clear, the Khalsa order was instituted to finally end the ambiguities of Sikh religiosity" (1994, 59). The formalized rituals, codes of conduct, and new corporeal regulations, together created a distinct religio-cultural category that would permanently differentiate Khalsa Sikhs from those outside the establishment. These cultural accoutrements created normative distinctions between "us" and "them," thus enabling Sikhism to entrench its position as an authentic and permanent "third way."

Not only did the founding of the militant Khalsa Panth have a profound influence on the subsequent development of the Sikh religion, it would also serve as the archetype for the Khalistan movement that would emerge in the latter part of the twentieth century. As the Sikh separatist movement developed, it would invoke this phase of Sikh history by adopting its distinctive name, repertoire of symbols, and militant ethos. In defense of militancy many Khalistanis affirm the following, attributed to the tenth Guru: "when all means of peaceful persuasions fail, it is legitimate (for a man of religion) to move his hand to the hilt of the

sword" (cited in Gandhi 1980, 479). It is also important to note that although all the Sikh Gurus were of Khatri heritage, a large proportion of Sikh disciples were affiliated with the Jat caste. Kapur further states that

> Indeed, it has been argued that the beginning of Sikh militancy, traditionally ascribed to a decision of Guru Hargobind in direct response to Mogul persecution, was in fact, largely the result of growing *jat* influence among the Sikhs. The increasing number of militant *jats* among the Sikhs has been seen to have preceded, and to some extent prompted, a Mogul reaction. Further, the five symbols of the Khalsa have been linked to *jat* customs and traditions (1986, 5).

The nexus that certain scholars (Cole 1984, 268-70; Kapur 1986) identify between Jat infusion into the panth and the movement's subsequent militant ethos is perceived by some to have parallels with the contemporary Khalistan movement (this observation on Jat hegemony within the separatist movement will be explored further in chapter four).

The Context of Khalsa Identity

While there are varying accounts of the number of Sikhs initiated into the Khalsa, historical evidence suggests that not all Sikhs partook of the newly instituted Khalsa rites, symbols, and codes of discipline (Oberoi 1994; Grewal 1990; Kapur 1986; Cole and Sambhi 1978). Non-Khalsa Sikhs included some of the Nanakpanthis (Guru Nanak's devotees), followers of the other gurus, and a miscellaneous group of disciples who belonged to various successor splinter factions. They eschewed all Khalsa insignia and were collectively referred to as *Sahajdhari* Sikhs ("innate," i.e., not marked by outward symbols). As Kapur (1986, 4) chronicles, it was common practice for a single member of a Sahajdhari Sikh family to be baptized into the Khalsa while the others continued their non-Khalsa traditions.[111]

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[111] In certain cases, Sahajdhari parents would offer a male child to the Khalsa in a gesture of gratitude for spiritual favors that had been granted.

Thus, despite Guru Gobind's concerted effort to weave the disparate strains of Sikhism into a coherent whole, at the beginning of the eighteenth century Sikhs could still be classified into two groups: Khalsa or Amrit-dhari Sikhs and Sahajdhari Sikhs. In addition to the divergence in their adherence to Khalsa rites and symbols, one of the main divisions between the two groups lay in their differing political sensibilities. While Sahajdhari Sikh tradition was largely rooted in the pacifist teachings of Guru Nanak, Khalsa ideology was founded on Guru Gobind's notion that militancy was a requisite component in the defense and preservation of the faith. Despite these ideological differences, the two doctrines continued to coexist in relative harmony until the advent of British colonialism.

Moreover, as Kapur (1986, 5) recounts, despite their initiation into the Khalsa, many Amrit-dhari Sikhs continued to engage in several Hindu socio-religious rituals and customs. In 1798, an Englishman named George Forster observed:

> Though many essential differences exist between the religious code of the Hindoos and the Siques, a large space of their groundwork exhibits similarity. The article indeed of the admission of the proselytes among the Siques, has caused an essential deviation from the Hindoo system…Yet this indiscriminate admission, by the qualifications by which they have been adopted, do not widely infringe on the customs and privileges of those Hindoos who have embraced the faith of the Siques. They still preserve the distinctions which originally marked their sects and perform many of the ancient ceremonies of their nation. The form matrimonial connections only in their own tribes, and adhere implicitly to the rules prescribed by Hindoo law, in the choice and preparation of their food (cited in Kapur 1986, 7).

While the distinction between Sahajdhari Sikhs and Hindus had always been rooted in eschatological issues rather than in any observable behavioral variation, by the beginning of the nineteenth century this tendency was also increasingly manifest in the case of Amrit-dhari Sikhs (Kapur 1986, 6-7). Although Amrit-dhari Sikhs ostensibly observed the tenets of the Khalsa and

adhered to the five Ks, they lapsed into the practices and rituals of their erstwhile faith. For example, the veneration of the Guru Granth Sahib was replete with ceremonies similar to Hinduism's pantheistic worship rituals. Moreover, despite the strong doctrinal repudiation of caste, Amrit-dhari Sikhs continued to observe caste taboos in food preparation and consumption, social relations, and marriage rituals (Kapur 1986). In terms of daily socio-religious practice, therefore, as several scholars (Oberoi 1994; Kapur 1986; Fox 1985) posit, there was little to distinguish the Khalsa community from larger Hindu society.

The Formation of the Sikh Empire

The period following Guru Gobind's death in 1708 was witness to increasing levels of Mughal repression and intolerance. Given the level of Mughal oppression, revolts and uprisings had become endemic and the era was marked by political chaos (see Gupta 1944). One of the more popular Punjabi rebel armies was led by a Khalsa Sikh named Banda Bahadur Singh, a follower of Guru Gobind, who managed to thwart Mughal power for several years. His rallying cry, *Raj Karega Khalsa* (meaning "the Khalsa shall rule"), reverberates in the rhetoric of the present-day Khalistan movement.[112] While Banda Bahadur and his army of saint-soldiers successfully fought and won a series of battles against the Mughals, they were finally overpowered by Mughal imperial forces and surrendered in 1715. The following year, Banda Bahadur and his troops were paraded through the streets of Delhi before being publicly executed. Banda Bahadur's execution by external forces further reinforced the culture of martyrdom that had become embedded in the Khalsa heritage.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire began to show incipient signs of its impending disintegration—largely a corollary of its sustained wars with the Afghans. Sikh strength thus grew vis-à-vis the deteriorating Mughal

power and by 1765, the Sikhs had organized into twelve *misls* ("warrior bands") that extended across most of the Punjab. In 1799, the leader of the Sukerchakia misl, Ranjit Singh,[113] united the various Sikh factions, captured the city of Lahore, and made it the capital of his kingdom. On *Baisakhi*[114] day in April 1801, he had himself crowned Maharajah and this marks the beginning of Sikh sovereign rule in the Punjab (Singh, Patwant 2000, 98).

While the state administered by Maharajah Ranjit Singh was "an authentic extension of eighteenth century Khalsa ideals" (McLeod 1989, 63), his reign was distinguished by a high degree of tolerance for other faiths.[115] The rise of Sikh political power led to a concomitant rise in the popularity of the Khalsa and there was a general resurgence in the adoption of Khalsa symbols and rituals. However, even the establishment of the Khalsa Sikh kingdom could not wholly eradicate the pervasive influence of Hindu caste and custom (Kapur 1986, 6-7). Evidence of this is provided in the following historical social commentary written in 1812 by an unidentified English observer:

> The Seikh converts continue, after they have quitted their original religion, all those civil usages and customs of the tribes to which they belonged, that they can practice without infringing the tenets of Nanac, or the institution of Guru Govind. They are most particular with regard to their inter-marriages, and on this point Seikhs descended from the Hindoos almost invariably conform to Hindoo customs… The Hindoo usages regarding diet [are] also held equally scared, no Seikh de[s]cended from a Hindoo family ever violating it, except upon particular occasions…when they are obliged…to eat promiscuously. The strict observances of these usages [have] enabled many of the Seikh[s]…to preserve an intimate intercourse with their original tribes,

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[112] For an interesting discussion on how this phrase has historically framed Sikh politics, see Bhupinder Singh (1999) and Dhanoa (1990).

[113] Mythologized in Sikh folklore as the "She-re-Punjab" ("Lion of the Punjab").

[114] Some times spelled as "Vaisakhi." The date of the new year/spring harvest festival. Sikhs regard it as important because the Khalsa panth was founded on this day in 1699.

[115] Although vestiges of eighteenth century hostility towards Muslims remained, several Muslims were, nevertheless, appointed to high positions of authority within Maharajah Ranjit Singh's court. A number of Europeans, Hindus, and non-Punjabis also occupied several high-ranking army and civil functionary positions. See account provided in Chopra (1997, 89-100).

who, considering the Seikhs not as having lost caste, but as Hindoos that have joined a political association…neither refuse to intermarry nor to eat with them (cited in Kapur 1986, 6).

As the preceding chronicle illustrates, the distinct brand of Khalsa Sikhism espoused by Guru Gobind Singh was under siege from autochthonous Hindu practice even during the zenith of Sikh rule. Additionally, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's implementation of what he believed to be Khalsa practice did not enjoy universal approval and two reform movements that still command significant followings emerged during his reign. They are the *Asali Nirankaris* or "True Nirankaris" (as opposed to the controversial *Sant Nirankaris* who will be dealt with later in this chapter) and the sect variously known as the *Namdharis* or the *Kookas.*[116] Although both the Namdharis and Nirankaris ("*Nirankar*" meaning "formless God") shared the same spiritual goal of restoring Sikhism to its original "authentic" state, they interpreted the means of attaining this objective in divergent ways. While the Nirankaris wanted a return to the fundamentals of Nanakpanthism, the Namdharis espoused the establishment of a restored and revitalized Khalsa (McLeod 1989, 64-5). Orthodox Sikhs regard the two sects as heretical because of their acknowledgement of a continuing line of living Gurus. These doctrinal deviations have also served to create deep schisms within the larger Sikh community and continue to surface in contemporary political debates relating to separatism.

The Imperial Entanglement: Sikh-British Relations
In 1809, Maharajah Ranjit Singh signed a Treaty of Friendship with the British in order to appease the expanding colonial power and thwart its advance

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[116] The name derives from their distinct form of worship that is similar to that of the Sufi dervishes. Their whirling and chanting culminates in a state of ecstasy (*hal*) at which point they emit shrieks (Kooks), hence, the name "Kookas." They are further distinguished by their appearance—they dress almost exclusively in white raw cotton (*khadi*) and their turbans are tied

into the Punjab. Upon his death, a series of dynastic disputes between his successors led to betrayals and counter-betrayals that culminated in the Sikh empire's rapid disintegration (Cook 1975, 11-23; Singh 1955). Such conditions of widespread instability favored the British and after a series of prolonged battles (the First and Second Anglo-Sikh Wars[117]), the Punjab was annexed into the British Raj in 1849.

The collapse of the Sikh empire had a profoundly adverse impact on the Khalsa and eroded the considerable institutional power it had wielded during Maharajah Ranjit Singh's reign. The numbers of Amrit-dhari Sikhs declined sharply upon the imposition of British rule. Amrit-dhari Sikhs (some whose families had belonged to the Khalsa for generations) proceeded to rapidly disassociate themselves from their former distinctive Khalsa identity. According to Kapur (1986, 8), their actions were motivated by apprehension about the new colonial power's attitudes towards the Khalsa Sikhs, who had, until recently, been its adversary. Similarly, while numerous Sahajdhari Sikhs and Hindus had grown their hair long and adhered to Khalsa social codes during the years of Sikh rule, the arrival of the British, led to a swift abandonment of all Khalsa accoutrements. In 1849, noting the erosion of Khalsa identity and institutions, the Governor of the Punjab wrote that the Sikhs are "gradually relapsing into Hindooism, and even when they continue Sikhs, they are yearly Hindooified more and more" (cited in Kapur 1986, 8). Echoing this, Sir Richard Temple, writing in his capacity as secretary to the government in 1853, observed that:

> The Sikh faith and ecclesiastical polity is rapidly going where the Sikh political ascendancy has already gone…. The Sikhs of Nanak, a comparatively small body of peaceful habit and old family will perhaps cling to the faith of [their] fathers, but the Sikhs of Govind, who are of more recent origin, who are more specially styled the Singhs or Lion, and who embraced the faith as being the religion of warfare and conquest, no longer regard the

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into flat bands across the forehead.
[117] For detailed historical accounts of the various battles, see Nijjar (1976) and Cook (1975).

Khalsa now that the prestige has departed from it. These men joined in thousands, and they now depart in equal numbers. They rejoin the ranks of the Hinduism whence they originally came, and they bring up their children as Hindus. The sacred tank at Amritsar is less thronged than formerly, and the attendance at the annual festival is diminished yearly. The initiation ceremony for adult persons is now rarely performed (cited in Kapur 1986, 8).

Although Khalsa identity and numbers were on the decline, the militant ethos on which the order had been founded would shape British-Sikh relations in subsequent years. Numerous accounts (Singh, Patwant 2000; Tatla 1999; Mahmood 1996; Goulbourne 1991; Fox 1985; Singh 1978) indicate that the British were visibly impressed with the military prowess of the "Lions of the Punjab" whom they had fought and conquered, and lost no time in formally incorporating them into the British Indian army. Racial theories about physiognomy on which nineteenth century British colonialism was predicated further leant credence to the view of Sikhs as a "martial race."[118] Illustrative of this is a statement made by a prominent English administrator, Denzil Ibbetson, who claimed that "The Sikh is more independent, more brave, more manly than the Hindu, and no whit less industrious and thrifty, while he is less conceited than the Musalaman and not devoured by that carking discontent which so often seems to oppress the latter" (cited in Kapur 1986, 24). Thus, the cooptation of Sikhs into the British Indian army in the service of the British Empire also fit in nicely with the prevailing colonial policy of "divide and rule."

As Peter Goulbourne (1991) contends, the British Raj strove to cultivate "special relationships" with certain groups of her multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-religious subjects as part of broader colonial policy. By according certain groups privileges and denying others, the British intentionally exploited longstanding pre-colonial divisions in some cases and created new ethnic rifts in

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[118] For an insightful discussion on the pivotal role played by race theory in colonial politics, see Bayly (1999).

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others.[119] The British had, for purposes of army recruitment, defined the category "Sikh" to mean a Khalsa Sikh. Relevant to this discussion on Sikh identity is the fact that the British did not merely encourage the observance of the five "Ks" by Sikh soldiers but compelled them to conform to the Khalsa code (Jeffrey 1987, 67; Fox 1985). By this time, the Sikh population had become heavily dependent on income from service in the armed forces and the British preference for Amrit-dhari Sikhs directly led to an increasing number of initiations into the Khalsa.

British colonial policy was thus instrumental in the expansion and subsequent hegemony enjoyed by the Khalsa Movement (Oberoi 1994; Fox 1985). According to the Punjab administration report for 1856-7, "Sikhism…., which had previously fallen off so much, seems again to be slightly on the increase. During the past year the baptismal initiations at the Amritsar temple have been more numerous than during the preceding year. Sikhism is not dormant" (cited in Kapur 1986, 11-2). As Peter van der Veer concludes, "The Sikh case is an excellent example of the influence of British colonial policies on the development of communal identity" (1994, 55).

The Emergence of the Singh Sabha Movement

While British colonial policy favored Khalsa Sikhs, the new administrative apparatus was capable of absorbing only a fraction of the members of the disbanded Khalsa army. Consequently, after the initial spurt of Khalsa initiations, the Khalsa Sikh population was again on the decline. Kapur (1986) suggests that this decline may be traced to the pervasive influence of Hindu tradition that continued to color Sikh daily life. According to the census report of 1881,[120] "The precepts which forbid the Sikh to venerate Brahmans or to

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[119] As Goulbourne claims, when India was granted Independence in 1947, the policy of the colonial rulers was no longer to "divide and rule" but to "divide and quit" (1991, 149).

[120] In the 1881 Census, Sikhs were for the first time classified as a discrete group. However, who was considered a "Sikh" remained unclear.

associate himself with Hindu worship are entirely neglected…while in current superstitions and superstitious practices there is no difference between the Sikh villager and his Hindu brother" (cited in Kapur 1986, 13). Moreover, as many scholars (Kapur 1986, McLeod 1989) observe, while Sikhs were less rigid in the observation of caste restrictions than their Hindu counterparts, they nevertheless ostracized Sikh converts who had previously belonged to untouchable Hindu castes. Despite doctrinal directives to the contrary, the degree of social distancing was such that many of these new Sikhs were debarred from even entering the precincts of an upper caste gurdwara.

During this period, in addition to the persistent shadow of Hinduism, Sikh practice was simultaneously challenged by the expanding efforts of Christian missionaries.[121] While Christian missionary activity was primarily targeted to the untouchable segment of society, certain prominent aristocratic Sikh families—increasingly disillusioned with prevailing "Hindu-tainted" Sikh practice—also converted to Christianity. The conversion of this latter group sparked apprehension among members of the Sikh aristocracy and landed gentry who recognized that Sikhism was being threatened by a new source. While efforts to reform Sikhism from within had been initiated even before annexation, in the face of aggressive missionary proselytizing, such reform efforts acquired a greater urgency. The reformation of Sikhism was no longer viewed as a purely doctrinal issue but rather a pragmatic matter with long-term material consequences (Kapur 1986, 14-16).

To counter the growing influence of Christian missionaries, Sikh activists (many of them from the reformist Namdhari sect) founded the *Singh Sabha*

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[121] One of the more notable Christian converts included the last Sikh monarch and Maharaja Ranjit Singh's youngest son, Dalip Singh, who with a fervor commonly associated with the newly-converted, actively championed the promotion of Christianity.

("Singh Society") movement.[122] Given its emphasis on the recovery of distinctive Sikh values, the Singh Sabha movement espoused a new orthodox version of Sikh identity that was coterminous with Khalsa identity and divorced from any vestiges of Hindu tradition. Following Singh Sabha directives, Khalsa Sikhs increasingly distanced themselves from individual sect distinctions and moved towards the consolidation of one common and distinct Sikh identity.

Another factor that contributed to the development of a Sikh renaissance was the specter of Hindu revivalism posed by the *Arya Samaj* ("Aryan Society") in the late 1800s.[123] Although both the Singh Sabha movement and the Arya Samaj had initially been united in their opposition to Christian missionary efforts, their alliance collapsed due to the latter's "reconversion" of approximately two hundred outcaste Sikhs back to Hinduism (Kapur 1986, 21-2). A bitter conflict ensued between the Arya Samajists and the Singh Sabhaites and the Sikhs became increasingly vociferous in their declaration that Sikhism constituted a distinct and separate identity. The Singh Sabha movement was subsequently dominated by a radical faction known as the *Tat Khalsa* ("pure Khalsa") that was even more aggressive in championing the notion of Sikhism's fundamental distinctiveness (Oberoi 1994, 381-417; Thursby 1992; McLeod 1989, 82-98; Kapur 1986).

Despite the concerted efforts of both the Singh Sabha and Tat Khalsa movements in proclaiming Sikh identity as inherently discrete, the question of the similiarity/dissimilarity of Sikhs and Hindus continued to be vigorously debated. In 1898, the issue resurfaced in a *cause célèbre* involving Dayal Singh Majithia, a Sikh aristocrat and philanthropist who had bequeathed his estate to a trust (Jones

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[122] The Sri Guru Singh Sabha of Amritsar was formally established in 1873. This was followed by the creation of another Singh Sabha society in Lahore six years later. By 1900, there were approximately one hundred twenty such organizations throughout the Punjab.
[123] The peripatetic Swami Dayanand had established the Arya Samaj in 1875 in order to promote a purified and revived form of Hinduism. Reformist Hindu leaders, concerned by what they perceived to be mass conversions to Sikhism during the early colonial period, waged a campaign

1989, 113). After his death, his wife contested the will claiming that since it had been executed under Hindu law and the issuing party was a Sikh, its legality was questionable. A protracted legal battle followed and the case was ultimately taken to the Punjab High Court that was charged with determining whether Sikhs were Hindus under prevailing British-Indian law. The court ruled that under Indian law, Sikhs were, in fact, considered indistinct from Hindus, and that, therefore, the original will was valid.

The verdict further heightened the animosity between the Arya Samajists and the Singh Sabhaites who started a prolonged propaganda war in order to elicit support for their respective positions (Jones 1989 113-5). The former, who argued that Sikhism was a merely a reformist strain within Hinduism, distributed two tracts titled "*Sikh Hindu Hain*" (meaning "Sikhs are Hindus"). The Tat Khalsa rejoined by publishing Kahan Singh Nabha's (a Tat Khalsa activist) well-known treatise predictably entitled "Ham Hindu Nahin" (meaning "We are not Hindus"). As noted earlier, many contemporary Khalistani groups routinely invoke Nabha's aphorism in their publications and publicity materials.[124]

The Consolidation of Sikh Identity

The Tat Khalsa's rise to dominance within the larger Sikh reformist movement largely determined the subsequent trajectory of Sikhism. As many scholars (Oberoi 1994, 1988; McLeod 1989; Kapur 1986; Fox 1985) observe, the identity, customs and traditions that would become known as "Sikh" in the latter half of the twentieth century were largely a consequence of the Tat Khalsa's concerted and sustained efforts. In the context of identity politics, one of the Tat Khalsa's most significant victories was the Imperial Legislative Council's formal

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to bring Sikhs back into the Hindu fold. For the impact of this movement on communal politics in the Punjab, see Banga (1999).

[124] Journalism was one of the primary means employed by the Tat Khalsa in publicizing their brand of Sikhism and these newspapers and tracts also found their way to diasporan communities in North American and Britain. See, for example, the discussion in chapter four.

implementation of the Anand Marriage Act in 1909.[125] The enactment of this law legally codified a Sikh ritual and accorded for the first time, official governmental recognition of Sikhism as a discrete religion. This decision marked a transformative moment in Sikh history and further enabled the Tat Khalsa to forcefully counter any resistance to its doctrinaire ideology.

One of the Tat Khalsa's other important reform initiatives focused on the management of gurdwaras that, since the eighteenth century, had been under the trusteeship of the Udasis (the sect founded by Guru Nanak's eldest son, Sri Chand). The Udasi tradition's fluid and pacifist inclination was in marked contrast to the militant dogmatism propounded by the Tat Khalsa, and the latter declared that gurdwaras should no longer be administered by "non-Sikh" elements who enjoyed the patronage of the British. Arguing that the *Mahants* (gurdwara custodians) had become corrupt and engaged in profane Hindu practice (such as the veneration of idols), the Tat Khalsa movement launched a forceful gurdwara reclamation campaign (see Uprety 1980, 65-72). In 1920, the Tat Khalsa-dominated Akal Takhat issued an edict that established a committee that would henceforth oversee all Sikh shrines. The committee named the *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee* ("Central Gurdwara Management Committee" [SGPC]) was charged with the task of forcibly reforming mismanaged gurdwaras and ejecting corrupt mahants. In their quest to regain control of gurdwaras, volunteer brigades of orthodox Sikhs calling themselves the *Akali Dal* ("army of immortals") invaded gurdwaras in an attempt to wrest control from their Udasi guardians. The resultant violence compelled British Indian authorities to severely curtail and monitor the operations of the Akali Dal for a number of years. The period 1920-1925 was marked by intense conflict both between Sikhs and Hindus and between various factions of Sikhs regarding the trusteeship of gurdwaras.

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[125] The Tat Khalsa was extremely successful in its political mobilization efforts—over 700,000 Sikhs petitioned the British government to pass this legislation.

After a period of sustained violence, widespread political agitation, and a series of revised draft bills, the British finally ratified the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 (Kapur 1986, 47-100; Singh 1978). The Tat Khalsa had lobbied heavily for the implementation of the legislation and played a key role in determining the specific provisos contained within the Act. Among other provisions, the Act listed by name over three hundred gurdwaras that would fall within the custody of the SGPC in the form of locally elected committees. Additionally, the Act provided the "authoritative" definition of a Sikh as "one who believes in the ten Gurus and the Granth Sahib and is not a *Patit* ['apostate']" (Sambhi and Cole 1978, 160).[126] The Act thus provided legitimacy to the Tat Khalsa's view of a Sikh as one who "has no other religion" (McLeod 1995, 196). While the Tat Khalsa's definition would later gain hegemony, Sahajdhari Sikhs continued to contest this restrictive classification and urged that the clause "and that I have no other religion" be eliminated (cited in Kapur189).

The Akali Dal subsequently evolved into a major political party in the Punjab while the SGPC (although predominantly composed of Akali Dal members) limited its function to overseeing spiritual and educational issues (Cole and Sambhi 1978, 168). By granting widespread jurisdiction to the SGPC on all Sikh-related issues, the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 may be regarded as the culmination of a decades-long battle for institutional Sikh separatism (Kapur 1986, Cole and Sambhi 1978). It is ironic, however, that the original initiators of reform within Sikhism, the Namdharis and Nirankaris (who acknowledge a living line of Gurus), were now disqualified as Sikhs by the Act's restrictive vocabulary. The disputes and controversies engendered by the Tat Khalsa's narrow definition

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[126] Building upon this definition, a process was begun in the 1930s that would further narrow the definition. It was finally ratified in 1950 and is contained in the *Sikh Rahit Maryada* ("Sikh Code of Conduct"). According to this, a Sikh is "any person who believes in God (Akal Purakh); in the ten Gurus (Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh); in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, other writings of the ten Gurus, and their teachings; in the Khalsa initiation ceremony instituted by the tenth Guru; and who does not believe in any other system of religious doctrine" (cited in Thursby 1992, 2).

of Sikh identity continue to color current debates within the Khalistan movement.

As the previous section evinces, the historical pluralism of the Sikh tradition and the porous boundaries between Sikhs and Hindus lasted until the early 1900s. Capturing the evolution of Sikh tradition, Kapur states:

> The boundaries of Sikh identity, of what it meant to be a Sikh were unclear and flexible and overlapped with Hindu identity. The militant Khalsa brotherhood founded by the tenth guru, Gobind Singh, shared a set of common symbols, rituals and practices which superficially set them apart from the Hindus, but Khalsa numbers were fluid, their numerical strength derived from the Hindu community, and they relapsed into the Hindu community from time to time. Besides, even as members of the Khalsa, they followed many of the practices, customs, and traditions of the Hindus and continued to be bound to the Hindus by ties of kinship and marriage. Moreover, it was common for one member of a Hindu family to adopt the garb of a Khalsa without being seen by Hindus to become a lesser Hindu in the process. If few Sikhs would spurn Hindu beliefs without a heavy conscience, the Punjabi Hindus for their part paid homage to Sikh gurus in their thousands. For four hundred years, Sikh and Hindu identities remained interlinked and overlapping (1986, xii).

As scholars (Oberoi 1994; 1988; Kapur 1986; Fox 1985) argue, the development of the teachings of the Sikh gurus into a coherent, distinct whole has been an intensely political process fraught with considerable conflict. Sikh identity was neither a singular one nor internally consistent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and, as the next section attempts to demonstrate, this state of affairs persists even in the contemporary period. Orthodox Sikhs (including a segment of the Khalistan leadership) have actively attempted to distance itself from this mutual and intimate history of "interlinked and overlapping" identities and view Sikhism and Hinduism as "diametrically opposed" (Oberoi 1993).

However, while such "selective amnesia" may be considered an act of deliberate political manipulation on the part of Sikh separatists, it also needs to be interpreted within the context of contemporary Indian politics. The recent rise of

Hindu nationalist parties such as the Bharatiya Janatha Party ("Indian People's Party [BJP]) and its affiliate the paramilitary Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has created a climate of heightened intolerance that serves to create considerable apprehension among many religious minorities in India. This fear is particularly palpable in the Sikh community. In the case of Sikhs, the Hindu-nationalist threat is even more pronounced, given that a common Sikh-Hindu history makes Sikhism susceptible to absorption by a dominant and increasingly belligerent Hinduism. For example, in April 2000, RSS chief K. S. Sudarshan visited the Punjab and proclaimed that Sikhs were part of the "Hindu mainstream" and claimed that organizations that maintained that the Sikh community had a distinct identity "were secessionist" (Swami 2000, 1). Sudarshan further stated that the RSS was "working hard to revive the custom of the eldest son in every Hindu family being raised as a Sikh" (Swami 2000, 1-2).[127] Sudarshan's incendiary rhetoric sparked a furor among orthodox Sikhs who have since mounted an even more vociferous and confrontational campaign to proclaim their individuality.[128] Thus, while the orthodox militant faction has at times striven to champion an unambiguous identity to further their own political ends, in light of recent events, their persistent claim to separateness is understandable.

The Unholy Union of Religion and Politics

Identity Issues and the Khalistan Movement

In what ways does the historical evolution of Sikhism, with its attendant multifarious forms and sub-traditions, cast its imprint on present-day separatist politics? According to Oberoi (1987), "The category, Sikh, was still flexible,

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[127] This applied only to the Punjab, which has had such a tradition.

[128] On April 29, 2000, hundreds of Sikhs took to the streets in protest. In their attempt to differentiate themselves from the Hindus, they shouted the slogan "*Maans gau ka khayenge; Hindu nahin akhwayenge*" ("We will eat beef; We do not want to be called Hindus"). For more information see "A Crisis of Identity" in *The Hindustan Times* online, May 7, 2000.

problematic, and substantially empty: a long historical intervention was needed before it was saturated with signs, icons, and narratives, and made fairly rigid by the early decades of the twentieth century. There was still critical space at the centre and periphery of the community that has not been appropriated and shaded in the colours of a dominant ideology" (1987, 32). It is these "unappropriated" spaces within the community that have challenged the Khalsa version of Sikh identity put forth by the militant Khalistan movement. Challenges to what Oberoi refers to as the "Khalsa episteme" (1994) consistently manifest themselves in contemporary conflicts between the anti-separatist and pro-separatist factions *and within* the Khalistan movement itself. The following section describes some of the more significant recent disputes that have emerged against this backdrop of Sikh identity politics.

Hallowed Boundaries and Sacred Transgressions

The efforts of orthodox Sikhs to eradicate all diversity and present Sikhism as an undifferentiated monolithic faith has led to violent conflicts with sects such as the Sant Nirankaris who are more ambivalent about their Sikh heritage (Oberoi 1993, 272-3). In the 1940s, some members of the reform-oriented Asali Nirankaris ("True" Nirankaris) broke away to form a new organization they named the "Sant Nirankaris" (McLeod 1989, 119). While relations between Khalsa Sikhs and the original Nirankaris had always been tenuous (given the latter's acknowledgement of a living spiritual leader), the canon espoused by the Sant Nirankaris was anathema to orthodox followers. In the minds of orthodox Sikhs, the sacrilege committed by the heretical Sant Nirankaris is twofold: The Sant Nirankaris *not only* pay exalted homage to a living Guru, but, by venerating other works *in addition* to the Guru Granth Sahib as part of their scriptures, are adherents of an apocryphal religion (McLeod 1989, 119). Orthodox Sikhs thus derisively refer to the Sant Nirankaris as the *Nakali*

102

Nirankaris ("Spurious Nirankaris") to differentiate it from the older Asali Nirankar sect.

Orthodox Sikh passions were further roused by the widespread popularity and rapid expansion that the Sant Nirankar movement enjoyed during the late 1960s. During this period, the leader of the Sant Nirankaris began disseminating works that challenged the hegemonic version of Sikhism. Additionally, flouting conventional prohibitions against the veneration of idols, the Sant Nirankaris began to publicly worship the sandals of Baba Gurbachan Singh, their spiritual head. By the 1970s, when the Sikh militant faction was beginning to politically reassert itself, opposition to the Sant Nirankaris' heterodox behavior became an expedient rallying point (Oberoi 1993, 273). Condemning the Sant Nirankaris as blasphemers and apostates, orthodox Sikh preachers demanded that Sant Nirankar centers be closed and that the sect be perpetually banished from the Punjab. Prominent among this group was one Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the charismatic head of the *Damdami Taksal*, ("Mint of Damdama"[129]), an orthodox religious seminary that propounded a doctrinaire Sikh theology. The mounting tensions between the orthodox faction and the Sant Nirankar movement climaxed in outright violence, and Bhindranwale's role in the conflict irrevocably and incalculably shaped the future course of Punjabi politics (this is explored more thoroughly in chapter five).

On April 13, 1978, the Sant Nirankaris assembled in Amritsar for their annual religious convention with the approval of the then-ruling Akali Dal provincial government. To orthodox Sikhs such as Bhindranwale, the public convening of "impenitent profaners" in the holy city of Amritsar constituted the ultimate act of sacrilege (Oberoi 1993, 273). Upon hearing the news of the Sant Nirankar meeting, Bhindranwale is reported to have said: "We will not allow the

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[129] The word "mint" is used in the sense of the verb "imprint;" the school's mission is thus to permanently imprint students with the teachings of Sikhism.

Nirankari convention to take place. We are going to march there and cut them to pieces" (Tully and Jacob 1985, 59). The inflammatory rhetoric employed by Bhindranwale and other orthodox preachers served to mobilize several Sikh congregations to organize anti-Nirankar demonstrations. Additionally, Bhindranwale and another orthodox Sikh named Fauja Singh[130] led a processional from the precincts of the Golden Temple to the location of the Nirankar conference. Fauja Singh then took his sword and struck Baba Gurbachan Singh on the neck at which point the Nirankar leader's bodyguard shot and killed Fauja Singh.[131] The ensuing melee resulted in the deaths of three Nirankaris and twelve orthodox Sikhs and set in motion a series of turbulent events that would ultimately culminate in the establishment of a militant insurrection.

The effects of the Nirankar clash would be felt both in immediate and far-reaching terms. Following the events of April 1978, the Akal Takhat issued a *Hukamnama* (encyclical) that unequivocally stated that Sant Nirankaris would no longer be considered Sikh and that, therefore, any interaction with them was expressly forbidden.[132] Moreover, many orthodox Sikh leaders, angered by the non-guilty verdict handed to those they deemed responsible for the deaths of their colleagues, pointed to a conspiracy between the Nirankaris and central government that would consequently serve to fuel the separatist agitation.[133] On

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[130] He was an agricultural minister of the Punjab government.

[131] His widow Bibi Amarjit Kaur blamed Bhindranwale for her husband's death claiming that Bhindranwale slipped away before the procession reached the convention. She thus broke forces with Bhindranwale and retreated to the Golden Temple where she subsequently founded the orthodox *Akhand Kirtani Jatha* (hymn singing) movement. This group was the antecedent to the militant Babbar Khalsa organization. See Tully and Jacob (1985, 59-60).

[132] The relevant passage of the edicts reads: "Issued under the seal of the Akal Takht, every Sikh man and woman is hereby directed to oppose in every possible way this sect which is anti-religion and enemy of the mankind and it should not be allowed to proliferate in the society and the world at large. There should be no relation of *roti* and *beti* with those Sikhs who have joined this so-called Nirankari sect, including their head Gurbachan Singh, and there should be no interaction of any type with them" (cited in Singh 1998, 3).

[133] Orthodox Sikhs were angered that the case against the Nirankaris had been transferred to the neighboring predominantly Hindu state of Haryana, and that the Haryana court had found them

April 24, 1980, Baba Gurbachan Singh was assassinated and his death was followed by the mass killings of Sant Nirankaris across the Punjab (Oberoi 1993, 273). Given Bhindranwale's incendiary rhetorical campaign against the Sant Nirankaris, the police initially regarded him as a prime suspect. Bhindranwale's arrest was prevented, however, by the intervention of Home Minister Zail Singh[134] who subsequently made a declaration to Parliament confirming the Sant's innocence. According to Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, "Shortly after the statement, Bhindranwale announced that the killer of the Guru of the Nirankaris deserved to be honoured by the High Priest of the Akal Takht…." (1985, 66). In an ironic twist of events, the person subsequently convicted of Baba Gurbachan Singh's murder, a carpenter named Ranjit Singh, would in 1996 be appointed *Jathedar* ("chief priest/officiant") of the Akal Takhat while serving his fourteen-year prison sentence.

In a situation reminiscent of the Nirankar debacle, strident accusations of heresy and threats of excommunication have been leveled against the Namdharis during the past year. The uproar was caused by the recent publication of the Namdhari work, the *Purakh Guru*, which challenges the authenticity of certain passages in the Guru Granth Sahib. Orthodox Sikhs have condemned it as blasphemy and many within the orthodox camp interpret it as a sinister Hindu-engineered attempt to undermine "authentic" Sikh doctrine. Numerous prominent

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innocent (the Nirankaris had argued that they would be denied justice in a Punjab court). See Tully and Jacob (1985, 65). This incident has not been forgotten by many Khalistan activists and continues to figure in many pro-Khalistan publications. See, for example, the article "Martyrs of Amritsar Vaisakhi 1978" by Sikh Students Federation member, Jagbir Singh Sikh, in the April-May 1997 issue of the *Khalistan Deeyan Goonzan*.

[134] Zail Singh served as Home Minister and President in the Congress government led by Indira Gandhi during the early 1980s. As chapter five notes, the Congress (I) party of Indira and Sanjay Gandhi actively cultivated Bhindranwale during the late 1970s. This was primarily motivated by their desire to weaken the then-governing Akali Dal-Janata Dal coalition. In addition, Zail Singh was involved in a protracted feud with Punjab's Chief Minister Darbara Singh (a fellow Congress Party member) that further factored into the political plots and counter plots that were endemic during this time. For a detailed investigation into this political intrigue, see Tully and Jacob (1985, 52-121).

orthodox Sikh leaders, including a faction of the Akali Dal, have demanded that the government of Punjab ban the book outright. As of May 2000, the controversial issue continued to be the focus of heated debate.[135]

The quest for a univocal identity has also led to numerous bitter struggles between diasporan Sikhs. Paralleling developments in the Jewish community regarding dogma and tradition, there have been numerous arcane and frequently volatile contemporary debates focusing on the "true" tenets and nature of Sikhism. Additionally, scholarship that challenges contemporary Sikh claims to the separateness and historical persistence of an identifiable Sikh identity has roused the ire of many orthodox Sikhs. Scholarly attempts to explore contradictions and complexities that are intrinsically part of the faith have often encountered strong resistance from the orthodox front, as illustrated in the following cases.

Sikh Scholarship Under Scrutiny

In the mid-1980s, in an effort to reinforce its commitment to multiculturalism, the Canadian government helped establish chairs of ethnic studies in various Canadian universities (O'Connell 2000, 204-5). Given the significant population of Sikhs in western Canada, it was proposed that a Chair of Punjabi and Sikh Studies be established at the University of British Columbia. The proposal stipulated that funding for the chair would come from the Federation of Sikh Societies of Canada, which would raise $350,000 from Sikh donors and be matched by a government grant (O'Connell 2000, 204). However, amidst a backdrop of escalating violence in the Punjab, the 1985 Air India plane crash (described in further detail in chapter four), the charges of Sikh terrorism, and the counter charges of Indian intelligence involvement, the Canadian government refused to release its share of the funds until 1987. When the governmental funds

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[135] For detailed information, see postings on May 13, 2000 at the newsgroup <soc.religion.

were finally disbursed, the university hired Harjot Oberoi, a young, accomplished social historian to fill the position. Oberoi, an Australian-trained Indian Sikh, had been influenced by the work of W. H. McLeod (a eminent scholar hailed by the academic community as a pioneer within Sikh Studies). McLeod's work, with its focus on the gradual evolution of Sikh identity, had roused the ire of the orthodox community on several previous occasions. The orthodox faction thus greatly disapproved the university's selection of one of his intellectual protégés to the position of the newly established Sikh chair. Some of its elites pressured university officials to dismiss Oberoi, which they resolutely refused.

The underlying tension between Sikh orthodox members and the university finally erupted in 1994, with the North American publication of Oberoi's book, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries* (cited at the outset of this chapter). The prize-winning work, an extension of Oberoi's doctoral thesis on the transformation of Sikh collective identity at the turn of the 20th century, had been published in India a few years earlier to a series of glowing scholarly reviews.[136] Although the book is widely regarded as a thoroughly-researched, well-analyzed, and impartial depiction of Sikh history, devoid of any explicit political message, orthodox Sikhs viewed it as "an aggressive work of mischievous propaganda"—a deliberate conspiratorial act to deracinate the provenance of their communal identity (cited in Mahmood 1996, 240).

In a situation reminiscent of the controversy surrounding Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, in the immediate aftermath of the book's publication Oberoi was subjected to a barrage of criticism and harassment from the orthodox segment of the community. An orthodox network that, according to Joseph O'Connell, is "ideologically guided from Chandigarh and financed from southern California" launched a sustained campaign to remove Oberoi from his

Sikhism>.

position (2000, 205). This is confirmed by Ken Bryant, head of the University of British Columbia's Asian Studies Department, who states, "There were phone calls, letters, pressure on the university to fire him. To its credit, the university didn't. He was accused of being a crypto-Christian…." (cited in Walkom 1998, 4). Oberoi's critics organized protest meetings throughout North America, Great Britain, and the Punjab, and enlisted the authority of the Akal Takhat to shore up support for their cause. Further, as a rebuttal to what they perceived as Oberoi's tendentious work, a group of orthodox North American Sikhs produced their own volume of polemical essays, facetiously titled *The Invasion of Religious Boundaries* (Mahmood 1996, 237). A "review" of Oberoi's book also appears on the pro-Khalistan Sikh Youth Federation (SYF) website in the form of a commentary entitled "The Construction of Religious Boundaries: A Strange Thesis." Written by SYF president Kuldeep Singh, it chastises both Oberoi and McLeod for their interpretation of early Sikh tradition. An excerpt of the review follows:

> After all why are the finer details of the Sikh religion are [sic] not clear to pseudo-scholars like Oberoi and McLeod? Because Oberoi is a non-practicing Sikh and the other claims to be an agnostic Christian missionary. To understand the Sikh value system and to experience the depth of the Sikh holy scriptures & the ideology of our great Gurus is not only hard but rather impossible for them to visualize…. Instead of constructing religious boundaries, the author has tried his level best to destroy the established boundaries of Sikh religion. This book entitled "Construction of Religious Boundaries" should in fact be renamed as the book for the "Destruction of Religious Boundaries <http://syf.jaj.com/relbound.htm>.

Oberoi initially attempted to address such criticism but eventually found dialogue with the orthodox faction a futile endeavor (Mahmood 1996, 240). The unrelenting harassment that he and his family endured in the years following the

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[136] In 1995, it won the prestigious "Best First Book in the History of Religions" prize awarded by the American Academy of Religion.

book's publication finally took its toll. In the summer of 1996, Oberoi resigned from the Chair, although he retained his position as a faculty member in the department of History. According to O'Connell (2000, 207), the vacated Chair continues to "function in a truncated fashion," supporting night school Punjabi language courses and visiting lecturers and scholars.

While the Oberoi imbroglio generated considerable publicity both in the western and Punjabi vernacular media, it was not the first dispute between western-trained academics and those opposed to academic research on Sikh history and religion. Just before the publication of Oberoi's book, the University of Toronto had found itself embroiled in a similarly contentious situation because of the content of one of its students' Ph.D. treatise. Pashaura Singh[137] wrote his doctoral thesis under McLeod's supervision while the latter was a visiting scholar at the University of Toronto between 1988-1992 (O'Connell 1995, 283). Pashaura Singh's dissertation was completed in 1991 and constitutes a textual analysis of the Adi Granth. His work was partly influenced by his dissertation supervisor's earlier research and many of his findings contradict popular hagiographic accounts of Sikh history. Consequently, his work was widely denounced by the orthodox community. His detractors illegally duplicated the library copy of his unpublished dissertation and proceeded to distribute numerous copies to be analyzed by a contingent of "religious scholars" drawn from the orthodox community (O'Connell 1995, 278). They concluded that his "pseudo scholarship" amounted to heresy and that he was part of a more sinister Christian-engineered conspiracy to undermine the faith.[138]

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[137] He is a Canadian immigrant and former *Granthi* ("custodian") of the Calgary gurdwara. He was also the first recipient of a Ph.D. in Sikh Religion at the University of Toronto.

[138] The view that Western scholarship intentionally aims to misrepresent the Sikh faith is reflected in various books and articles. See for example, "Chapter 12: A Critique of the Attempts at Destroying the Sovereign Self-Identity of Sikhism" in Ahluwalia (1983). Also, various articles on the SYF website < http://syf.jaj.com>; and the web article titled "Sikh Studies in the West: An

While his erstwhile student was reviled as an apostate, McLeod was accused of orchestrating a widespread western conspiracy to subvert Sikhism from without. As Mahmood (1996, 240) notes, the term "McLeodism" was coined by orthodox Sikh scholars to pejoratively describe western academic research considered antithetical to their beliefs. Despite the animosity directed towards Professor McLeod, Pashaura Singh, as a practitioner of the Sikh religion, became "the more vulnerable target" (O'Connell, 1995, 278). Soon after his appointment to the Sikh Studies Chair at the University of Michigan, Anne Arbor (which, despite the controversy, he still holds), Pashaura Singh was subject to a scathing denunciatory campaign waged in the Punjabi vernacular press. This was accompanied by a controversial ruling by the SGPC that deemed his work blasphemous and severely rebuked the University of Toronto for sanctioning his research (O'Connell 1995, 278). A few months later, the acting Jathedar of the Akal Takhat, Manjit Singh, confirmed the SGPC's decision and summoned Pashaura Singh before a specially convened committee. After adopting several security precautions, Pashaura Singh traveled to Amritsar and appeared before the Akal Takhat on June 25, 1994. Upon hearing the charges leveled against him, he responded by expressing his continued loyalty to the Sikh faith and remorse for any pain that his research had caused. The Akal Takhat decreed that Pashaura Singh perform various acts of penance that he dutifully accepted[139] (Mahmood 240). He also agreed to seriously consider the various criticisms aimed at his dissertation before publishing it in any form.[140]

The controversy generated by Pashaura Singh's thesis was essentially responsible for the disintegration of the Sikh Studies program at the University of

Analysis," by Gurbakhsh Singh and Taranjeet Singh available at <http://people.a2000.nl/asidh/c.1.1htm>.

[139] Including cleaning the shoes of pilgrims who visited the Golden Temple.

[140] Contrary to some reports circulating in the community, he did not, however, agree to stop conducting research on the Adi Granth nor did he indicate his willingness to retract or revise his findings in the absence of persuasive counter evidence (O'Connell 1995, 278-279).

Toronto. While the program had expanded steadily in the 1980s and early 1990s through generous funding by both individuals and gurdwaras, the defamation campaign mounted against Pashaura Singh and the University of Toronto profoundly impeded fund-raising efforts.[141] Donors were dissuaded from contributing to the university amidst charges of heresy, and the visiting professorship was subsequently dismantled. University of Toronto South Asia scholar and historian Milton Israel, maintains that the department could not ultimately counteract the influence of the powerful orthodox Sikh diasporan lobby (interview with author, October 21, 1998). Consequently, according to O'Connell (who also is a member of the faculty), "The ability of the University of Toronto to offer courses and support doctoral research on Sikh history and religion has been severely curtailed though not eliminated" (2000, 205),

As the preceding section evinces, scholarship that focuses on claims regarding the authenticity of the Sikh religion is not simply an exercise confined within the boundaries of academe. Rather, it has the potential to foment palpable communal discord. Additionally, the metaphorical battle between orthodoxy and heterodoxy continues to manifest in the more material disputes that have recently emerged within the diasporan community. A selection of these incidents is provided in the following section.

The Langar Controversy

Doctrinal debates within the diasporan Sikh community have inexorably colored, and in turn, been colored by disputes within the Khalistan movement. More recently, this has manifested itself in an acrimonious fight over the bona fide code of conduct to be observed in the langar (referring to both the communal meal and communal kitchen/dining hall). Relations between the various factions involved in the ostensibly ideological conflict deteriorated to the extent that

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[141] Despite the program's initial expansion, the appointment of Professor W.H. McLeod as a

certain Canadian gurdwaras had to be placed under a form of judicial trusteeship (Walkom 1998, 1).

In contrast to the Indian customary practice of sitting on the floor, Sikhs in British Columbia have had a long-established practice of partaking the langar at tables while seated on chairs and benches. More recently arrived Sikh immigrants, however, have adhered to putative tradition and eaten the post-religious service meal while seated on mats laid out on the floor. Despite these disparate practices, until recently, the two groups attended religious services together and shared the post-religious service meal in relative harmony. In 1996, however, Balwinder Singh Rangila, a visiting Indian *Gyani* ("preacher"), delivered a sermon in which he declared that the westernized practice of using tables and chairs in the langar constituted a grave doctrinal violation (Walkom 1998). Chastising the congregation for its unorthodox conduct, he argued that "proper Sikhs" should sit on the floor to highlight their solidarity and equality, just as their forebears had done centuries ago. Rangila's pronouncement served to further exacerbate the polarization that, since the mid-1990s, had begun to increasingly mark the Vancouver Sikh community.

Gurdwaras are controlled by the local sangat (congregation) through their elected representatives. Gurdwara members traditionally elect their management committees guided by the dictates of their respective gurdwara's constitution. Thus, they enjoy considerable autonomy from the Akal Takhat in both their day-to-day operations and the codes of conduct they choose to enforce. During the mid-1980s and early 1990s, at the height of the Khalistan movement's popularity, Khalistani militants had been elected in landslide victories to administer numerous gurdwaras in Vancouver, including the Guru Nanak gurdwara in Surrey (a suburb twenty miles southwest of Vancouver). Much of the Khalistan militant gurdwara leadership openly espoused "righteous violence" as a legitimate means

visiting scholar provoked hostility even as early as 1986 (O'Connell 1995, 283).

of attaining political objectives. Additionally, several of its members were linked to militant groups such as the Babbar Khalsa International and the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF).[142]

By late 1995, amidst allegations of mismanaged funds and rampant corruption, the Khalistani militants were defeated in several gurdwara elections (Jain 1995). Predictably, the more militant bloc viewed the election of moderates (who while endorsing Khalistan generally eschew violent methods) as a significant threat to their own authority. The moderate group's more accommodative stance towards Sikh rituals and its approbation of diasporan religious innovations further antagonized purists within the militant faction. The election of the moderates to the management committees of many gurdwaras consequently led to a backlash from the militants, who by the late 1990s had become aware that they were increasingly marginalized (Swami 1998). Rangila's sermon was thus seized upon by the militants, who viewed it as an expedient instrument with which to undermine the authority of the newly-elected moderates. The degree of inter-factional hostility within the Khalistan movement is illustrated in the following incidents.

Rationalizing "Righteous Violence"

Rangila's controversial homily became the catalyst for a series of violent incidents that served not only to divide British Columbia's approximately 175,000[143] member Sikh community but also to generate considerable discord in diasporan communities elsewhere. In December 1996, following Rangila's directive, orthodox members of the Guru Nanak gurdwara[144] destroyed and threw out the furniture in the communal dining hall. On January 11, 1997,[145] the

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[142] Classified by the United States State Department as terrorist organizations.
[143] Varying accounts provide different statistics ranging between 150,000-175,000.
[144] It has approximately seventeen thousand members.
[145] A few days earlier shots had been fired outside the home of the gurdwara's president.

moderates attempted to return tables and chairs to the langar, but were blocked by seventy-five orthodox members seated in protest on the floor. When the moderates pushed through the protesters and attempted to force the furniture into place, a violent skirmish ensued. In addition to other weapons, Sikhs used ceremonial swords and kirpans against fellow Sikhs, an act completely antithetical to Sikh tenets (Walkom 1998, DePalma 1997, Nann 1997).[146] Eventually, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) had to be called in to quell the fighting. In the days following the incident, the RCMP occupied the gurdwara, during which time it uncovered a cache of ceremonial swords and weapons (DePalma 1997). Wide media coverage of incident and the arrest of five gurdwara members[147] for assault and attempted murder served to further bolster the mainstream Canadian view of Sikhs as an "irksome community." In the immediate aftermath of the violence, a sign (written in the Punjabi Gurmukhi script) was placed on the back wall of the gurdwara that forbade "proselytizing or speeches with respect to the issue of the use and presence of chairs versus mats" (DePalma 1997). While the immediate cause of the controversy was the issue of seating arrangements, many observers interpret the conflict as a manifestation of deeper struggles over authority, legitimacy, and resources (Jeyaraj 1998a, 1998b; Swami 1998, Walkom 1998; DePalma 1997). According to moderate Harmohinder Singh Bains[148] (a mona Sikh ["clean shaven"]), "This is not a table and chair issue. The whole thing is about power, ego and money" (cited in DePalma 1997). Moderates further ask why militants did not impose a furniture ban during their ten-year term in office. Militants rejoin that they were unaware of the gravity of the violation. According to militant spokesperson Gurpreen Singh

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[146] While the moderates accused the militants of instigating the clash they were also implicated in the violence that ensued. According to one report, "Moderates were among those who stoned police and chanted 'Kill the RCMP'" (Walkom 1998, 2).
[147] Some of the accused have since been acquitted for lack of evidence. See *The Salt Lake Tribune*, February 20, 1999.

Jouhal, "We had never thought about it before. But when someone who knew something told us what we had been doing wasn't right, we said 'All right.'" (cited in Walkom 1998, 7).

The British Columbia Sikh community is one of the oldest "visible minority" settlements in Canada, and Sikhs form one of the more affluent migrant communities. Thus, Vancouver area gurdwaras tend to be relatively wealthy institutions. It is estimated that the Guru Nanak gurdwara, for example, has assets worth five million dollars and administers an annual budget in excess of one million dollars (Walkom 1998, 6). According to many observers (Jeyaraj 1998a, 1998b; Walkom 1998; Corriea 1997), the control and appropriation of these funds has been at the center of many Khalistani inter-factional battles. Moderates charge that during the militants' trusteeship, funds were misappropriated for various questionable activities including remitting funds to arm Khalistan rebels in the Punjab. The militants contest such charges maintaining that gurdwara funds were never used to support terrorism. Jouhal states, "There is no question that money goes to India from here. But there is no evidence it goes to (terrorists)…" (cited in Walkom 1998, 6). Fellow militant Amrit Singh Rai concurs: "There is no need to use temple money. We can raise money outside the temples"[149] (cited in Walkom 1998, 6). Despite these refutations, moderate Sikhs and other non-Sikh Canadians allege that militant Khalistanis and other radical groups exploit Canada's liberal tax policy that grants a tax-exempt status to philanthropic institutions.

The battle recounted in the preceding section was subsequently replayed at the oldest and largest gurdwara in North America, the Ross Street gurdwara in Vancouver (Pais 1999, 1998). According to John Spellman, professor of Asian Studies at the University of Windsor, "There were several incidents where kirpans were drawn" (Neuman 1999, 2). Additionally, in August 1998, a man was stabbed

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[148] He was elected to the Surrey gurdwara leadership in December 1995.
[149] Rai claims that his organization has raised $500,000 since 1994 to assist Sikhs jailed in India

after he wore shoes into the Abbotsford gurdwara located west of Vancouver (Walkom 1998). The residual effects of the violence that erupted in Canada continued to be felt in other diasporan communities. In August 1998, Paramjit Pannu, a member of the West Broward gurdwara in Florida, demanded that the worshippers sit on the floor during the ritual langar (Swami 1998). When his fellow congregants ignored the request, he left the service in anger. He later returned with a gun to a religious lecture session at the Florida Sikh Society and fired into the audience killing Gurtej Dhaliwal and injuring two others. After firing into the congregation, Pannu turned the gun on himself. In January 2000, an official at the El Sobrante gurdwara in California, Ajmer Singh Malhi, was shot and killed by Joga Singh Sandher, whose alleged motivation is that he was not permitted to address the congregation (Boudreau 2000, Mozumder 2000). In a subsequent interview with detectives, he said that he shot Malhi because Malhi had lied to him by telling him there was no time left for his speech. In his deposition Sandher maintains that "The person was lying and it was my religious obligation to punish him" (cited in Mozumder, 2000).

In an effort to legitimize their anti-furniture stance, the militant faction appealed to the Akal Takhat for support. On April 20, 1998, the jathedar of the Akal Takhat, Ranjit Singh, ruled in their favor and issued a hukamnama that affirmed that partaking langar while seated on chairs amounted to an act of apostasy. Although Ranjit Singh's controversial decree served to strengthen the militant camp, ultimately it did little to resolve the issue. While militants maintained that the Akal Takhat is the final arbiter on all doctrinal matters and that their position had finally been vindicated, moderates continued with their previous practices. The moderates argued further that the divine wisdom of the faith is vested in the Guru's writings and in the individual communities (sangat) that comprise each gurdwara. Thus, they claim that one rigidly enforced code of

(Walkom 1998, 8).

116

conduct is inappropriate for widely different congregations. Additionally, some moderates alleged that the leadership of the Akal Takhat had become increasingly corrupt and thus challenged its judgment in determining how the quotidian aspects of their gurdwaras should be administered.[150] Ranjit Singh's hukamnama was also harshly criticized by his predecessor, Manjit Singh, the present Jathedar of the Sri Kesgarh Sahib (another of the five takhats). Moreover, the anti-furniture decree served to further stoke the rampant factionalism that exists between certain Akali Dal leaders and members of the SGPC (see Kang 1999; Swami 1998).

While the langar issue has been dominated by the moderates and the militants (who have even adopted the media's shorthand labels, "pro-furniture" versus "anti-furniture," in their self-descriptions [Walkom 1998, 2]), they do not represent the majority of diasporan Sikhs (Nann 1997). Many diasporan Sikhs argue for a practicable solution that embodies the spirit of the law rather than rigid adherence to the letter of the law, and, therefore, do not identify with the militant faction. Conversely, they also do not identify with the moderates who are vociferous in their opposition to the anti-furniture camp. This largely ignored "silent majority" has adopted a "live and let live" attitude towards the issue and eschews the strident dogma propagated by both the pro-furniture and anti-furniture camps. This intermediary position is encapsulated in a recent email submitted to a Khalistan electronic discussion group:

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[150] Incidentally, in 1999, when Ranjit Singh attempted to travel to the United States, diasporan Sikhs swiftly mobilized to prevent his visit. While the Jathedar had already been refused a Canadian visa, he had obtained a US visa by concealing his prior criminal record. Minutes before he boarded the flight, his detractors provided US authorities with a videotape of him confessing to the murder of Nirankar leader Baba Gurbachan Singh's. Orthodox Sikhs continue to lobby US authorities to allow Ranjit Singh entry into the United States (Pushkarna 1999).

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa - Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

I have even lost friends over the discussion about the langar and the chairs, but I will again try and make my point, in the hope that not too many people will get mad with me !

I only like taking Langar sitting on the floor. What other people do is their business, but I sit down on the mat provided.

I cannot see any advantage, from any point of view, in eating standing, as many people do here, both in the Southall and Hounslow Singh Sabha. I can understand that somebody not used to sitting crossed-legged has problems sitting in sangat listening to kirtan or katha, but unless you are handicapped or ancient, you should be able to sit on the floor for let us say maximum 15 minutes, whilst taking your prasada.

The Reht Maryada is very clear on the essence of langar : equality. Although I do not like it myself, I cannot see where haumai comes in, or where you go against equality, or the idea of all, 'high' or 'low' sitting together, if you use the same simple chairs for everyone. And the Reht does not specify that you have to sit on the floor !

The Jathedar of Akal Takht, nor any other individual or group of individuals, be it 5 or ten or one hundred, have not got the right to impose decisions on the Panth, without consulting some form of Sarbat Khalsa. The Guruship went from Guru Gobind Singh to Guru Granth and Guru Panth, not to Guru Akal Takht, Guru Panj Piaré, or Guru Jathedar. They implement the gurmattas, they implement the reht, they do not make new rules, that is the job of Guru Panth, acting in the spirit of Guru Granth.

The argument of history seems inconsistent with the spirit of Sikhism. Going by that rule, history, tradition, Guru Nanak would have been in the wrong rebelling against his family, and the Hindu traditions. Guru Nanak did many things that we would not dream of doing, and we do many things that he did not know about, simply because they did not exist in his days. Saying : we

118

have to sit on the floor, because Guru sat on the floor, seems not a very good argument for followers of revolutionaries.

Again and again in SGGS, you will find that Guru stresses not on what to do, but on in what spirit to do things.

So let us stop fighting about kursia in langar, and let us instead concentrate on true sewa, with love and humility, and true equality between human beings, male or female, young or old, jats, ramgharias or whatever. And I will keep taking langar sitting on the floor.

Yours,

Gurfateh
Harjinder Singh

Diasporan debates concerning the langar issue are ongoing and continue to dominate electronic discussion groups and postings on several Sikh web sites.

The Corollary of "Righteous Violence"

Rejecting the authority of the Akal Takhat, several moderates continued to defy the furniture ban.[151] Subsequently, six prominent moderates were ordered to appear before the Akal Takhat and renounce their position, which they refused to do. On July 25, 1998, Jathedar Ranjit Singh responded by declaring them *Tankhaia* (apostates) and formally excommunicated them citing their continued defiance and impenitence. The dissident group was led by Tara Singh Hayer, a journalist and publisher of one of the longest circulating Canadian Punjabi weeklies, the *Indo-Canadian Times*.[152] Hayer and his fellow excommunicants had been particularly vocal in their criticism of Ranjit Singh's decree, arguing that it

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[151] Certain reports allege that this group was on a hit list compiled by the militant faction (Jeyaraj 1998a, 1998b).
[152] Other members included Balwant Singh Gill (president of the Surrey gurdwara), Giani Harkirat Singh (former head granthi at the Surrey gurdwara), Rattan Singh (president of the Vancouver Akali Sikh Society), Kashmir Singh (record secretary of the Khalsa Diwan), and Jarnail Singh (a leading member of the Khalsa Diwan).

had been issued with the consent of just two of the five heads of the key Sikh Takhats. In a much-publicized denunciation of Ranjit Singh, Hayer further claimed that the jathedar "wants once again that the fundamentalists capture gurdwaras and misuse offerings" (cited in Swami 1998, 2).

The hukamnama, which condemned the moderates as apostates, also proscribed other Sikhs from interacting with them both professionally and socially. Given its stringent stipulations, even the innocuous act of purchasing a copy of the *Indo-Canadian Times* was considered heretical. Despite the edict, the publication continued to retain a substantial readership (Jeyaraj 1998a, 1998b; Walkom 1998). Many militants were incensed by its continued popularity and used intimidation and extortion to compel stores and restaurants in British Columbia and Washington State to discontinue its sale.[153] Shortly thereafter, several Sikh establishments in Surrey, Vancouver, Abbotsford, Baltimore, Houston, New York, Virginia, and Washington State cancelled the newspaper. While many attribute this to sustained militant harassment, Kuldip Singh Malhi, editor of the ISYF–sponsored Punjabi language weekly, the *Charhdi Kala* ("Rising Spirit"), countered that the widespread cancellations were prompted by community members adhering to their own consciences (Bolan 1998).

Even before the langar controversy, Hayer had incited the wrath of many militants by publishing a series of strongly worded articles and editorials in which he accused them of misappropriating gurdwara funds and arming terrorist groups (Bolan 1998; Walkom 1998). On a number of occasions, he had publicly urged Revenue Canada to rescind the charitable tax status that Sikh gurdwaras enjoy in

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[153] Speaking on a condition of anonymity, two storeowners said that they feared physical harm if they did not comply with the militants' demand. Others said that they were concerned that their businesses would be targeted for attack. Another said, "I didn't know them. They said there is a hukamnama against selling this newspaper. Some of those people are crazy so I did what they said." Gurpal Singh Mann, owner of a video store and secretary of the Punjabi Market Association, further states that after the hukamnama was issued, several batches of the *Indo-Canadian Times* had been repeatedly stolen from his establishment (see journalist Kim Bolan's 1998 reports at <http://www.bcnf.org/1998/newsopen98.html>.

their capacity as charitable organizations (Walkom 1998). In 1986, a bomb exploded outside his office but he escaped unscathed (Jeyaraj 1998a). Two years later, Hayer was shot (and paralyzed from below the waist) by a seventeen year-old refugee claimant named Harkirat Singh Bagga. Many in the diasporan community believe that Bagga was merely a henchman acting at the behest of key leaders in the Babbar Khalsa International and ISYF with whom he was closely affiliated (Bolan 1998).[154] Ajit Singh Khera, a British Khalistan moderate, who was acquainted with Bagga when the latter resided in England, claims that there is little doubt that the Babbar Khalsa International and the ISYF colluded with the teenaged assailant. Khera concludes that "It is certainly not something he did on his own. There were forces working on his mind to carry out this assassination attempt" (cited in Bolan 1998).

Despite numerous allegations pointing to a wider conspiracy, the RCMP did not pursue the investigation further and Bagga alone was convicted of the crime.[155] Following this, in the 1990s, Hayer and his family became the target of a vitriolic smear campaign in the *Charhdi Kala*, the ISYF-sponsored weekly. In the period that followed, both Hayer and members of the ISYF used their respective newspapers to wage a battle of character assassination and vilification. The series of increasingly vituperative accusations and counter accusations deployed by both Hayer and his antagonists culminated in a defamation suit that Hayer filed against the *Chardi Kala* Punjabi Newspaper Society.[156] The case was heard by the British Columbia Supreme Court, which on June 26, 1996, ruled in Hayer's favor and awarded him and his three co-plaintiff daughters, damages in

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[154] According to one account, the plot to kill Hayer was orchestrated by both the Babbar Khalsa and the ISYF who had each agreed to pay half the cost of the operation (Bolan 1998).
[155] He was sentenced to 14 years in jail and then deported to India.
[156] While the attacks leveled at Hayer were particularly vitriolic, he also resorted to printing libelous articles about his opponents.

excess of Canadian $300,000.[157]

On November 18, 1998, Hayer was fatally shot in the head while leaving his office. Several reports claim that Hayer had routinely received death threats, which many attribute to his enemies within the militant camp (Summers 2000; Jain 1998; Jeyaraj 1998a, 1998b; Matas 1998; Willcocks 1998). His family and colleagues believe that he had received information that would irrefutably implicate certain militant organizations in the 1985 bombing of the Air India flight[158] (Bolan 1998; Matas 1998). Moreover, it is speculated that just before his death Hayer had unearthed evidence that conclusively confirmed widespread fraud during the years of militant gurdwara rule (Summer 2000; Bolan 1998). Hayer's family and supporters maintain that the assassination might have been averted had the RCMP conducted a more comprehensive investigation during the earlier attack in 1988. Hayer's daughter-in-law Isabelle states, "We were under the impression they were still investigating. Why would they stop when everybody knew there were more people involved? They had all this information and nothing was acted on" (cited in Bolan 1998). According to Bikar Singh Dhillon, a former gurdwara president and target of a 1991 assassination attempt himself, "There have been rumors of hitmen in town for weeks and police have done nothing."[159]

Although numerous accusations about a militant conspiracy abound, militants claim they are conveniently targeted as scapegoats. They further note that they have been falsely accused in the past. For example, when a Guru Nanak gurdwara caretaker was brutally murdered in early 1998, some moderates publicly accused the militants of committing the act. Subsequently, however, five white

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[157] See details of the libel case in the official documents of the Vancouver Registry at
<http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb%2Dtxt/sc/96/09s96%2D0959.txt>
[158] The importance of this event and its impact on the community will be described further in chapter four.

supremacists were charged with the crime (Walkom 1998, 8). As of early June 2000, the investigation into Tara Singh Hayer's murder remained open although his son intimates that the RCMP is close to solving it (Summers 2000).

According to certain community members, the incriminating evidence purported to have been in Hayer's possession was given to him by his friend Tarsem Singh Purewal, editor of Britain's largest selling Punjabi language weekly, *Des Pardes* ("Home and Abroad") (Summers 2000; Bolan 1998). In a sinister foreshadowing of Hayer's assassination, Purewal was shot dead by an unknown assailant outside his office in West London suburb of Southall, on January 24, 1995. In the early 1980s, Purewal had strongly endorsed the Khalistan militant faction and his newspaper had reflected this pro-militant stance. Shortly before his death, however, Purewal had begun to increasingly distance himself from the militants. It is rumored that Purewal had planned to publish a series of articles exposing various illicit practices within the militant camp, including information that would corroborate its role in the Air India bombing (Summer 2000; Bolan 1998). Given his early intimate ties to both the ISYF and Babbar Khalsa, Purewal had enjoyed access to a variety of confidential information and is reported to have even visited Sikh terrorist training camps in Pakistan (Summer 2000). Some in the British diasporan community believe that Purewal's access to such sensitive information made him a formidable threat to the militants.

British police arrested several people in Birmingham in conjunction with Purewal's murder, including Raghbir Singh Johal, general secretary of the ISYF and editor of *Awaze Quam* (an ISYF-sponsored Punjabi weekly). Johal, a political asylum applicant, was detained under the National Security Act and served a notice of intention to deport, which was based on reasons of "national security." The ISYF, the National Union of Journalists, several Ministers of Parliament, and

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[159] Cited in a letter written by Wayne Sharpe, Executive Director of the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists to the Canadian Minister of Justice, the Hon. Anne McLellan.

numerous human rights groups mounted a much-publicized protest campaign in his defense. They argued there was no substantive evidence that proved that Johal was a terrorist or that he constituted a national security risk (see Amnesty International Report 1996). After being imprisoned for approximately a year, Johal and his fellow detainees were subsequently released in December 1996. Although the police subsequently closed the file, the Purewal assassination was still unresolved as of June 2000.[160] Dave Hayer affirms his conviction that "the same organization was behind both deaths, if not the same individual. My father and Mr. Purewal were good friends and both were investigating the same elements in the Sikh community. They are small in number but they are involved in criminal activities, terrorism. They were trying to expose them" (cited in Summers 2000, 1). There is however, another theory circulating within the community regarding Purewal's murder. Reports indicate that Purewal had been routinely violating British law by publishing the names of rape victims in court proceedings in his newspaper. Some in the community believe that his assassin was a paid agent hired by one of the families whose honor (*izzat*) had been compromised by the naming of their daughter as a rape victim (Summer 2000).

The incidents described thus far epitomize the depth of passion ingrained within conflicts regarding the interpretation and practice of the Sikh faith. The multiple schisms that have been engendered by such virulent inter-factional fighting have, in turn, served to permanently fracture the Khalistan movement as a whole.

Conclusion

The roots of contemporary intra-diasporan friction may be traced to the

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[160] Labor MP for Ealing Southall, Piara Khabra (himself a Sikh), states, "The police have not been able to get any new information or any evidence whatsoever. I read about cases from 40 years ago being detected, and yet this case seems to be beyond them. I sometimes feel that not much attention is given to these cases if they are members of the ethnic minority community, certainly not as much for white murders" (cited in Summer 2000).

Sikh tradition's historical pluralism, universal egalitarianism, and emphasis on democratic institutions (Boudreau 2000; Kalsi 1995; Ballard 1994a; Pettigrew 1991). Paradoxically, the convergence of these attributes, which make Sikhism highly attractive to potential western converts, also serve simultaneously to undermine the autochthonous Sikh community's cohesion. Given the absence of an overarching centralized authoritative body, it may be expected that intense contestation follows.[161] According to Mark Juergensmeyer, "The joke is, if there are two or three Sikhs together, two will break off and form a gurudwara (temple)…. They are fiercely democratic. That's a good thing. But that means there is a lot of politics and infighting" (cited in Boudreau 2000, 2). Moreover, even institutions such as the sangat that are theologically sanctioned to make authoritative decisions regarding religious procedure, are in practice, devoid of any real power. Sewa Singh Khalsi (1995) summarizes the sangat's ambiguous status thus:

> Although the institution of Sangat is highly respected in Sikhism, in practice it has no real authority. Moreover, it is a very vague structural entity. Who constitutes the Sangat is most problematic to define. During the normal congregation, everyone present is supposed to be part and parcel of the Sangat and theoretically empowered to take any decisions. All gurdwaras in the UK and Canada, like other community-based gurdwaras, are managed by committees which are elected annually by the approved membership according to the constitution. Different factions of Sikhs make every effort to control the gurdwaras through these elections…. It may be argued that the real authority lies in the capacity of a faction to muster large number of voters at the annual elections and the backing of a hard core of supporters

[161] Another ongoing controversy concerns the adoption of a new Sikh calendar that attempts to usurp the existing *Bikrami* calendar based on the lunar cycle. A year ago, Canadian Sikh, Pal Singh Purewal, developed the new *Nanakshahi* calendar, which follows the solar cycle and takes as its point of origin 1469, the year Guru Nanak was born. The Nanakshahi calendar further excludes festivals common to both Sikhs and Hindus. Purewal's motivation for creating the new system was based on the need to further emphasize the distinctiveness of Sikh identity. The calendar was adopted last year by the SGPC in the wake of vocal opposition from the Akal Takhat. Consequently, last year, several important events in Sikh history were commemorated twice. This has led to further conflict between the SGCP and the Akal Takhat that threatens to spill over into diasporan separatist politics. For a more detailed account, see *The Tribune*, January 24, 2000, online edition <http://www.tribuneindia.com/20000124/main5.htm>.

(1995, 13).

Additionally, the claims and counter-claims regarding Guru succession that emerged during Sikhism's early phase, coupled with subsequent reform movements, have spawned a multiplicity of sects with divergent spiritual mores and traditions. The existence of such sectarian divisions further highlight the essential heterogeneity of the faith and consequently pose a problem to orthodox Sikhs who envision a theocratic Khalistan founded on Khalsa principles. For example, the Nirankaris have (somewhat predictably) been vehemently opposed to the separatist movement. The Namdharis have generally ignored the Khalistan issue although some members have been vocal in their opposition to the militants.[162] In addition, despite the Sikh doctrine's express proscription on following caste protocol, caste continues to infiltrate Sikh social relations both inside and outside India. This, in turn, contributes to further schism within the community (Khalsi 1995; Ballard 1994b). Many non-Jat Sikhs[163] point out that the Khalistan struggle is dominated by members of the Jat caste and trace the movement's militant ethos to this factor. Thus, as chapter four explicates more clearly, differential support for the movement is also rooted in diasporan caste practices and perceptions.

Furthermore, the challenges to the militant separatist vision are not limited merely to the proliferation of multiple identities within the faith. Even if Sikhs were in fact a highly homogenous community, the demand for a religious homeland would remain doctrinally unfounded. As several authors (Pettigrew 1991, 1987; Oberoi 1994, 1987) contend, the concept of "panth" (community of

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[162] During a February 2000 visit to Coventry, England, I met a Namdhari who strongly criticized the Khalistan movement. He alleged that the Khalistanis were involved in arms dealing, weapons smuggling, terrorism, and a host of other similarly nefarious covert operations. He further claimed that he had been verbally and physically assaulted by Khalistan militants on a number of occasions.

disciples) that forms one of Sikhism's fundamental constituents is not denotative of a theo-political nationalism.[164] According to Joyce Pettigrew (1987),

> Among the Sikhs, "community" is not a spatial entity; "community" is the collective body of those believing in the Sikh faith. A relationship between land, people, and territory such as is found in Judaism, is not present in Sikh theology. From a theological view, territory could not be a focal point for a nationalist movement. No special claims can be made that have any religious validity. Hence, Sikhism does not lend itself easily to the formation of a state, and it is very difficult to equate peoplehood and nationality in this case. It is this lack of association between Panth, as the community of the faithful, with a specific territory, that has portended ill for them in their endeavor to keep separate when confronted with the assimilative processed of the secular state (1987, 6).

In conclusion, it may be argued that Sikhism's "multiple loci of authority"[165] forms an inadvertent cause of inter-factional disputes and discord. This is further compounded by the introduction of the diasporan element into the formula. In the Khalistan case, competing factions struggle to impose their respective "authentic" episteme on the pan-Sikh collective in order to confer a univocal identity to the movement. As many authors (Bolan 1998; Jeyaraj 1998a, 1998b) note, the intensity of the ideological warfare waged between rival factions comprising the Khalistan SDM has served to discredit the movement as a whole. Moreover, while the larger Sikh community is deeply polarized between the pro-

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[163] This is based on conversations/correspondence with numerous non-Jat Sikhs during the past three years.

[164] For a discerning analysis of how "the Punjab homeland" has become naturalized in the separatist dialogue, see Oberoi's (1987) article "From Punjab to "Khalistan": Territoriality and Metacommentary."

[165] Phrase employed by Kalsi (1995).

and anti-Khalistan blocs, as illustrated in this chapter, even those who support Sikh separatism express apprehension regarding the blatant endorsement of violence by certain militants. The mode in which migration and settlement issues further affect this phenomenon is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Migration and Memory: Patterns of Sikh Settlement and Community Cohesion

> For twelve years you roamed abroad.
> For what fortune?
> What did you bring in return?
>
> Popular Punjabi folk song

Introduction

As the preceding chapter illustrates, ideological, tactical, and personal disputes within a Separatist Diasporan Movement (SDM) possess the potential to create rampant factionalism, which ultimately serves to discredit the movement as a whole. This ideological fragmentation is further affected by other forms of social differentiation within the migrant community, which is a predictable corollary, given varying patterns of migration, settlement, and acculturation processes. The Sikh diasporan community (like the larger South Asian diaspora of which it is a microcosm) is a complex collective comprising migrants from diverse social, economic, and political backgrounds. Diasporan Sikhs may be distinguished on a number of bases, including, but not limited to: place of origin, country of settlement, generational order (first, second, third etc.), migratory motive (sojourn, settlement, economic advancement, exile), migrational sequence (migration neophytes versus veteran trans-migrants), political affiliation, education, religiosity, caste, and sect. In order to be fully comprehended, the socio-political diversity extant within the Sikh diaspora must thus be situated within the specifics of its migration and settlement history. To this end, chapter four[166] chronicles the Sikh migrant experience in Great Britain, Canada, and the

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[166] Sections of this chapter appear in another article by the author, see "Let Smiles Return to My Motherland: The Sikh Diaspora and Homeland Politics," in *Ethnicity and Governance in the Third World*, ed. Mbaku et al (Aldershot, UK: forthcoming).

United States, which together account for over seventy-five percent of the overseas Sikh population (Tatla 1999, 41).

Before embarking on an exposition of *"the Sikh diaspora's"* migration history, however, certain nomenclature issues must be considered. Some scholars (Leonard 1989; McLeod 1989) contend that the specifics of the chronology of migration make it untenable to theoretically engage the concept of a "Sikh diaspora" in analyzing migration identity politics over time.[167] Highlighting problems associated with the careless adoption of labels, McLeod cautions that "We need to be aware that when we talk of *Sikh migration* we are choosing to use an imprecise adjective" (1989, 32 [italics mine]). He and others (Leonard 1989) argue, that for early twentieth century migrants, what was most meaningful was their common culture, "their place of origin," "their mother tongue," in essence, their "Punjabi identity." According to their reading, it was only in the latter stages of their settlement history that the Sikh aspect of the migrant's identities gained salience and served to forge a pan-Sikh consciousness.

While conceding the point that the Sikh aspect of early migrant identity may have been subsumed within a broader Punjabi identity, for ease of classification I define the migrants as "Sikh" rather than "Punjabi" in my discussion of early settlement patterns. Further, my choice of appellation derives some legitimacy from several empirical accounts (Tatla 1999; Buchignani and Indra 1989; Dusenbery 1989; Helweg 1989; Johnston 1988), which indicate that the majority of early Punjabi migrants adhered to the Sikh faith. Norman Buchignani and Doreen Marie Indra (1989, 142) further assert that given the strong pattern of chain migration, the early Indian emigrant population in North America was extremely homogenous, with Sikhs constituting almost 90-95 percent of the total migrant community. Likewise, in Great Britain, Sikh

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[167] This issue is explored further in essays by Bruce La Brack (1999) and Verne Dusenbery (1995, 17-42).

settlement was also largely characterized by patterns of chain migration and resulted in early Punjabi migrants being overwhelmingly drawn from the Sikh populace (Ballard and Ballard 1977; Aurora 1967).

In attempting to trace the multifarious cleavages that exist within the diasporan Sikh community, this chapter considers the following questions: First, in what ways do immigrant collective trajectories impact both the consolidation and fragmentation of diasporan identities and sensibilities? Second, what kinds of institutions sustain diasporan identity-formation in the respective host countries? Third, how do events in both the "homeland" and the "hostland" permeate identity politics and forge ethnopolitical solidarity? And, finally, under what conditions are identities contested and transformed and what role does this subsequently play in the development of a migrant nationalist ethos?

An Overview of Sikh Migration

The global Sikh population is numbered at sixteen million, of which roughly one million Sikhs reside outside of India[168] (Tatla 1999, 41). The majority of Indian Sikhs live in the Punjab province where they comprise approximately sixty percent of the population and the remainder are scattered across other parts of India. This remainder, who live outside the Punjab, is estimated at five million, about a third of the entire Indian Sikh population (Helweg 1993, 70).

While the fifteen million strong Indian Sikh community makes up only slightly less than two percent (1.8% to 1.9%)[169] of India's total population, they are represented overseas in numbers far exceeding this ratio (Tatla 1999; Helweg 1993; Kalsi 1992; La Brack 1989).[170] Additionally, in many districts of central

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[168] A figure, that includes first and second generation foreign-born Sikhs.

[169] The figure varies between this range, depending on what you read in different kinds of government documents and scholarly articles.

[170] According to Tatla, the only Indian ethnic groups that have overseas representation greater than that of the Sikh community are the Gujeratis and Mirpuris (1999, 41). See for example, Roger

131

Punjab, fully a third or more of the "local-born" population lives outside India (Dusenbery 1989, 1). This disproportionate number of overseas Sikhs in relation to their Indian Sikh counterparts is significant because it accords the Sikh diaspora an important voice in the affairs of their erstwhile homeland (see for example, Helweg 1983; Thompson 1974). As Hugh Tinker (1977, 1976, 1974) notes, India's internal and external political relations have historically been, and continue to be, strongly influenced by her emigrant communities. This phenomenon is amplified in the case of diasporan Sikhs whose specific migrant experience highlights the extent to which expatriates can exert leverage on, and be influenced by, the political conditions in their former homelands (Helweg 1989).

Of the roughly one million Sikhs who constitute the diaspora, the majority emigrated voluntarily, while a small group was "pushed" into relocation by political upheaval in India (Tatla 1999, 61). Sikh migration may thus be classified into three distinct phases: (i) Migration during colonial rule that lasted from the late 1800s to the 1930s, (ii) Migration during the post-1947 partition of the Punjab, and (iii) Migration in the aftermath of events that took place in India during the 1980s and 1990s (events that are examined further in chapter five).

Migration During the Colonial Era

As several authors (Tatla 1999; Singh and Barrier 1996; Barrier and Dusenbery 1989; Helweg 1989) document, the Punjab has historically experienced a long tradition of emigration. Despite the fact that the region is endowed with rich natural resources, a rapidly increasing population coupled with restrictive British policies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries formed "push" factors that galvanized migration (Tatla 1999, 1995; Dusenbery 1989; Helweg 1989). Moreover, in the first major mutiny against British rule in

Ballard's (1990) article, "Migration and Kinship: The Differential Effect of Marriage Rules on the Processes of Punjabi Migration to Britain."

India in 1857[171] Sikh troops remained loyal to the Raj and helped quell the rebellion. This loyalty further reinforced the "special relationship"[172] shared by the British and the Sikhs and let to an important migration-related outcome. While (as stated in chapter three) the British had from the outset viewed Sikhs as a "martial race," the aftermath of the aborted mutiny saw an even greater increase in Sikh recruitment into the British Indian Army. In particular, British military officials favored the numerous and politically dominant Jat Sikhs, the majority of whom strongly conformed to Khalsa traditions and thus could visibly be differentiated from other Indians (Fox 1985; Ballard and Ballard 1977).

As a result of this "punjabization" of the infantry regiments, Sikh battalions increased from twenty-eight to fifty-seven during the 1862-1914 period (Mahmood 1996, 110).[173] By the beginning of World War I, about 100,000 of the approximately 152,000 Indian combat troops (roughly sixty percent) were drawn from the Punjab (Fox 1985, 44). Numerous Sikh contingents were deployed to Burma, Hong Kong, Malaya, China, and other parts of Southeast Asia in the service of protecting British imperial interests. Consequently, this led to the long tradition of Sikh emigration and subsequent settlement in various far-flung places within the British Empire (Tatla 1999). This also resulted in Sikhs settling in North America in the early twentieth century before the imposition of restrictive immigration laws. As Tatla (1999) concludes, Sikh migration during this initial early phase was thus directly linked to British colonial military policy.

The latter part of this first phase of Sikh migration is also marked by a large-scale Punjabi movement to East Africa, when British African protectorates

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171 Also known as the Sepoy Mutiny.
172 This drastically changed with the 1919 Jallianwalla Bagh massacre when General Dyer of the British colonial army gave orders to fire on an unarmed crowd of protestors. Over four hundred people were killed and over 1,200 were wounded. Many of the victims were Sikhs who had gathered for the rally, which was a founding episode in the struggle for Indian independence. This event permanently alienated the Sikhs from the British in later years.
173 Cynthia Mahmood (1996, 110) notes that all other groups except the Nepalese Gurkhas (another so called "martial tribe") declined during this same period.

recruited both indentured and free labor (Tatla 1999; Ballard 1994b; Bhachu 1985; Ballard and Ballard 1977). In the late 1890s, Punjabi Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh indentured laborers were drafted to work on the Ugandan Railways project. The majority of Sikhs who migrated to Africa during this time belonged to the *Ramgarhia* (artisan[174]) caste and were recruited specifically on the basis of their craftsmanship skills. In order to attract additional Indian labor and provide incentives for permanent settlement, the Ugandan colonial government devised a scheme that would grant land to railway employees. While this project did not ultimately materialize, numerous Sikh laborers and artisans remained in Uganda once they completed their contracts. Similarly, in Kenya and the region that would later become Tanzania, Sikh settlements began to emerge out of previous railway worker colonies. Once the railway project was completed, the colonial infrastructure rapidly expanded and many Sikhs remained in Africa and became part of the lower echelons of the colonial administration. Because of chain migratory patterns, East African Punjabi migrants belonged overwhelmingly to the Ramgarhia Sikh community (Ballard 1994a; Bhachu 1985).

Post-Partition Migration

The second phase of Sikh migration occurred in the period following Britain's withdrawal from India, which accompanied the abrupt formation of two states. The creation of India and Pakistan, on August 15, 1947, was accomplished in part by a bisection of the Punjab—West Punjab would subsequently become Pakistani Punjab while East Punjab would henceforth be known as the Indian Punjab.[175] The partition, one of the bloodiest in recent history,[176] also created an unprecedented number of refugees (Gupta 1993). The new boundary divided the

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[174] This category includes carpenters, blacksmiths, and brick-layers.

[175] For a detailed discussion on the politics surrounding the creation of the boundary, see Ishtiaq Ahmed's (1999) article, "The 1947 Partition of the Punjab: Arguments put Forth by Before the Punjab Boundary Commission by the Parties Involved."

[176] Communal riots claimed the lives of half a million people (Ahmed 1999, 161; Tatla 1999, 20).

Sikh community almost equally between the two states (Hardgrave 1993, 52). Mass anti-Sikh and anti-Hindu violence in West Punjab, coupled with fears of subjugation in a "theocratic" Muslim state, resulted in a mass exodus of Sikhs and Hindus from West to East Punjab. Similar atrocities against Muslims in East Punjab led to their large-scale migration into West Punjab. It is estimated that more than 12 million newly created refugees crossed the freshly demarcated international border (Tatla 1999, 20).

In May 1948, the eight states of Patiala, Kapurthala, Sind, Nabha, Faridkot, Malerkotla, Nalagarh, and Kalsia were amalgamated into the state of Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU). Additionally, seventeen of the Punjab Hill States were merged to create the new state of Himachal Pradesh. In 1956, under the States Reorganization Act, PEPSU was integrated into the Punjab with certain internal changes. A further reorganization in 1966 took place after increased Sikh agitation led by the Akali Dal for a Punjabi-speaking state or Punjabi *Suba*. This linguistic reorganization led to the old state being bifurcated into two new states: Punjab, where the official language would be Punjabi, and Haryana, where the official language would be Hindi. It is in this new state of Punjab that Sikhs would constitute an estimated 60 percent majority.

These post-partition upheavals and displacements also resulted in a "push" towards settlement outside India, a phenomenon classified as "impelled flight" migration.[177] Numerous West Punjabi Sikh refugees who moved to the densely populated Doaba region in the Indian Punjab subsequently chose to migrate abroad[178] (Tatla 1999; Helweg 1986a, 1986b; Helweg 1983; Thompson 1974). Other displaced West Punjabi Sikhs who settled in the Malwa region soon

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[177] Phrase coined by William Peterson in his 1958 work *A General Typology of Migration*. Sections are reproduced in Robin Cohen's (1996) *Theories of Migration.*

[178] As Hiro (1991, 111) observes, the post-war economic boom in England also coincided with the post-1947 India-Pakistan border conflict, which centered on the province of Kashmir. Consequently, there is a large Muslim Kashmiri diasporan community in Britain, that (like the Sikhs) have been active in homeland politics.

followed suit (Tatla 1999, 55). In the early 1950s, while several newly-independent former British colonies tightened immigration restrictions, there was a simultaneous loosening of immigration controls in the West. In particular, post-war Britain's ambitious reconstruction program necessitated a large labor force, which subsequently led to the large-scale migration of workers from commonwealth[179] countries.

Additionally, by the mid-1940s, both Canada and the United States had begun a process to reverse their previously exclusionary immigration policies. As Tatla (1999, 55) notes, this opening up of the West coincided with the partitioning of the Punjab, and consequently, western countries became the primary destination of Sikh migrants during this period.

Migration in the Post-1984 Period

From the 1980s to the mid-1990s, the Punjab experienced unprecedented levels of violence. As described in detail in chapter five, the army invasion of the Golden Temple in 1984 led to mass mobilization for a separate state and resulted in the establishment of numerous militant Khalistan organizations. The army's subsequent indiscriminate operation to "wipe out" all militants led to a mass refugee movement during the post-1984 period. The insurrection waged in the Punjab was ruthless, as were the measures enacted by the government to suppress it. By the early 1990s, the Indian government's repressive counter-insurgency finally succeeded in crushing the militant movement, and numerous former guerillas sought asylum in foreign countries. Other Sikhs, whose only crime was their youth, religiosity, and political beliefs, also fled the Punjab during this period. Thus, refugees in the post-1980 period were predominantly comprised of young Sikh men who had been tortured or, alternatively, were under threat of torture for their political actions, beliefs, or associations. On December 25, 1996,

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[179] In 1931, the statute of Westminster established the British commonwealth of Nations, which is

hundreds of young Punjabi Sikhs were killed when the vessel smuggling them to Europe capsized (Swami 1997). Some survivors continue to wait in Eastern Europe for human smuggling agents to transport them to their Western European destinations.

Although there are no reliable statistical data on this recent group of Sikh refugees, extrapolating from existing reports on Indian asylum-seekers, Tatla (1999, 59) has compiled the following rudimentary table.

essentially a family of independent dominions.

Country	Year*	Refugee Population	Primary Area/s of Settlement
Europe			
Austria	1990-	500-600	Unknown
Belgium	1981-	4,500-6,000	Brussels
Denmark	1981-	1,250-1,500	Copenhagen
France	1982-	3,000-4,000	Paris
Germany	1981-	11,000-13,000	Cologne, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Frankfurt
Netherlands	1984-	2,500-3,500	Amsterdam, Rotterdam
Norway	1984-	750-900	Oslo
Switzerland	1983-	3,000-4,500	Zurich, Geneva
UK	1984-	5,000-7,500	London, the Midlands
Far East			
Australia	1984-	700-1,000	Sydney
Thailand	1984-	1,500-2,500	Bangkok
Hong Kong	1984-	500-600	Unknown
Malaysia	1984-	500-750	Unknown
North America			
Canada	1981-	4,500-7,500	British Columbia, Ontario
USA	1984-	7,500-9,000	California, New York

Table 4.1. Sikh Refugee Emigration during the Post-1980 period. Source: Darshan Singh Tatla, The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999, 59 (* Year when refugee statistics were first recorded). Reprinted, by permission, from UCL Press, Limited, London, England. Copyright © Darshan Singh Tatla.

Other information on this group may be gleaned through interviews, news articles, human rights reports, and judicial proceedings. This category of migrants will be examined in further detail in the individual country studies that follow.

Sikh Migration to Great Britain

According to the 1991 Census, ethnic minorities constituted a little over 3 million (5.5 percent) out of Britain's total population of 54.9 million.[180] The Census also indicated that out of the total ethnic minority population of 3 million, almost half (49.1 percent) were of South Asian origin (the South Asian category encompassed migrants from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal etc.).[181] A national survey conducted in 1994 further delineated the migrants based on religious affiliation, which is represented in table 4.2.

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[180] Figures obtained from Census data provided by Muhammed Anwar (1998, 17-18).
[181] Includes foreign-born and British-born.

Religious Affiliation	% of Total Population of South Asian Origin in Great Britain (Tot. pop. approx. 1,473,000)*
Muslims	45
Sikhs	24
Hindus	23
Christians	2
Other religious affiliation	1
No religious affiliation	3
Did not answer question	2

Table 4.2. Religious Groups as a Percent of Total Population of South Asian Origin in Britain. (*Data obtained from Muhammad Anwar *Between Cultures: Continuity and Change in the Lives of Young Asians.* London: Routledge,1998, 27).

From the figures provided here, it may be extrapolated that approximately 353,520 Sikhs are currently resident in Great Britain.[182] Moreover, Roger Ballard (1994, 95) estimates that more than half of these belong to the Jat caste. Southall, a town in the western Greater London area, forms one of the major areas of Sikh settlement, with over 80 percent of residents identifying themselves as having Punjabi Sikh origins (Harlan 1991, 152). It is colloquially referred to as *Chota*

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[182] This figure has not taken into account migration increases that have taken place since the 1991 Census (see Tatla 1999, 56).

Punjab or "little Punjab"[183] (figure 4.1 shows the Punjabi signage on the façade of the town's main railway station). Substantial Sikh populations may also be found in Birmingham, Coventry, Leeds, Bradford, Nottingham, Derby, and Gravesend[184] (Knott 1991, 92).

Illustration 4.1. Punjabi Signage on Façade of Southall Railway Station.
Photograph by the author.

A Stranger in a Strange Land

After World War I, small groups of Sikh migrants began to arrive in Britain, as it was the only country within the Empire that maintained an "open door" policy at the time.[185] (see later section in this chapter on migration into

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[183] For detailed analyses of identity issues within the Southall community, see the work of Gerd Baumann (1996) and William Harlan (1991).
[184] For more on the Gravesend community, see Arthur Helweg's (1986b) excellent ethnography.
[185] Much of the data in this section is drawn from accounts provided in Ballard (1994b) and Ballard and Ballard (1977).

Canada). What Tatla (1999, 42) refers to as the "military-migration nexus," largely accounts for this first Sikh settlement.[186] The early pioneers were Punjabis, mostly Jat Sikh ex-servicemen who had fought with the allies in France and had subsequently decided to settle in Britain. Shortly after their arrival, they made contact with another group of South Asian sojourners, the *Lascars*, seamen who had previously worked on European ships and were now a relatively established migrant presence.[187] Depressed economic conditions and widespread unemployment among native Britons meant that industrial work was effectively closed to "outsiders," and thus Sikhs had to look for alternative avenues of employment. Most early Sikh settlers, therefore, followed the occupational route taken by the Lascars and worked as traveling salesmen, supplying apparel and sundry household items door-to-door.[188] Jat Sikhs (most of who were former military personnel) had no prior experience as traders and were not particularly adept at their new profession. However, during this period, a few Bhatra[189] ("peddler") caste Sikhs began to arrive in Britain. Given their traditional occupation, the Bhatra Sikh migrants soon began to dominate the trading arena. Their early economic successes contributed to an expansion of the Bhatra community as an increasing number of relatives began to arrive in Britain eager to partake of these newfound opportunities.[190] Most of these early Bhatra migrants hailed from a cluster of villages in the Punjab district of Sialkot. During this early

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[186] Prior to this, a small Indian community had been established in England as a few Indians, including maharajas, students, and lawyers, periodically visited London. For a pictorial chronicle of this early Indian presence in Great Britain, see Kusoom Vadgama's (1984), *India in Britain: The Indian Contribution to the British Way of Life*.

[187] They were predominantly Gujerati Muslims. For an indepth discussion on the Lascar community, see Rozina Visram's (1986) work.

[188] Tatla (1993b) provides an in-depth interview with one of the early pioneers, Anant Ram.

[189] According to Ballard (1994b, 93), the Bhatras constitute such a small group in the Punjab that few Punjabis are even aware of their existence. Traditional Bhatra occupations included hawking and fortune-telling, and their nomadic lifestyles resulted in them being accorded a low social status.

[190] Hearing of the Bhatras' exploits, other groups in the then-undivided Punjab (such as the Muslims), also began arriving in Britain in search of better economic prospects.

phase, most Bhatra Sikhs tended to settle in heavily populated port cities such as Southampton, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, and Newcastle.

In the 1930s, a parallel process of chain migration began to take place in the Jat Sikh community and incipient colonies of Sikh settlers began to emerge in several major industrial and port cities. However, the numbers were relatively small as most Sikhs who experienced wanderlust chose relatively prosperous Burma, Thailand, Hong Kong, and East Africa over an economically depressed Britain. While precise figures are difficult to obtain, it is estimated that there were a few thousand Sikhs settled in Britain by the late 1930s, with the proportion of Jats and Bhatras being roughly equal (Ballard 1994a). Because the overall population of South Asian settlers was so small, caste, ethnic, and religious differences were largely subsumed within the label of being a foreigner in an alien land.[191] Additionally, the Punjabi language that was common to all, irrespective of religion or ethnicity, tended to foster a pan-Punjabi solidarity. Thus, a kind of ecumenism prevailed among the early migrants—Punjabis, whether Jat Sikh, Bhatra Sikh, Hindu, or Muslim, regarded themselves in aggregate terms as an isolated, socially marginalized colony within a larger, mostly hostile British social milieu (Ballard 1994 a).

Cooperation and Cohesion

World War II effectively halted further immigration during the 1939-1945 period. However, as modes of transportation were reestablished immigration resumed, and this period marks the second important phase of Sikh settlement. The post-war economic boom had a significant transformational effect on Sikh occupational patterns and, consequently, on Sikh settlement as a whole. In an economic climate characterized by large-scale industrial expansion and almost

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[191] For an interesting discussion on the social dynamics of the early migrant community, see G. S. Aurora's (1967) work.

full native employment, labor became a scarce, highly-valued resource.[192] Many British factory owners were, therefore, willing to hire workers irrespective of color or national origin. Previously unobtainable industrial and factory jobs were now open to Sikhs, and this news soon reached the Punjab. These new economic opportunities, coupled with the devastating effects of displacement experienced by many post-partition refugees, resulted in a mass influx of Sikh sojourners into Britain. The areas that experienced the most severe labor shortages included outer West London, the industrial cities in the Midlands, and to a lesser extent the textile-manufacturing region of West Yorkshire. Consequently, Sikhs, especially Jat Sikhs who relied heavily on industrial work, settled in these areas in overwhelming numbers.

During this period, most Sikhs lived in congested all-male households, which formed a cooperative and supportive system whose members regarded it as a "quasi-brotherhood" (Ballard and Ballard 1977, 31). Izzat ("family honor"), an important notion in Punjabi culture, played a key role in social intercourse, and most early migrants provided financial and emotional support to fellow settlers. Because of these early pioneers, new migrants were well-informed of both the economic opportunities and challenging working conditions they would encounter. Moreover, many of these later arrivals had migrated because of their kinship ties to relatives already established in Britain. This latter group of migrants was, therefore, immediately incorporated into existing support networks and provided with accommodation and employment upon arrival. Roger Ballard (1994, 94) characterizes migration during this period as a "cascading chain," in which new migrants invariably possessed close kinship ties to previous settlers. This type of migration had significant demographic implications. Although the group steadily expanded, because most of the later migrants originated from the

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[192] Moreover, as John Cater and Trevor Jones (1991) posit, British capital benefited considerably from having access to such a vast source of extremely cheap labor.

same villages and castes as the early pioneers, the community continued to remain relatively homogenous. During this time, the majority of Sikh migrants came from just two districts in the Punjab—Jullunder and Hoshiarpur (Goulbourne 1998, 43).

While Sikh migrants had initially been willing to take any job at any wage (essentially jobs rejected by indigenous British workers), this gradually began to change. As migrants began to adopt British rather than Punjabi standards of reference to measure wages and standards of living, there was heightened awareness of their blatantly discriminatory and exploitative work environment. In 1957, the Leftist Indian Workers Association (IWA) was founded to address issues involving racism, immigration, and worker rights. While the IWA undertook only "all-Indian issues, irrespective of sects, parties and religious affiliation" (Tatla 1997, 95), it was a first stage in the marked politicization of the British Sikh community. Hundreds of Sikhs joined the IWA, and by the early 1960s, its total membership numbered roughly 16,000. Sikh political mobilization was symbolic of the notion that "they were here to stay" and was an important initial step in consolidating Sikh migrant identity.

From Sojourner to Settler

Before 1960, the Sikh migrant community in Britain was comprised almost exclusively of adult males. Sikh settlers had initially viewed their stay in Britain as temporary. Their main objective was to earn and accumulate as much wealth as possible before a swift return to the Punjab. Expressing the sentiments of most of his compatriots, Gurnam Singh, an early Sikh settler from Wolverhampton, declared that "money is our mother, money is our father, and money is all" (cited in Hiro 1991, 117). Given their transitory status, they regarded sponsoring wives and children as unnecessary and cumbersome, as it would drastically impinge on their capacity to save. However, because of Britain's thriving post-war economic climate, Sikhs continued to stay for a much

longer period than they had originally intended. Subsequently, as is the experience of numerous immigrant groups, the "myth of return"[193] was exchanged for the "reality of settlement." Moreover, while Sikh settlers remained in Britain because of enhanced economic prospects, they had, by this point, also become acclimated to the idea of permanent settlement in a foreign land. As Ballard (1994, 96) notes, however, the Britain in which they felt at ease was not an "English Britain" from which they were, at this stage, almost completely marginalized, but a replica of their former homeland. Because Sikh settlers were socially insulated from mainstream British society during this period, they had created a microcosm of Punjabi village society replete with traditional kinship networks, institutions, and customs. As the Sikh community expanded, there was renewed emphasis on traditional modes of behavior and social intercourse. According to Ballard,

> Perhaps most importantly of all, Britain became an arena for status competition. With this it ceased to be a cultural and social no-man's-land, where all gratification was deferred against an eventual return, but was transformed into an arena for social interaction every bit as lively as the villages left behind. Almost unbeknownst to themselves, sojourners were being transformed into settlers (Ballard 1994b, 96).

This psychological transformation from sojourner to settler was made even more concrete with the arrival of women and children in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These drastic demographic shifts also had a far-reaching impact on the collective identity and customs of the community.

Having committed to make Britain their permanent domicile, Sikh males became focused on family reunification and began sponsoring wives, children, and other members of their extended families. Additionally, the imminent threat of anti-immigration legislation injected a sense of urgency into their actions (Helweg 1988). Consequently, in the 1960-62 period, a mass influx of migrants,

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[193] Phrase attributed to Muhammad Anwar. See his 1979 work of the same name.

primarily women and children, arrived to join their husbands and fathers. In 1962, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act[194] was passed amidst increasingly strident calls for tighter immigration controls. The Act, which for the first time placed restrictions on a commonwealth citizen's right to enter and the right to abode, signaled the gradual closing of Britain's "open door" immigration policy.

The arrival of women and children led to a dramatic transformation in dwelling patterns as individual extended family homes supplanted the crowded all-male cooperatives. Concomitantly, family reunion altered the early Sikh migrant lifestyle and, at least initially, resulted in a further consolidation of the community. This, in turn, had a significant impact on issues related to ethnoreligious identity. According to one early settler,

> In the early days, we were all bachelors together. We worked very hard and we lived very rough, but when we enjoyed ourselves we really had a good time. We had plenty of beer and girls too…. Now our families have arrived, everyone has turned very strict. Many people have put their turbans on again and some won't even drink now (cited in Ballard and Ballard 1977, 36).

Although Britain's first gurdwara had been established (under the auspices of the Maharajah of Patiala) in the Shepherd's Bush area of West London during the late 1800s, most early Sikh migrants accorded little attention to religious ritual. As Ballard (1994, 109) describes, these self-defined sojourners adopted the attitude that Britain was best regarded as "a cultural and social no man's land" in which religious niceties could be temporarily discarded. In the early phase of settlement, many Sikhs, in an attempt to assimilate at least partially into British society, had gradually abandoned the external symbols (the five Ks) and cut their hair. However, by the late 1950s, as local Sikh communities were enlarged by

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[194] Commonly referred to as the "voucher system." The 1962 Act made all those seeking to enter the UK for settlement from the commonwealth and colonies after 1 July 1962 subject to rules which required them to have been issued with a job voucher in one of three categories: (A) (B) or (C). They could: 1) have a job to come to, 2) possess special skills which were in short supply, or

family reunification, there was a resurgence in orthodox religious practice. Several Sikhs who had abandoned their turbans and beards during the early years began to grow their hair and beards long and don turbans. There was, in essence, a collective reclamation of Sikh identity: the self-consciousness of being viewed as "different" was now replaced by a sense of pride in the overt display of religious symbols and ethnic markers.

Nascent Schisms

This renewed emphasis on spiritual issues manifested itself most visibly in the proliferation of gurdwaras in areas with large Sikh populations. During the 1950s, small groups of Sikhs had begun organizing *Diwans* ("religious services") in private homes, and by 1958, the first gurdwara in Yorkshire had been formally established. This was followed by the establishment of other gurdwaras and Sikh cultural centers in Leeds (Kalsi 1992). According to Ballard, "once established, the gurdwara movement took on a dynamic of its own" (1994a, 109). Raising funds and coordinating renovations (most early gurdwaras were erected on the premises of old dilapidated buildings) constituted a major enterprise, and those who rose to the challenge gained immense prestige. Given the prospect of acquiring high status within the community, there was intense competition to head such organizational efforts. Even after the gurdwaras were constructed, this competitiveness persisted as individuals sought leadership positions on the gurdwara management committees. As Ballard concludes, "Over the years that competition not only intensified, but also reinforced the process of caste crystallization" (1994, 109).

The rapid expansion of the community as a result of family reunification resulted in a renewed emphasis on caste and sectarian differences. While the small community of early settlers had few alternatives to cooperation, latter

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(3) be part of a large undifferentiated group whose numbers would be set according to the labour needs of the UK economy (Spencer 1997, 129).

groups of migrants (due to their sheer numbers) had the ability to distance themselves from other castes and limit themselves to social alliances within their respective caste community.[195] Again, it is within the context of gurdwara establishment that these revived notions of caste differentiation and exclusivity become readily apparent. Although the early migrants had worshipped together irrespective of caste, in the latter period many Sikh community leaders felt that each sub-group (the Jats, the Bhatras, the Ramgarhias, Ravidasis, the Namdharis, Nirankaris, etc.) required its own distinct place and mode of worship. Hence, gurdwaras with specific caste and sect memberships began to mushroom in several Sikh settlements (see Kalsi 1992). While the resurgence in religiosity had at the outset enhanced the cohesion of the Sikh community, the subsequent preoccupation with caste-related worship practices served to severely undermine its unity. Moreover, the divisions that emerged from such practices resulted in numerous political schisms that would manifest themselves within the Khalistan movement almost twenty years later.

The Arrival of the "Twice Migrants"

By the late 1960s, most families had been reunited and the number of migrants arriving directly from the Punjab was significantly reduced. However, the flow of African Sikhs that had begun to trickle into Britain in the late 1950s continued, culminating with the flood of Ugandan refugees in 1972. While Ramgarhia Sikhs comprised a large portion of the East African refugees, the refugees included other groups such as the Punjabi Hindus, Punjabi Muslims,

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[195] This phenomenon may also be discerned within the larger South Asian diaspora more generally. In recent years, as the South Asian diaspora has grown, differences have become magnified as groups attempt to replicate specific caste and sect-based institutions in their new countries of residence. For example, in the early phase of their settlement, given their overall small numbers, Hindus (regardless of caste, ethnic, or regional origin) had to worship at the same temple. Now, however, the members of the sizable Hindu diasporan community can select which type of temple they choose to attend. In Great Britain alone, there has been a proliferation of Hindu temples with specific caste, regional, and ethnic memberships (such as South Indian, North Indian, Gujerati, Punjabi, Tamil, Brahmin etc.). For more, see Knott (2000).

Gujerati Hindus, Gujerati Muslims, Parsis (Zoroastrians) and Ismailis (followers of the Agha Khan).[196] The arrival of the Sikh "twice migrants" further heightened nascent caste cleavages within the British Sikh community while simultaneously altering its class composition (See Bhachu 1991, 1988, 1985). This large-scale resettlement of African Sikhs in Britain transformed cultural and political networks in subsequent years, which in turn affected Sikh perceptions of collective identity.

Indians in colonial Africa were uniquely situated in a hierarchical racial "pigmentocracy" and this had significant consequences for their future on the continent. Their position can be best described as "a filling in the colonial sandwich," inferior in status to the European colonizers but superior to the indigenous Africans (Ballard and Ballard 1977, 25). By the 1960s, Asians occupied the majority of middle-level administrative and professional positions within the colonial bureaucracy (Sowell 1996). When the three East African colonies were granted independence, Indian professionals and public service workers felt the impact of the policy of Africanization especially strongly. With the advent of independence, the future of Indians in Africa became increasingly tenuous. Nationalist rhetoric and sentiment manifested themselves in a backlash against the Indian community. Certain nationalist African leaders were becoming more vociferous in their proclamations of "Africa for Africans" and indigenous Africans started questioning the legitimacy of an Indian presence in a post-independent Africa.

These feelings were reflected in a number of legislative acts enacted by newly-independent governments that were designed to "protect Africa from foreign control." Most Indians soon realized that there was no place for them in the newly-liberated African states. Many of them had retained their British

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[196] As Hinnells (2000) recounts, in a situation similar to that of the Sikhs, the arrival of these groups served to transform their respective coreligionist communities in Great Britain.

colonial passports, and viewed migration to Great Britain as their only viable alternative. The majority of the more highly-trained professionals began to migrate to Britain in the early to mid 1960s while some went on to settle in Canada and the United States. In 1972, General Idi Amin assumed power in Uganda and expelled the country's entire Asian population. This resulted in a mass influx of British Sikh refugees into Britain that same year.

Given their relatively long history of settlement in Africa, the African Sikh community had long abandoned any "myth of return." They viewed themselves as being ethnically and culturally of Indian or Punjabi origin but beyond that had little real physical association with India or the Punjab. The African Sikhs, unlike Sikhs who migrated directly from the Punjab, thus constituted a well-established, distinct minority community that transplanted itself onto British soil (Hinnells 2000; Ballard 1994a; Bhachu 1985). The absence of a "myth of return" also meant that most of these immigrants were quick to forge networks in their new home while simultaneously maintaining connections that had been formed back in Africa. While African Sikhs acknowledged the cultural links to their distant Punjabi homeland, they did not identify with it with the same degree of intensity as other British Sikhs. Because of this and other factors related to their history of prior migration, African Sikhs tend to be viewed by other Sikhs and by themselves as a discrete group (Ballard 1994a; Bhachu 1985). Class and caste dimensions also served to underscore this distinctiveness. Because of rigid colonial African recruitment policies, early Sikh settlers in Africa were generally skilled and well-educated. Their progeny (African Sikhs who arrived in Britain in the early 1970s), therefore, tended to be wealthier and more progressive in their attitudes towards gender and other cultural issues. Several African Sikhs possessed capital assets and advanced or professional degrees and were multilingual with many fluent in English and Swahili, in addition to Punjabi. As previously mentioned, they were predominantly Ramgarhias and had arrived in

Britain as part of larger well-established, self-contained homogenous community with a distinctive set of attitudes, assets, experiences, and expectations. While all East African Sikhs were not necessarily affluent, the standard of living to which they were accustomed was considerably superior to that of rural Punjab. As Bhachu (1985) posits, African Sikh migrants were thus better equipped to succeed economically and professionally in their new hostland and had the further advantage of possessing an already consolidated ethnic identity.

Moreover, in terms of identity, the African Sikh community constituted an interesting paradox (Ballard 1994; Bhachu 1985; Ballard and Ballard 1977). While they tended to be more "Westernized" than their Punjabi coreligionists in certain aspects of their lifestyles, they were simultaneously also more comfortable with the outward expression of their religious tradition and ethnic heritage. Because they had been used to living as an insulated and more or less excluded minority in Africa, they had already developed a strong (and in many ways "traditional") sense of ethnic consciousness. Their arrival also coincided with the resurgence in caste consciousness that was taking place within larger British Sikh society, and served to further amplify these distinctions. Thus, in the late 1960s and 1970s, several Ramgarhia gurdwaras were established to service the spiritual needs of this new group. As stated earlier, this phenomenon of caste-specific gurdwaras and their attendant exclusivist management committees significantly undermined the overall cohesion of the community.

The Arrival of Political Refugees

During the 1970s a series of increasingly restrictive anti-immigration legislation was enacted which drastically reduced the numbers of non-white (and by extension, Sikh) immigrants into Britain. The 1979 election of the Margaret Thatcher-led anti-immigration Conservative government, coupled with a long

economic recession, further contributed to this trend.[197] However, in the early 1980s, the growth of the militant Khalistan movement and the Indian government's sustained counter-insurgency led numerous Sikhs to seek political asylum in Britain. As noted previously, there is a dearth of statistical information on this group, and the figures available are derived from aggregate data on all Indian refugees. During the 1979-1985 period, four out of sixty-seven Sikh asylum applicants were accepted into Britain. In the years spanning 1984-1992, 5,900 Indian citizens[198] (predominantly Sikh) applied for political asylum. In 1995, the number of asylum seekers from India rose to an annual high of 3,255, of which the majority were Sikh. Between 1984-1999, no applicants were determined to be "genuine refugees," although eight hundred of those rejected were granted exceptional leave to stay in the country (Tatla 1999, 59). More recently, on July 31, 2000, the Special Immigration Appeals Commission granted refugee status to asylum seekers Paramjit Singh and Mukhtiar Singh (both of whom are active in the Khalistan movement), ruling that they would risk torture if deported to India. This landmark decision was viewed by many in the Khalistan movement as a vindication of their claim that human rights abuse persists in the Punjab. Upon their release, both refugees stated that they would continue their peaceful campaign to create an independent Sikh state <http://www.sikhrefugee. freeserve.co.uk>.

Sikh Migration to North America

In 1887, a Sikh regiment attending Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations in London traveled to British Columbia before returning to India (Tatla 1999, 51). Many of them returned to North America after their service and were joined by other retired police and army personnel who had been employed

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[197] For a comprehensive analysis of Thatcher's "racecraft" politics, see Zig Layton-Henry's (1992, 180-214) illuminating discussion.

by the British Imperial government in the Far East. According to N. Gerald Barrier, the North American West Coast became one of the last, but in several aspects most important, centers of early Sikh migration (1989, 69).[199] Barrier maintains that Sikh settlement in North America differed from migration to other parts of the world for a number of inter-related reasons. First, this was the only large-scale Sikh migration to a Western country at the beginning of the twentieth century. Consequently, the issues confronting the Sikhs and their responses to these challenges diverged considerably from their previous experiences in Africa and South East Asia. Second, largely because of the host society's exclusionist sociopolitical structures and the attendant social isolation and political disenfranchisement, Sikhs mobilized more quickly, formulated a broader set of ethnic institutions, and developed a strong collective identity. Finally, as several authors (Singh 1994; Barrier 1989; Buchignani and Indra 1989; La Brack 1988; Juergensmeyer 1979) contend, the hostile environment that the early migrants faced fueled a strong interest and subsequent involvement in both local and Indian politics. This early politicization of the North American Sikh community would also impact the separatist movement that would emerge in the community several decades later.

Paralleling the pattern in Britain, most of the early sojourners had arrived in North America through service in the British army and were predominantly from the agrarian region of central Punjab (Chadney 1984).[200] In the period between 1902-1908, Sikhs settled on the Pacific Coast, mainly in Oregon, Washington, and Canadian British Columbia and were employed as unskilled labor in the lumber industry. During these early years, some Sikh pioneers also migrated south to California and worked in the fruit orchards and farmlands in the

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[198] This figure excludes dependents.
199 Although my focus centers on Punjabi Sikhs, it should be noted that some Hindu and Muslim Punjabis from the Jalandhar district also migrated to the North American West Coast during this period.

San Joaquin Valley (which to them was geographically reminiscent of the Punjab).

Sikh migrants received a uniformly hostile reception from the dominant white community and soon became aware that they were the inheritors of several decades of anti-Asian prejudice (Puri 1983; Jacoby 1979).[201] Although the number of Indian migrants totaled no more than a few thousand, the specter of a "Hindoo"[202] or "turban tide," combined with the prevailing attitudes and fears about Asian immigrants as a whole, provoked a violent backlash from certain nativist elements. In most cases, the antagonism was directly related to competition for employment, as the new immigrants were often willing to work for considerably lower wages than their native counterparts. In 1907, there were anti-Asian riots in British Columbia against Asians in general (which included the Indians, Chinese and Japanese). Later that same year, the Indians were the specific targets of riots in the Bellingham, Washington lumber camps. By late 1908, the riots had moved south to Oregon. Meanwhile, in California, the Exclusion Movement that had originally focused its hostility on other Asian groups (such as the Chinese and Japanese) extended its reach to include Indians.

In both the United States and Canada, organized opposition promptly arose in an effort to curtail this new flow of "undesirables" into "white man's country." Consequently, pressures by powerful exclusionary groups led to a series of stringent administrative and legislative measures that effectively curtailed future migration during the second decade of the century.[203] During the 1920-

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[200] They were predominantly from the Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts.

[201] For example, there was widespread prejudice against immigrants from China and Japan, and in many cases, official policies merely reflected prevailing racist attitudes. For a comprehensive analysis of the factors that contributed to this hostile environment, see Patricia Roy's (1989) work.

[202] At this time, all Indians regardless of religious affiliation, were referred to as "Hindoos" or "ragheads" by the native white population.

[203] According to Tarik Ali Khan (1999), as early as 1907, the Dominion Government of Canada had briefly considered deporting its roughly 2,000 Indian settlers to what was then British Honduras (Belize).

1960 period, Sikh migration to North America was negligible and the entire community totaled no more than a few thousand. It was only in the mid-1960s, when the United States and Canada finally abandoned the last vestiges of their respective discriminatory immigration policies, that Sikhs began to migrate in large numbers to these two countries.

Sikh Migration to Canada

Canada represents a demographic configuration similar to Great Britain, in that Sikhs presently comprise the largest number of all immigrants of South Asian origin. Out of an estimated total number of 700,000 South Asian migrants, Sikhs constitute approximately 340,000 (about 43 per cent). The bulk of the Sikh population is concentrated in two provinces—Ontario and British Columbia. Almost one third of Canadian Sikhs reside in the greater Vancouver area while roughly half the Canadian Sikh community is clustered in Ontario. Details chronicling the history of the Canadian Sikh migratory experience are provided below.

The "Continuous Journey" Clause

As previously stated, Sikhs began to migrate into Canada during the early 1900s. However, by 1909, Canada began to successfully curb the flow of all East Indian immigrants by passing legislation that contained the draconian "continuous journey" clause (Tatla 1999; Singh 1994; Jacoby 1979).[204] This provision mandated that entrance to Canada be granted only to those immigrants who had arrived by "continuous journey or passage" (i.e., without stopping at any port) from their country of origin on tickets purchased in their country of origin. Additionally, the amount of cash that an immigrant was required to possess upon arrival increased from $25 to $200. Considering that this "head tax" was an

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204 Immigration Law of 1906, Sections 37 and 38.

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amount well beyond the reach of most travelers and that there were no steamship lines directly connecting India with Canada, these measures effectively curbed potential immigration from India and served to pacify the increasingly vociferous Canadian exclusionists.

The "continuous journey" clause specifically aimed at Indians (mainly Sikhs, given the historical pattern of migration) from the Far East resulted in a stark drop in the number of Indians entering the country. Between 1909 and 1913, only twenty-seven passengers were allowed to disembark and permitted entry into Canada. Frustrated by the blatantly racist immigration policies, Sikhs and other Punjabis organized mass protest rallies, sought judicial recourse, and sent several petitions to then Secretary of State for India, John Morley. Although a court deemed the "continuous journey" provision invalid, the Canadian government issued another Order-in-Council that retained the article. Responding to this, the Khalsa Diwan Society (an organization established by Sikh immigrants) led a delegation to Ottawa requesting that the "continuous journey" clause be struck down and that Indians receive equitable treatment in cases pertaining to immigration. Given that the Indians were British imperial subjects and that Canada constituted a British dominion, the British colonial government of India also raised objections to the Canadian government's restrictions on Indians claiming that these constraints violated the "spirit of free movement within the British Empire" (Tatla 1999, 53).

The Komagata Maru Episode

Tensions between Canadian immigration officials and Indian immigrants came to a head in 1914, when a Sikh entrepreneur named Gurdit Singh Sarhali chartered a Japanese steamship, the Komagata Maru, with the intent of transporting Indian emigrants to Canada. The Komagata Maru picked up 376

Indian (mostly Sikh) passengers[205] from Hong Kong and Shanghai and made its voyage to Canada. The ship anchored at Victoria harbor on May 23, 1914, but was detained and passengers were prohibited from disembarking (although they fulfilled virtually all immigration entrance requirements). The Canadian government immediately placed a 24-hour armed guard launch to ensure that the ship be kept under constant surveillance. Additionally, Gurdit Singh was isolated from the other passengers and neither he nor others on board were allowed any contact with the Vancouver Sikh community.

Gurdit Singh resolutely maintained that as British subjects, the passengers had the prerogative to visit any part of the British Empire as they desired. Canadian immigration officials viewed the situation somewhat differently and when the immigration team went aboard the ship, it permitted only twenty passengers (who were returnees) to enter the country. After a series of prolonged negotiations, the remaining passengers were issued deportation orders and the Komagata Maru was forcibly repatriated. Upon landing in Calcutta, a violent clash erupted between British police personnel and Indian civilians who were outraged at the racist treatment that the passengers had received at the hands of a white government (Singh 1994, 52; Deol 1969, 94-6).

According to Harish Puri, in the minds of the Punjabi community, the term "Komagata Maru" subsequently became synonymous with "British oppression" (1983, 69). The incident permanently marked the political psyche of many Indians, including Sikh soldiers hitherto loyal to the British Empire. There was widespread consensus that if political control of the Indian state had been in Indian hands, then the Indian government would have fought to protect its citizens abroad. According to several scholars (Tatla 1999, 53; Chadney 1989, 187-9; Puri 1983, 77-81; Ganguly 1979, 18-54; Deol 1969, 95-6), the Komagata Maru incident played a significant role in producing fertile ground for the nationalist

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205 Of the 376 passengers aboard, 340 were Sikh, 24 were Muslim, and 12 were Hindu.

ideology of the Ghadar movement and, thereafter, the Indian Congress Party (Tatla 1999). Additionally, the racism that all Indians experienced at the hands of the white community tended to foster an "us versus them" solidarity that transcended religious and ethnic differences. In a situation reminiscent of early settlement patterns in Britain, most early Indian settlers in Canada viewed themselves as belonging to a disenfranchised pan-Indian community. This manifested itself most visibly in the numerous cooperative immigrant networks and institutions that were established during this period.

Diasporan Sikh Institutions and Networks

The founding of many Sikh networks and organizations may be traced to the sociopolitical events that were taking place in both in North America and in India at the time.[206] During this early period of settlement, Sikh institutional activities centered around three sets of networks (Barrier 1989). First, the Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver (founded in 1907) that coordinated several Sikh religious activities and included establishing gurdwaras, supplying preachers, and raising monies for a variety of local community and Indian social projects. As Barrier (1989, 69-70) highlights, the establishment of the Society served as the catalyst for the creation of a variety of communication networks within segments of the Sikh immigrant community and between Sikhs and their compatriots in the Punjab.[207] The Diwan was also closely affiliated with Khalsa schools (Sikh educational institutions), service organizations, and gurdwaras, and these institutions also served to forge ties and foster a sense of solidarity within the Sikh community.

One of the biggest issues confronting Canadian Sikhs was the rising level

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206 In this section, I rely extensively on N. Gerald Barrier's (1989, 49-89) historical data.
207 Important journals and papers of the time include, *The Aryan* (an English monthly edited by Sundar Singh in Victoria), *The Swedeshi Sewak* (published in Vancouver in both Gurmukhi and Urdu), the *Khalsa Herald* (a Gurmukhi journal published in Vancouver by Kartar Singh Akali),

of hostility they encountered in their interactions with mainstream white society. The Canadian Sikh community's feelings of insecurity were further heightened by officially sanctioned persecution in the form of blatantly prejudicial anti-immigration legislation. Consequently, in 1907, there were impassioned editorials and correspondence describing the prevailing racial climate, in two prominent Sikh publications, the *Khalsa Samachar* and the *Khalsa Advocate.*[208] Barrier cites, for example, an issue of the *Khalsa Samachar* dated April 1, 1908, in which a Sikh named Kartar Singh recounts in detail the maltreatment of Indian immigrants living in Vancouver (1989, 70). It may be surmised that by 1913 the racial situation had deteriorated even further, for the pleas for assistance had become more frequent and plaintive, and information relating to racial harassment had become the primary focus of many publications. There was extensive reporting on delegations sent to both the Canadian and British governments that presented the Indian immigrant community's grievances. Additionally, a group of Canadian-Indian immigrants also visited the Punjab in order to lobby the British-Indian administration to put pressure on Canada to reform its inequitable immigration policies. The Canadian Khalsa Diwan Society supported several of these activities both directly (by coordinating meetings, drafting resolutions and petitions, and sending representatives to meet with government officials) and indirectly (by lending its resources to other immigrant support networks).

Another concern of great importance to Sikh immigrants at this time related to the prevailing political and religious upheaval in their Punjabi homeland (Barrier 1989, 70-1). Canadian Sikhs were actively involved in fund-raising, and generated considerable monies that were remitted to India to support political activists and organizations in addition to maintaining Sikh religious and

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The Free Hindustan and *Sansar* (a Gurmukhi newspaper published in Vancouver). See Barrier (1989, 69).

[208] For interesting discussions on the evolution of the vernacular press in North America, see Tatla (1994); In Great Britain, see Tatla and Singh (1989).

educational institutions. Funds were raised for the Canadian Khalsa Diwan Society, the Educational Conference, and for particular organizations such as the Sikh *Kanya Mahavidyala* in Ferozepur, primarily through appeals made in publications such as the *Khalsa Advocate* and the *Khalsa Samacha,* which circulated widely among Vancouver Sikhs. When sending monies to the Punjab, Canadian Sikhs also dispatched copies of Canadian newspapers and other publications. Sikhs in the Punjab were thus thoroughly apprised of the situation of their Sikh compatriots in Canada. Responding with indignation to reports of Canadian racism against their kinsmen, numerous Sikh organizations in the Punjab coordinated mass protest rallies and sent back donations to help defray legal costs. For example, a 1913 case concerning three Vancouver students barred from attending school in their turbans attracted much attention in the Punjab and generated considerable support for Canadian Sikhs (Barrier 1989, 71).[209]

As Barrier highlights, the preoccupation that many Canadian Sikhs had with education and the fate of their religion in the Punjab was rooted in their own particularly arduous migrant experience. Canadian Sikhs were distinctly aware of the close link between literacy and survival in an alien land and this theme formed the focus of numerous resolutions, meetings, and discussions. It was also the motivation behind the establishment of Khalsa schools, which were thought to be the cornerstone of a literate and self-sufficient community. Most Sikh migrants viewed education as a mechanism of upward social mobility—there was a sense that if the Sikh community progressed as a whole, individual Sikhs could enhance their image and improve their position vis-à-vis the white Canadian community. Likewise, there was a feeling that if Sikh religious institutions in the Punjab could be strengthened and revitalized, then this would potentially serve as a powerful

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[209] The turban issue continues to be controversial even in contemporary times. See, for example, Somini Sengupta's article, "Restaurant Faces Bias Suit For Barring Man in Turban," in *The New York Times*, April 25, 1997.

spiritual resource for Canadian Sikhs[210] (Barrier 1979, 70-3)

An organization closely affiliated with the Khalsa Diwan was the Hindustan Ghadar Party. As many migrants soon realized, political repression in the Punjab and social marginalization in North America were not isolated phenomena, but rather situations largely determined by the prevailing geopolitical status quo. This increasing awareness was the motivation behind the initial establishment of the Hindustan Association, which subsequently became the Hindustan Ghadar (Revolutionary) Party. As Mark Juergensmeyer (1979) maintains, while a direct correlation cannot be drawn between the establishment of the organization and the hostility that the migrants encountered, it is possible to argue that economic and social pressures served as a powerful mobilizing force for the nationalist cause. The Hindustan Ghadar Party was vocal in its support of self-rule in India and relied heavily on the Khalsa Diwan's membership and resources. The Ghadar group had its own publications and revolutionary mission, and although it drew many of its members from the Sikh community, was primarily a Pan-Indian nationalist organization.

The second type of institutions in which Sikhs participated were the "pan-Indian" organizations that had emerged in several American and Canadian cities to serve the new migrants' needs. Membership in these clubs was open to all religious groups—Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs—and social and educational programs were designed to provide a wide range of "practical" support such as helping new migrants find jobs, housing, etc.

A third set of networks was instituted through the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society (PCKD), which was founded in 1912 in the San Francisco area.

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210 According to Barrier (1989), several accounts reveal the kinds of information that the Canadian Sikhs felt important to share with co-religionists back home. In 1907, the Khalsa Diwan of Vancouver held meetings on the topic "Controversies with Hindus." A Canadian Brahmin had attempted to get a manager to force 200 Sikhs in a factory to cut their hair, which resulted in a strike and subsequently successful negotiations with the owners. Another series of reports dealt

Religious, educational, and social programs coordinated by the PCKD closely resembled those organized by the Canadian Khalsa Diwan. Sikhs in the Stockton area also actively participated in PCKD programs, although they maintained their own separate diwans and gurdwaras. While its leadership was drawn subsequently from Sikhs in the Stockton area, its prominent founding members included several Sikh visitors from India.

Opening the Door to Asian Immigration

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Canada began a piece-meal process of dismantling its anti-Asian immigration legislation. According to Ronald D' Costa (1993), this was largely motivated by Canada's prominent role on the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, more intense involvement in international affairs (specifically with regard to the politics of the Commonwealth), and the economic conditions that followed the war (in particular, severe labor shortages in several industries). In 1947, Parliament began to debate changes to the existing Immigration Act and subsequently repealed the Chinese Immigration Act on May 14, 1947, which governed Asian immigration. However, certain discriminatory stipulations continued to be retained, including the controversial "continuous journey clause" and the "money qualification" (or "head tax") which applied to all Asian immigrants.[211]

Sikhs and other South Asians were not granted the right to vote until 1947, even though they had served in the Canadian army during World War II. For

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with the infighting among Sikhs over control over *Sansar*. Some wanted the paper to be community property, while others filed a case in court to keep it independent.

[211] The anti-immigration organization, Canada First, cites on its website's home page the following statement made by Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King on May 1st 1947, regarding Canada's long-term immigration agenda: "Immigration is a matter of domestic policy and is subject to the control of Parliament. Canada is perfectly within her rights in securing the immigrants she wants. An alien has no 'fundamental human right' to enter Canada. This is a privilege…. The people of Canada do not wish to make a fundamental alteration in the character of their population through mass immigration. The government is therefore opposed to 'large scale

many Sikhs, the acquisition of unabbreviated citizenship rights coupled with the introduction of an immigration quota system meant a swift reunion with family members left behind in the Punjab. Sikh immigration began to gradually expand during this period as Canadian Sikhs began sponsoring kinfolk, creating a discernible pattern of chain migration, analogous to the one in Britain. According to data formulated by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, immigrants of East Indian origin totaled 1,139 during the 1946-55 period. Published statistics by the Department of Employment and Immigration further indicate that between 1956-62, East Indian immigration increased to 4,088 (see D'Costa 1993, 184). Between 1963-67, before all discriminatory clauses were removed from prevailing immigration statutes, 12,856 immigrants of South Asian origin gained admission to Canada. According to Annamma Joy (1989), in the 1950s and early 1960s, Sikhs (mostly sponsored friends and relatives of the early settlers and their progeny) comprised the majority of the South Asian immigrant population. Additionally, during this time, there were two other sources of Sikh migration: students from the Punjab and professionals from East Africa. By the early 1950s, realizing their precarious position in the various newly enfranchised East African states, this latter group viewed transmigration as their only viable option. While many settled in Great Britain, a large segment of the professional class chose to migrate, both to Canada and the United States. This trend was also shaped by the immigration policies pursued by the three countries in question. By the mid-1960s, just as Great Britain was embarking on a process that that increasingly restricted immigrants of South Asian origin, both Canada and the United States had coincidentally begun to liberalize their respective immigration policies.

In 1967, in what is considered a watershed in Canadian Immigration policy history, the government formally abolished all discriminatory provisions in

immigration from the Orient,' which would certainly give rise to social and economic problems, which might lead to serious international difficulties" <http://www.canadafirst.net/>.

legislation governing immigration. In essence, the 1967 law eliminated discrimination on the bases of race or nationality and formulated a more consistent and transparent admissions process that centered on a point system.[212] These amended immigration regulations accorded high numbers of points to certain specialized occupational categories (engineering, medicine, accounting, nursing, etc.) for which there were dire labor shortages. Canada's concerted effort to attract highly skilled professionals led to a surge in the number of applicants from South Asia and between 1968 and 1972, the number of immigrants from the region rose to 30,501. Although the altered immigration laws resulted in the arrival of an increased number of non-Sikh migrants from India, Punjabi Sikhs still accounted for roughly half of all Indian immigrants. Even in the 1970s, as the criteria for migration changed to favor semi-skilled labor, Sikhs still constituted almost half of all Indian immigrants because of the chain migration process (O' Connell 2000, 192).

While the early sojourners had settled almost exclusively on the Canadian west coast, by the 1950s a small Sikh presence had become established in the eastern province of Ontario. Although the nascent Sikh community in Ontario did not have access to the varied resources and elaborate institutions of the Sikh community in British Columbia, it gradually developed its own set of networks and formal institutions. In 1954, commemorations marking Guru Nanak's birth anniversary were held for the first time in the residence of a migrant named Kuldeep Singh Chatwal. By 1965, there were approximately 400 Sikhs in Toronto and they had begun congregating at a downtown community center (on Eglinton Avenue) for a monthly religious service. In 1969, on the quincentenary of Guru Nanak's birth, the community established its first permanent gurdwara on Pape Avenue in Toronto. With the influx of Sikh migrants in the 1970s, and the concomitant increase in demand for spiritual instruction and guidance, gurdwaras

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[212] For detailed information on Canada's point system, see Ronald D' Costa (1993, 183).

continued to proliferate in Ontario. One account (Singh 1990) estimates that the province has over twenty-five temporary and permanent gurdwaras, which simultaneously serve as spiritual institutions and multi-use community centers. As discussed in detail in chapter three, gurdwaras in both Ontario and British Columbia, while serving as an integrative force for the Sikh community, have also constituted a major source of intra-communal competition. As is the case in Britain, the drastic increase in migration and the resultant internal variation in the Canadian Sikh community led to the founding of gurdwaras with specific caste, sect, and political memberships. This in turn, has led to further intra-communal fragmentation. Moreover, in the case of Canadian Sikhs, as Blaise and Mukherjee conclude

> What divisions they did know were typical of rivalries from any culture in the world. Rival villages, rival gangs, rival class and religious loyalties. These petty jealousies and enmities were carried to Canada and would later serve to influence their selection of temple, or their membership in various factions of the Khalistan movement. World Sikh Organization, Khalistan Youth, International Sikh Youth Federation, Dal Khalsa – they shared the goal of independence for the "Sikh Nation," but they were originally organized under different leaders, with different styles (1987, 176).

Refugee Migration

In the 1980s, while large numbers of Sikh professionals and relatives of Canadian citizens continued to migrate to Canada under the prevailing point system,[213] a new category of migrants—refugees—simultaneously began to emerge. The migration of this latter group was largely influenced by the turbulent events in the Punjab during this period. Canada's reputation as a country possessing one of the West's most liberal refugee policies resulted in it becoming a favored destination for many Sikh refugees fleeing political persecution. While there are no verifiable statistics concerning the precise number of Sikh asylum

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[213] It should be noted that despite the creation of a point system, in 1984, 94 percent of all immigrants from India arrived through family sponsorship and only 4 percent came as independents (Johnston 1991, 119).

seekers, Tatla (1999, 60) maintains that since 1980 the number of applications from Indian citizens has averaged at roughly 500 per year. As previously stated, according to Tatla's (1999, 60) analysis, the majority of these Indian applicants are Sikhs from the Punjab.[214]

On July 12, 1987, a cargo ship named the *Amelie*, which had begun its voyage in Rotterdam, landed in Charlesville (on the southwest coast of Nova Scotia) with 174 Sikh refugees[215] aboard. The RCMP later detained them in Halifax and immigration proceedings were initiated. The following day, the Swedish captain Rolf Nygren and a Sikh named Jasbir Singh Rana (who allegedly coordinated the effort) were arrested on charges of human smuggling. The incident sparked vocal protests by numerous anti-immigration groups, who called for the immediate repatriation of the asylum seekers.[216] The intervention of several prominent Sikh organizations and gurdwaras subsequently led to the release of the detainees and their settlement in Sikh-populated cities such as Vancouver and Toronto.

The recent "refugee phase" of migration into Canada has generated highly controversial debates about the efficacy of current Canadian immigration legislation (Bell 2000; Jain 2000c). Many Canadian citizens argue that the majority of migrants claiming asylum status are economic refugees and that their

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[214] Approximately three thousand Sikhs who fled the Punjab in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star and claimed refugee status in Canada are now unable to return to India because Indian officials refuse to issue them passports. For more information, see the article "Sikh 'Refugees' Stranded in Canada," in the online edition of *The Indian Express*, Wednesday, April 15, 1998 <http://www.expressindia.com/ie/daily/19980415/10550284.html>.

[215] The group included 173 men and 1 woman.

[216] As many anti-immigrant groups contend, the Canadian immigration system makes it extremely easy for refugees and other illegal migrants to circumvent the law. Unlike in the Unites States, most foreign nationals who arrive at the Canadian border and claim refugees status are automatically allowed into the country after being given a court date to appear for a hearing on their status. In a number of cases, many fail to show up for the hearing and get "lost" in the country.

claims of political persecution are exaggerated at best or spurious at worst.[217] Additionally, some members of long-established visible minority groups regard the new refugees (who tend to be less educated, less affluent, less westernized, and more provincial) as compromising the image of their respective migrant community vis-à-vis white Canadian society.[218] Moreover, the recent importation of homeland hostilities onto Canadian soil by groups such as the Khalistani Sikhs and the LTTE Tamils has further garnered the opprobrium of mainstream Canadian society.

According to several reports (Jeyaraj 2000a, 2000b; Roane 2000; Sengupta 2000), a discernible nexus between new refugee communities in the West and militant separatist organizations has recently begun to emerge. Canada, unlike the United States, does not maintain a list of proscribed terrorist[219] organizations and such groups thus have the latitude to operate freely. As Sengupta (2000) recounts, many of them have been active in raising and remitting monies to fund their respective homeland movements. Moreover, individuals with ties to terrorist groups are able to exploit lax policies on travel documents, which has prompted some government officials to refer to Canada as a "Club Med for terrorists" (Roane 2000). Additionally, a generous tax code makes it easy to fund

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[217] Although the most vocal calls for immigration reform have emanated from segments within the white community, even members of long-established visible minorities have voiced their support for a more restrictive refugee policy and harsher sanctions against those who abuse the system.

[218] A young upper-middle-class Canadian-born Sikh, whose parents (both professionals) migrated to Toronto in the late 1960s, informed me that he and his friends are generally contemptuous of the new asylum-seekers from the Punjab and refer to them derogatorily as "fugees" or "just off the boat" (Interview with author, October 10, 1998). This view was also expressed by several of my own relatives and friends in the Canadian Sri Lankan community (both Sinhalese and Tamil) who regard the new Tamil refugees with deep suspicion and/or contempt. Moreover, many of the long-established professional migrants who arrived via legal means strongly favor reforms that would drastically curb illegal and/or refugee migration.

[219] I am aware that the label "terrorist" is one that is laden with a variety of emotive connotations and, therefore, one that must be used with caution. As the much-hackneyed adage proclaims, "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom-fighter." I employ such a disputed term in this discussion because it is the appellation applied by governments to non-state actors who use violence or intimidation to achieve political ends.

dubious organizations that fall under the expansive rubric of "charitable" or "religious" institutions.[220] Militant Sikhs based in Canada have also been implicated in several terrorist acts,[221] most notably the June 1985 bombing of an Air India Kanishka aircraft in which all 329 aboard perished.[222] The majority of those killed on flight 182 were Hindu Indo-Canadians and the incident served to generate considerable antipathy between the Indo-Canadian Hindu and Sikh communities.[223] An hour earlier that same day, another bomb planted on an Air India flight originating in Vancouver exploded in Tokyo's Narita airport killing two Japanese baggage handlers. Although it was widely suspected that Inderjit Singh Reyat (a Sikh electrician from Duncan, British Columbia) and Talwinder Singh Parmar (the founder of the militant Babbar Khalsa) masterminded the bombings, neither was arrested for the bombing of flight 102 (Blaise and Mukherjee 1985). Reyat was subsequently linked to the Narita bombing and convicted for the unauthorized possession and detonation of explosive material.[224] Talwinder Singh Parmar was detained by the RCMP and questioned over the course of a two-year period but was subsequently released due to a lack of evidence. He fled Canada in 1988 and joined Khalistan operatives in Pakistan, but was expelled from the movement allegedly due to certain anti-party activities.[225]

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[220] For example, in 1993, the Babbar Khalsa Society of British Columbia obtained charitable tax status even though it had been previously classified by both India and the United States as a terrorist organization. It should also be noted that although Revenue Canada has since revoked the organization's exempt tax status, it has done so only because of a book-keeping infraction.
[221] Another incident attributed to Sikh militants, was the shooting of a cabinet minister from the Punjab who visited Vancouver to attend a family wedding (Johnston 1991, 129).
[222] Canadian and Indian authorities believe that the June 23, 1985 bombing was a revenge attack by Khalistan militants to mark the one-year anniversary of the Indian army's invasion of the Golden Temple.
[223] Many of the passengers were Hindu Indo-Canadian women and children who were traveling to India for their summer vacation. For a detailed account of the disaster, see *The Sorrow and the Terror: The Haunting Legacy of the Air India Tragedy* (Blaise and Mukherjee 1987).
[224] He is currently in prison serving a ten-year sentence.
[225] The exact nature of these "anti-party activities" that Parmar is alleged to have engaged in remains unclear. Some say that it is rumored that he turned traitor and became an agent of the

Upon his return to India in 1992, Parmar was killed by Indian police in a "police encounter" (chapter five provides more detailed information in the section on the North American Babbar Khalsa organization).

After a lengthy and expensive investigation (which spanned fifteen years and two continents, produced eight hundred witnesses, and uncovered over half a million evidential documents) Canadian authorities arrested two men on October 27, 2000. The accused, Ripudaman Singh Malik[226] and Ajaib Singh Bagri (one of Parmar's close associates), have been charged with a series of crimes including first-degree murder (Dowd 2000; Jain 2000a). Many of the victims' relatives have expressed relief that the case is finally going to trial.[227] Allegations about Sikh terrorism and counter-allegations about Indian espionage continue to proliferate, and this has served to further cleave the Indo-Canadian community.[228] Sikh militants counter that they have been expediently made into scapegoats for this and other acts of terrorism.[229] They further claim that they are continually

Indian government. Others state that this was merely another Indian government ploy to denigrate him and sow dissention within the Sikh separatist movement (Tatla 1999, 120-121).

[226] According to Bolan (2000b), he has been identified as a longtime financier of militant Sikh separatist groups in Canada and have publicly acknowledged providing funds to some of the main suspects in the Air India bombing.

[227] For a poignant portrayal of the tragedy and the indelible imprint it left on victims' families and the larger Indo-Canadian community, see Shelley Saywell's documentary film, "Legacy of Terror: The Bombing of Air India," which premiered on Canadian television in August 2000 (Ali 2000).

[228] In recent years, the Canadian-Sikh community, long silent on the issue, publicly condemned the bombing. Additionally, in a marked shift in Canadian Hindu-Sikh relations, the gurdwara in British Columbia (from which it is alleged, the terrorists plotted the bombing) held a memorial service in June 1999, to commemorate the 14th anniversary of the disaster.

[229] For example, in the December 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight by Muslim Kashmiris belonging to the militant Harkat-ul-Ansar organization, there was early speculation that the hijackers were Sikh because of their turbans. Sikhs were particularly incensed by a front page report by Susan Sachs in *The New York Times* of Saturday, December 25, 1999, which began "Five Sikh men said to be armed with grenades, rifles and knives hijacked an Indian airline jet yesterday." Only at the end of the article was there any mention of the possibility that the hijackers might belong to a Kashmiri rebel group. The diasporan Sikh community swiftly mobilized to refute the unsubstantiated charges and in the latter part of December 1999 and the early part of January 2000, numerous e-mails were exchanged on the Sikh.net listserve urging members to protest the distorted coverage. Several prominent Sikh organizations such as the Sikh

portrayed unfairly in the media, as aggressors and instigators of violence. In justifying their position, they frequently cite the book *Soft Target: How the Indian Intelligence Service Penetrated Canada* (Kashmeri and McAndrew 1989), coauthored by two non-Sikh journalists, which alleges that the Air India bombing was an Indian intelligence conspiracy designed to vilify Sikh separatists. Nevertheless, the Air India tragedy and the recent violence that has permeated gurdwara politics have indelibly marked the Sikh community as being violent and conflict-ridden. This perception of the Sikh community as "troublesome" has also been exploited by right-wing anti-immigration organizations such as Canada First, who justify their demand for more stringent immigration controls by highlighting terrorist acts that are linked to visible minorities. Similarly, many anti-immigrant groups have cited the abuse of Canada's generous welfare scheme by immigrants who possess criminal records or are closely linked to terrorist operatives.[230] In light of numerous calls to more actively oversee the political operations of migrant groups, Canada became a signatory to a recent United Nations convention that urges states to monitor and ultimately freeze the collection or deposit of funds that may be used to arm or support terrorists abroad (Bell 2000; Sengupta 2000). At present, there are several proposals underway that would grant Canadian immigration and intelligence authorities more expansive powers in dealing with immigrants who are suspected of being terrorists (Roane 2000). Additionally, debates are in progress to rescind certain sections of the country's Charter of Rights and Freedoms that would curtail the civil liberties of immigrants with ties to terrorist organizations. This last proposal has generated a great deal of controversy, with various segments of Canadian society lobbying to the government to implement legislation that reflects their respective position.

Mediawatch and Resource Task Force (SMART) also sent letters to the media protesting its irresponsible reporting of the incident. For more on the issue, see J.M. Shenoy's (1999) report.

Numerous anti-immigrant groups have lauded these proposals while civil rights advocates and immigrant organizations have been vocal in their opposition to the curtailment of any civil liberties. The latter group fears that such a step would allow state authorities to arbitrarily harass all political refugees with impunity.

Sikh Migration to the United States

The Sikh community in the United States is highly heterogeneous due to the particular settlement patterns of early and later migrants (Mann 2000). By the 1990s, there were approximately 180,000 Sikhs settled in the United States and they are differentiated on the bases of caste, class, religiosity, education, and length of settlement (Tatla 1999, 56). In contrast to Sikhs in Great Britain and Canada, Sikhs in the United States do not comprise the bulk of the South Asian population and are not concentrated in any specific region. According to one estimate, in the 1980s, Sikhs made up roughly five percent of the entire South Asian American migrant community (Tatla 1999, 56). The Sacramento Valley in California, where Sikh pioneers established early settlements in Yuba City[231] and Marysville, contains the largest Sikh community in the country and includes the bulk of second and third generation immigrants. Many of the more recent arrivals (who comprise the largest segment of the American Sikh population) are dispersed throughout the United States and reside in major metropolitan areas such as Chicago, San Francisco, New York, and Washington, D.C. Given the nature of American immigration policy, which favors professionals and contains stringent provisions that govern the admission of refugees, Sikhs in the United States tend to be better educated and wealthier than their Canadian and British

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[230] According to several press reports, Satnam Kaur, the wife of Inderjit Singh Reyat, pled guilty on February 1st 2000 to collecting more than Cdn$109,000 (approximately US $ 75,200) in welfare benefits to which she was not entitled between 1991 and May 1998 (see Jain 2000c).
[231] Yuba City had 400 Sikhs in 1948 and the figures stabilized to 10,000 by the mid-1980s (LaBrack 1989, 280).

counterparts (Mann 2000; LaBrack 1989).[232] Paralleling their coreligionists' experiences in Great Britain and Canada, the Sikh settlement experience in the United States has undergone several permutations.

Early Migration

In the first decade of the twentieth century, with the exception of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the quasi-statutory "Gentlemen's Agreement" of 1908 with Japan (barring Japanese workers), there was no United States immigration legislation aimed at any particular national or racial group. However, as Harold S. Jacoby maintains, immigration law in this period did specify "a number of physical, psychological, economic, and philosophical characteristics, which rendered individuals *as* individuals unwelcome in this country" (1979, 162). Both the interpretation and enforcement of these laws were left to the discretion of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, which had few reservations about applying these provisos to exclude Indian immigrants. With encouragement from nativist factions and anti-immigrant groups such as the Asiatic Exclusion League, the Bureau swiftly implemented rigorous screening procedures for all Indian immigrants. A direct consequence of these measures was that there was a drastic reduction in the numbers of Indians admitted.[233] Far from it being a covert operation, Bureau officials openly bragged about their biased screening methods and the high levels of success they consequently attained[234]

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[232] It must be noted, however, that in the 1980s and 1990s, numerous South Asians (including Sikhs escaping the violence in the Punjab) have arrived in the country through illegal means. They have generally been less educated and poorer than their legal counterparts. However, given their illegal status, it is difficult to accurately account for their numbers and any data relating to these migrants tends to be anecdotal.

[233] For example, during the years prior to 1907, the percentage of Indian applicants for admission to the United States who were rejected because of some "defect" was less than ten percent. For the years 1907-14, the rejection rate rose to thirty-three percent; and, in the years 1909, 1911, and 1913, the rejection rate was fifty percent or higher (Jacoby 1979, 162).

[234] The District Commissioner of Seattle claims in his 1910 annual report that: "A number of Hindus have applied for admission to the United States through this district during the year just passed. Every Hindu has been rejected by a board of special inquiry on the grounds of belief in

(Jacoby 1979, 162). United States immigration restrictions against Asians culminated in the 1917 Barred Zone Act, which designated most of Asia as a geographic zone from which immigrants were barred (Leonard 2000, 194).

Although over ten thousand Sikh males had settled in California between 1904 and 1923, due to strict immigration controls and some out-migration their numbers had, by 1947, dwindled to a mere three thousand. From 1920 to 1947, migrants (some of whom had entered the United States illegally via the Mexican border) lived in small, secluded communities and worked as agricultural laborers. As Karen Leonard (2000, 1997, 1996, 1992, 1989) recounts in her extensive ethnographic research on Punjabi-American communities, prevailing anti-miscegenation statutes[235] prohibited the migrants from marrying Anglo women, and subsequently, many Sikhs married Mexican women, raised families, and settled in California's Imperial Valley.

One of the most powerful setbacks to Sikh settlement in America came in the form of a 1923 United States Supreme Court decision. In the *Thind* case (*United States v. Thind*, 261 U.S. 204 [1923]), the Court ruled that although Indians were racially regarded as Caucasian, they could not be classified as "free white persons" and, therefore, were ineligible for citizenship. The verdict meant that Sikhs would now fall under the jurisdiction of the 1913 California Alien Land Act, which restricted the right to register land to American citizens. The original intent of the California Alien Land Act had been to thwart the land-owning aspirations of Japanese farmers. However, the Thind verdict, by stripping Indians of the right to citizenship, effectively extended the California legislation to dispossess them of land ownership rights as well. The corollary of such institutionalized discrimination was that North American Sikhs, particularly those resident in the United States, became politicized at an early stage. In particular,

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polygamy, likely to become a public charge, doctor's certificate, or as an assisted immigrant"
(cited in Jacoby 1979, 162).

the formation of the Ghadar movement and the intense political struggle that followed shaped much of the early phase of the American Sikh migrant experience.

The Ghadar Movement

According to Mark Juergensmeyer, while the Ghadar movement is historically situated within the context of Indian nationalism, it in fact reveals more about the early Punjabi (and by extension Sikh) migrant experience than it does about the freedom struggle in India (1979).[236] Certain scholars (Juergensmeyer 1979; Puri 1983) point out that two separate, albeit inter-related, dialectics worked in tandem to produce the Ghadar militancy. While the movement was clearly a manifestation of nationalist support, its establishment also starkly reflects the anger and disenchantment felt by a marginalized immigrant community. The movement served as a conduit for the channeling of frustrations endured by the new migrants increasingly beleaguered by their deteriorating situation. Thus, individual hardships encountered by Indian immigrants in North America became immediately and inextricably linked with the national subjugation of Indians in British-ruled India. The bitterness felt by many migrants in response to the racism they experienced at the hands of white North American employers, landlords, and police officers was transformed into bitterness against white British rulers in India. The intense passion and level of commitment that the movement invoked in the migrant community (to the extent

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[235] California dismantled its anti-miscegenation laws in 1948.

[236] During its early stages, the Ghadar movement's membership was drawn from a broad base of Indian migrants whose political interests and backgrounds were as varied as their professional affiliations (Puri 1983; Juergensmeyer 1879). The revolutionary coalition comprised agricultural laborers, priests, political refugees, students, and visiting intellectuals, whose educational and class statuses varied considerably. For example, members included Bab Sohan Singh Bhakna (a founding member of the movement who had previously worked as a laborer in the Oregon lumber industry), Jawala Singh (a Stockton potato farmer who helped finance the movement), Bhagwan Singh (a gyani [Sikh priest] who led the party after 1917), and Karatar Singh Sarabha (who had

that many were willing to sacrifice their lives for the nationalist cause) may be attributed to "the fusion of nationalism with other, more personal, experiences" (Juergensmeyer 1979, 175). The motivation behind the formation of the Ghadar party may thus be found in both the American and Indian contexts of the migrant experience. As Juergensmeyer suggests, in the new North American context the issues of the old British Imperial context gained a heightened salience (1979, 173-4). In his analysis, therefore, the struggle against oppression in North America and India became fused into one unified struggle—*Ghadar* or revolution—against white hegemony in general.

Although there were some links between the Ghadar leadership and autochthonous political activists in India, the movement operated independently of the freedom movement in India and was largely autonomous. Emphasizing the distinctly self-contained nature of the movement, Juergensmeyer asserts that "[T]he *Ghadar* movement was not only based in North America, it almost wholly existed within North America…."(1979, 173). Both Puri (1983, 85-6) and Juergensmeyer (1979, 73) further note that most Ghadarites were markedly more militant than most nationalists back in India. Puri recounts that "most of the Ghadar men had expected to find their compatriots in the Punjab in a state of readiness," but instead "their fellowmen in Punjab considered the Ghadar men, to be crazy" (1983, 85). Exile militancy, however, is unsurprising given that exiles are generally less constrained in their activities than their compatriots in the homeland. According to Benedict Anderson (1994, 1992), this brand of "long distance nationalism" is inherently more militant than a homegrown variety *precisely* because exile protagonists have the freedom to engage politically while

come to the United States in the early 1900s to attend the University of California, Berkeley and was subsequently killed in an uprising in the Punjab).

remaining unaccountable for their consequences.[237]

Ghadar militants, for example, had created a romantic chimera in which they would invade India, mobilize the masses into a spontaneous liberation struggle, and heroically herald the birth of a new independent nation. Ultimately, however, the Ghadar movement did not realize its lofty goal of ending British Imperialism. It became susceptible to rampant factionalism that was rooted in ideological differences and split into two separate camps in 1917. While the party formally became defunct only at the time of Indian independence in 1947, it had already begun to disintegrate by the early 1930s.

As numerous scholars (Anderson 1991; Lal 1990; Singaravelou 1990; Tinker 1990; Helweg 1989; Juergensmeyer 1979) posit, the experience of being a foreigner in an alien land frequently has the effect of sharpening ethno-national, linguistic, and religious identities. For non-white immigrants in North America, this sense of being the perennial outsider was further intensified by officially sanctioned xenophobia in the form of anti non-white immigrant policies. In understanding the historical evolution of the Ghadar movement, it is thus necessary to examine the chronological framework within which events took place during this period.

Between 1910 and 1913, a series of incidents occurred that served to foster mass support for the movement. The tightening of Canadian immigration rules resulted in Indian migrants increasingly settling in the United States. The last year of large-scale immigration to the United States was 1910, and in this same year widespread anti-immigrant riots erupted in both Oregon and California. That same year, Tarak Nath Das instituted the formal struggle for Indian independence in Washington, and in 1911, Har Dayal (generally considered the founding father of the movement) began coordinating Ghadar activities in

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[237] This resonates with Lord Acton's claims that "exile is the nursery of nationality" and that national consciousness arises from exile because men can no longer dream of easily returning to

California. In 1913, California's Alien Land Laws were enacted, and that year also saw a visible expansion of Ghadar activities. In May 1913, the Hindi Association of the Pacific Coast was founded in Oregon by Har Dayal and Bab Sohan Singh Bhakna. Later that year, Har Dayal established the Ghadar Party's political headquarters in the Yuguntar Ashram in San Francisco. Another watershed in the movement's history was that the party's official newspaper, the *Ghadar,* began publication on November 1, 1913.

In 1914, Indian immigrants experienced one of the more violent phases in their short settlement history. That year, both European and Asian migrant laborers went on strike in the hop fields of Wheatland, California, to protest exploitative working conditions. Strike-breakers and anti-labor gangs were brutal in their targeting and treatment of Asian immigrant workers and Indians in particular suffered the brunt of the violence. These riots permanently marked the Sikh community and played a pivotal role in forging a sense of group solidarity and raising political consciousness. As Juergensmeyer (1979) notes, the date of the riots is significant. Later that same year, in the aftermath of the riots, the Ghadar Party experienced its greatest expansion and consolidated its position within the immigrant community. Juergensmeyer claims that

> In reviewing the history of the development of the Ghadar movement, one notices a sort of rebound effect between acts of racial hostility against the immigrant Punjabis and new developments within the movement. And there is also an interaction between events in the Punjab and the activities of the immigrant Punjabis. The two sets of relationships seem to be the incendiary combination necessary for the militancy of Ghadar" (1979, 76).

While there are no conclusive social scientific data that supports a causal relationship between immigrant alienation and nationalist proclivities, it may be concluded as Juergensmeyer contends, that the prevailing anti non-white immigrant ethos and nativist violence greatly helped mobilize support for the

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the motherland in which they had been born (cited in Anderson 1992, 4).

Ghadar movement. Thus, while the movement may be seen as a manifestation of exile nationalist solidarity with their compatriots in India, it also must be understood within the context of immigrant identity politics. Ironically, Sikh involvement in Ghadar—a movement that was designed to advance the cause of Indian sovereignty—would half a century later serve as a model for the Khalistan struggle, a movement whose *raison d'être* is the ultimate destruction of India in its present territorial form.

The India Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1946

In the post-Second World War period, United States immigration legislation followed a trajectory similar to that of its northern neighbor. In 1946, the United States rescinded the 1917 Barred Zone Act with the enactment of the Luce-Celler Bill that allowed limited immigration (an annual quota of approximately one hundred people) from India. Officially titled the India Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1946, it also made early Sikh settlers eligible for citizenship and enabled them to sponsor family members. Newly-naturalized Sikh citizens were swift to make use of these new privileges, and in the 1950s, numerous Sikhs arrived from the Punjab to join their relatives in Northern California. As a result, during the 1950-1966 period, the majority of Indian immigrants in the United States were Sikhs (Tatla 1999, 56). The political and social institutions and alliances that had been formed by early Sikh settlers during the Ghadar period also played an important role in the politicization and socialization of these later arrivals.

As Leonard (1995) recounts, the arrival of these new immigrants from the Punjab also served to create rifts within the nascent American Sikh community. Recent Sikh arrivals regarded the hybrid religious and cultural practices of early Sikh settlers with deep suspicion and numerous conflicts ensued regarding the authenticity of certain customs and institutions. In particular, controversies centered on the socio-religious issues of food preparation, birth and death rituals,

inter-marriage, gurdwara practices, and the observation of the five "K"s. Additionally, later migrants from the Punjab questioned the "Punjabiness"[238] of the offspring produced by early Punjabi-Mexican unions and were reluctant to interact with them as equals. Consequently, the progeny of most of the early pioneers, while maintaining vestiges[239] of their Punjabi Sikh heritage, have become highly assimilated into mainstream American society and tend to distance themselves from Indian Punjabi concerns. This is most starkly reflected in the politics surrounding the Khalistan movement, which the majority of Mexican-Sikh descendents unequivocally oppose (Leonard 1995, 103).

In 1965, the older quota system was replaced with the Immigration and Nationality Act that based admission on professional criteria rather than race. Immigration from South Asia surged as large numbers of doctors, engineers, scientists, and other highly skilled professionals began to choose the United States and Canada over an increasingly anti-immigrant Britain. With the liberalization of immigration policies, other ethnic and religious groups (such as Gujerati Hindus and Christian Keralites) began to grow and by 1966, the ratio of Sikhs in relation to other Indian communities began to decline. Similar to Canada and Britain, the 1960s and 1970s also saw a large-scale migration of East African Sikhs into the United States. As noted in the other two cases, the influx of this group further fragmented the American Sikh community on caste lines. The impact of such cleavages on the social dynamics of the diasporan community is captured in an e-mail message sent to a Khalistan discussion group, which reads as follows:

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[238] A term used by Leonard (1995, 102).
[239] Some of these include, retaining the name "Singh" and eating meals comprising chicken curry and roti.

To: khalistan@egroups.com
Delivered-To: mailing list khalistan@egroups.com
Sender: harbirsingh54@hotmail.com
Date: Thu, 05 Oct 2000 16:15:16 EDT
Subject: Re: [khalistan] Singh/Kaur: Say no to caste system in Sikhism.

Dear Readers:
It requires courage to say no to the caste system (or to keep Rehat) that I guess us many of us are lacking.
The older most Sikhs grow the more they seem to be start delving into castes. Growing up as a child, we were oblivion to such differences but I guess the real world is much different.
Look at most of the Gurdwaras in N'America/UK, where ever the Sikh population is increasing, more divisions are taking place based on castes. Instead of judging/electing people on merits, people are discussing origins/castes to decide their support.
Now the Sikhs have created another caste for themselves Sikhs vs clean-shaven Sikhs. A look at the matrimonial columns appearing in Indian papers (e.g. IA [*India Abroad*]), will reveal that Sikh families/girls are openly looking for clean-shaven boys for a very long time. I wonder why these families like to call themselves Sikhs if they want clean-shaven boys?

Harbir

In terms of caste demographics, Jats comprise the majority of American Sikhs, followed by Ramgarhias and Khatris (Mann 2000). Until 1947, there was only one gurdwara in the country (in Stockton), but by the late 1990s, the number of gurdwaras in California alone had risen to thirty. It is estimated that at present there are eighty gurdwaras spread across various regions of the United States (Mann 2000, 264). Certain gurdwaras such as the Richmond Hill gurdwara in New York have risen to prominence and continue to play a prominent role in forging transnational ties with Sikh communities in Canada and Britain. As discussed in chapter three, gurdwaras serve as the center of migrant sociopolitical relations and, thus, the effects of gurdwara politics continue to ripple through the larger migrant community. Similar to the situation in Canada, conflicts between

moderate and militant Khalistanis over the control of gurdwara management committees have also served to create disharmony within the wider American Sikh community.

Arrival of the "New Immigrants"

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a slight increase in Sikh migration into the United States (largely due to the political instability that the Punjab experienced during that same period). Some of the better-educated rural youth (who possess college degrees from the Punjab) arrived in the United States and after obtaining legal status sponsored wives and other family members. A few arrived as political asylum seekers, but given America's relatively strict refugee policies,[240] have not been particularly successful in garnering support for their claims. Many others migrated illegally and subsequently legalized their status through various means such as marrying US citizens or permanent residents. As is the case in Canada, some long-established Sikh immigrants accuse these recent arrivals of denigrating the entire community by engaging in questionable activities and supporting terrorist groups in the Punjab.[241] According to I. J. Singh, a professor of anatomy and the author of a recent book that focuses on issues relating to Sikh identity, "New immigrants don't understand how the system works… They bring their differences, sometimes their own political and family differences, and they fight their battles here. The temple is their common ground, and that's where they fight" (cited in Boudreau 2000, 2).

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[240] Compared to Canada, for example.

[241] During the course of researching and writing this dissertation, I serendipitously encountered numerous anti-Khalistani diasporan Sikhs (who were not part of my original research focus) who expressed this opinion. Several North American Sikhs were of the opinion that there is a strong correlation between the recent violence experienced within the North American Sikh community and the arrival of these new migrants.

Implications for Sikh Solidarity

Like other immigrant groups, the Sikh diaspora in the West has maintained a keen interest in homeland politics and their communities have become accordingly politicized. As becomes readily evident from the Ghadar movement, much of this political activism with regard to the homeland has been simultaneously linked to their position as non-white, non-Christian migrants in predominantly white, Christian societies.[242] In the last twenty years, however, the dramatic expansion of the diasporan community had led to greater internal differentiation, which in turn, has reduced the degree of communal cohesion. This has had a significant impact on the politics of separatism, which has simultaneously served as a catalyst for new divisions within the community.

In Britain, for example, Sikhs played a prominent role in founding the Indian Workers' Association (IWA) and campaigned heavily for anti-discriminatory hiring policies, immigrant worker rights, and fair wages. However, in the 1980s, the IWA was riven by internal disputes between its pro- and anti-Khalistani factions, which subsequently eroded much of its political power (Malik 1997; Harlan 1991; Josephides 1991). Additionally, in the 1960s and 1970s, while the Sikh community in Southall was strongly united by their opposition to the exclusionary Southall Residents Association and the fascist National Front, this solidarity has largely dissipated in recent years (Harlan 1991). Again, this may be attributed to the rampant factionalism that emerged within the community between both the pro- and anti- Khalistan blocs *and* between the moderate and militants within the pro-Khalistan camp.

As previously mentioned, even among pro-Khalistan Sikhs, support for

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[242] For example, much of the early politicization of diasporan Sikhs centered on their right to observe their external religious symbols. Maintaining long hair/beards and carrying kirpans, in particular, became potent sources of controversy, and in several instances Sikhs have been compelled to appeal to the judicial system. For more information on the ways in which these battles were fought in Canada, see Sara Wayland's (1995) paper, "Religious Expression in Public Schools: Kirpans in Canada, Headscarves in France."

the separatist struggle varies greatly. Differential support for groups that comprise the Khalistan SDM reflects differentiation within the community on the lines of caste, class, sect, and settlement patterns. Moreover, the Khalistan movement is viewed by many in the Sikh community as being dominated by Jats, and while caste differences are frequently downplayed by Khalistani elites, they account, at least partially, for this variation in support (Tatla 1999). Many non-Jats feel that because Jats comprise the majority in both the Indian Sikh community and the Western diaspora (Britain, Canada, and the U.S.), Khalistan would not be a Khalsa state but a Jat homeland.[243] Moreover, as stated in chapter three, many non-Jats who are critical of the more militant Khalistani groups also attribute this extremism to the militant ethos that has historically formed an important component of Jat culture. Additionally, as noted in the previous chapter, despite the doctrinal directive to eschew caste, low caste Sikhs continue to be treated with varying degrees of condescension by their upper caste coreligionists such as the Jats. Many of these low caste Sikhs,[244] therefore, fear that if Khalistan, a Jat-dominated theocratic state, was established, they would lose the few protections they are presently accorded by an ostensibly secular Indian state. Accordingly, the low caste Ravidasis (converts from the Hindu untouchable *Chamar* ["leather worker"] caste) have been vocal in their condemnation of the movement (Tatla 1999, 145).

The matter of Jat-Ramgarhia relations vis-à-vis the Khalistan movement is more complex (Tatla 1999). On July 22, 1984, in the aftermath of Operation Bluestar, a Ramgarhia Panthic Convention was held in a gurdwara in

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[243] Numerous non-Jat Sikhs that I encountered during the course of this project expressed this viewpoint.

[244] Somewhat surprisingly, the low-caste Bhatras (who are regarded as "inferior" by upper castes such as the Jats) have been ardent supporters of the separatist cause. To this end, many of their gurdwaras have organized numerous meetings and fund-raising events to further the Khalistan agenda. This remains a puzzle as none of the existing primary or secondary literature reveals why this is the case. I have not been able to contact anyone in the Bhatra community about this pro-Khalistan stand, which seems to run counter to expected patterns of behavior.

Birmingham, England. The Ramgarhia leadership pledged "full support for the Khalsa Panth of which Ramgarhia is an integral part" (quoted in Tatla 1999, 145). However, in the past fifteen years, this initially resolute pro-Khalistan stance has transformed into one that is much more ambiguous. While early condemnation of the Indian governments action in the Golden Temple was univocal, later events have divided the Ramgarhia community into two main camps, one supporting an independent state and the other refraining from involving itself in the issue. Such an outcome has been shaped both by intra-Ramgarhia factionalism and by broader inter-caste (Jat-Ramgarhia) disputes that centered on the Khalistan movement's strategy and tactics. One of my Canadian interlocutors, a Kes-dhari Ramgarhia Sikh residing in Ontario, expressed his views on separatism as follows:

> Before, I always felt that although I was a Sikh, I was also an Indian who lives in Canada and has Canadian passport. However, what happened in 1984, with Operation Blue star and the Delhi Riots—that really shocked me. Personally, we are not communal-minded people. We had always had Hindu friends and when we saw the reports on TV, we just could not imagine what was happening to Sikhs back home. After that, in the 1980s, you can say that I supported Khalistan but not as an activist really, more that I gave emotional support. We always gave money to the gurdwara and I know that some of the money went to Khalistan but also a lot of the money went to help victims of the Delhi riots…. In the last ten years, I have changed my mind about Khalistan, not because I love India but because I don't know what this Khalistan that these people are fighting for is all about. The trouble with them [the Khalistanis] is that they cannot agree on one thing, they are all interested in becoming the leaders and getting status and power rather than helping the community. *This* is *the* fundamental problem in our community (Interview by author, 20 October 1998).

In addition, many Ramgarhias were offended by the vitriolic Jat-sponsored propaganda campaign against Zail Singh (a Ramgarhia and member of the Congress Party), who was India's Prime Minister in 1984.[245] Given this host of

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[245] Early into my fieldwork, I was made acutely aware of these inter-caste tensions when I met with a group of male gurdwara officials in East London. At the outset of the meeting, I had requested that each provide me with some basic background information about himself (how long

factors, Ramgarhia support for Khalistan has declined considerably during the last fifteen years.

Conclusion

Inter-caste tensions are now discernible within the larger diasporan Sikh community, manifesting themselves most visibly in caste-specific organizations and caste-based social intercourse. While early settlers subsumed such identities under a Sikh (or in some cases, Punjabi) identity and concentrated their collective efforts on countering religious discrimination, present-day immigrants are much more apt to focus on the community's internal differentiation. Additionally, intra-Sikh differences are not limited merely to caste or sect but encompass other attributes such as religiosity and political orientation.

The ways in which migratory patterns affect community cohesion is extremely complex and deserves a much more comprehensive treatment than the one provided in this chapter. However, even a cursory examination of settlement patterns reveals the processes by which particular segments of diasporan communities fragment and align in terms of homeland and hostland politics. The next chapter examines more thoroughly the "critical event" that initially served to unify the Sikh diasporan community during the mid-1980s. It also provides a

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he had resided in Britain, what motivated him to migrate, what factors shaped his decision to join the Khalistan movement, etc.). When I raised the issue of caste in this context, the dominant member of the group informed me quite decisively that "Sikhs don't believe in caste." As the conversation progressed, I noted that the views of one member of the group in particular diverged considerably from the rest (who mostly gave me the "official" version of the movement being a reaction against Brahminical tyranny). This person stated that Sikhs needed to be more united and "forget their petty differences." He then went on to say that while he had initially been a strong supporter of Khalistan, he now felt that certain leaders in the movement were not interested in fighting on behalf of the Sikh community but were preoccupied with advancing their own political careers. He concluded by saying that Sikhs had a "tribal mentality" and that they needed to get "out of this mindset" and focus on what was "good for the Sikh community." While he made his remarks, the others in the group remained silent. After he left the room, the gentleman in the group who had less than half an hour earlier informed me that "Sikhs don't believe in caste" glanced at me knowingly and said, "Well, you know, he *is* Ramgarhia, that's why he says these things" (Interview with author, June 12, 1998).

186

comprehensive account of the different tactics and rhetoric employed by the various factions that comprise the Khalistan SDM.

Chapter 5: Nostalgic Nationalism: Diasporan Mobilization for Self-Determination

Whatever else organizations seek, they seek to survive.

James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations,* 1973.

Introduction

As the preceding two chapters illustrate, the schisms that have arisen in the diasporan Sikh community (both between pro- and anti-Khalistani factions and within the Khalistan bloc) are rooted in numerous caste, sect, and settlement differences. Such variation has also translated into differential support for the varied groups that comprise the Khalistan SDM. This chapter examines the evolution of these organizations and highlights the differences that exist within the Khalistani movement as a whole.[246]

In light of James Q. Wilson's (1973) statement regarding the natural proclivity of organizations towards self-preservation, it may be argued that Khalistan groups (despite their shared goal of secession) ultimately seek the advancement and survival of their respective organizations. This "preservation instinct" may also be applied to individual leaders and elites within the movement who strategically employ the Khalistan issue in order to bolster their own political and social positions within the migrant community. This is particularly significant

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[246] Sections of this chapter appear in another work by this author, see "The Diasporisation of Ethnonationalism: British Sikhs and the Punjab," in *Ethnic Studies Report*, vol.xviii, no.1, January 2000. Reprinted, by permission, from the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), Kandy, Sri Lanka. Copyright © by the ICES.

given that the membership of many of these formal organizations has declined drastically in recent years.[247]

In order to examine the factionalism that exists within the Khalistan SDM, this chapter first chronicles the origins of the separatist movement. Second, it provides an overview of the political situation in the Punjab immediately before and after Operation Bluestar (the "critical event"), which served as the main catalyst for diasporan political mobilization. The final part of the chapter provides a survey of the various Khalistan organizations that emerged in Britain, Canada, and the United States during the post-1984 period. This section also examines the ideological divisions present in the Khalistan SDM, which mirror those that exist within larger transnational Sikh society.

The Origins of the Khalistan Movement

Although Sikh agitation for a separate state of Khalistan gained widespread attention in 1984 because of Operation Bluestar, its conceptual foundations were laid much earlier (Tatla 1999, 1993; Goulbourne 1991; Helweg 1989; Juergensmeyer 1988; Oberoi 1987). While Arthur Helweg (1989) claims that the idea of Khalistan first originated within the emigrant community and continues to be primarily an emigrant endeavor, it is Peter Goulbourne's (1991) discussion on the dual origins of the movement that provides a more comprehensive analysis. As Goulbourne (1991, 155-8) maintains, there are at least two separate, though not necessarily contradictory, accounts of the origins of the demand for an independent Khalistan. One version places the demand for a separate state as coming from within the Punjab and emphasizes episodic

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[247] In fact, the membership in some of these groups has dwindled to a handful, namely, the organization's officials and a few other activists.

demands for a separate Sikh state (Sikhistan) beginning with negotiations over Britain's withdrawal from India in the 1940s.[248]

According to Goulbourne (1991), the demand for Khalistan from Sikhs within the Punjab was first given visible support by the All Indian Sikh Students Federation on August 15, 1972, when it organized a mass demonstration in Jullunder to advance the idea of an independent Sikh state. Additionally, in 1978, as the Punjabi homeland issue began to regain momentum, the Dal Khalsa (a militant Sikh organization) was founded, and at its first meeting in Chandigarh publicly declared its intent to fight for Sikh sovereignty. In June the following year, another group of radical Sikhs broke away from the Akali Dal, formed their own "revolutionary" Akali Dal, and reiterated the demand for Sikh self-determination.

The other version of the movement's inception chronicles its diasporan roots and highlights the exile element that shaped the movement during its early stages (Goulbourne 1991). In this latter account (provided by members of the West London based Khalistan Council), the origins of Khalistan may be traced to a Sikh named Davinder Singh Parmar.[249] In this version, Parmar arrived in London in late 1954 and immediately started propounding the notion that a separate Sikh state was essential in order for Sikhs to survive as a community. Parmar claims that when he left India he was asked by then Akali leader Master Tara Singh to "make some noise abroad" (Goulbourne 1991, 156). Additionally, according to Parmar, his predisposition towards separatism was reinforced by the hostile climate that foreigners encountered in England at this time.

In the early 1960s, Sikhs in Great Britain had begun to launch several "save the turban" campaigns to lobby for the right to wear their turbans while

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[248] See for example, Sukhmani Riar's (1999) essay, which recounts the events surrounding early demands for a separate Sikh state.
[249] Parmar belonged to a noted Punjabi family that had been prominent from the time of Maharajah Ranjit Singh.

employed in various official capacities (Tatla 1993, 165-70). In one highly publicized case, a worker in the Wolverhampton Transport Authority was terminated because he returned to work wearing a turban (after a prolonged illness). Numerous appeals were made to the Indian High Commission in Britain to intervene on behalf of the Sikhs. However, despite several emotion-laden pleas by Sikh activists and community leaders, the Indian High Commission refused to confront the British government regarding its treatment of the Sikhs. The Indian High Commission's refusal to mediate on behalf of its erstwhile citizens was perceived by many in the Sikh community as an outright rebuff. Paralleling the situation in North America at the turn of the century when Sikh migrants felt that an autochthonous Indian government would have been more sensitive to their needs than a British Indian one, some Sikh activists felt that they would have more leverage in British society if they had a Sikh representative body to which they could appeal. For the first time in the immigrant community's history, a few British Sikhs began to publicly denounce the Indian government's attitudes towards Sikhs in general; Davinder Singh Parmar in particular voiced his opinion that a Sikh High Commissioner would have been more sympathetic to migrant Sikh concerns. Another prominent Sikh activist involved in the turban campaign, Charan Singh Panchi, went so far as to accuse the Indian High Commission of colluding with the Wolverhampton Transport Authority against the Sikhs. He would subsequently become one of the first people to join the Sikh Homeland Front when it was formed as a breakaway faction of the Akali Dal.

Despite a few anti-Indian sentiments expressed with regard to the turban issue, most British Sikhs regarded India, at this time, with considerable affection and derided Parmar for his separatist views. When he organized a meeting to discuss the Khalistan issue at the Shepherd's Bush gurdwara, it elicited a poor response, with less than twenty gurdwara members attending the event. Moreover, when Parmar raised the issue of a separate Sikh state, an audience member

ridiculed him and chastised him for behaving like a "madman" (Goulbourne 1991, 156). As Parmar recalls, despite the fact that during the early stages only one person supported his separatist vision, he, nevertheless, continued to write to newspapers, distribute pamphlets, and debate his fellow Sikhs regarding the merits of Sikh sovereignty.

It was only in 1970, when Parmar met newly-arrived Sikh physician named Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan, did his commitment to Sikh separatism finally find a receptive channel. Chohan, a former member of the Akali Dal (the main Sikh political party since the 1920s), Secretary of the Master Tara Singh faction, and one time Finance Minister of Punjab, shared Parmar's unrelenting commitment to Sikh sovereignty.[250] In 1971, the Khalistan Movement (or the Sikh Homeland Front as it was then called) was formally launched in London at a press conference held at the Waldorf Hotel in Aldwych (which ironically is situated opposite India House where the Indian High Commission offices are located).

During the early years, the Khalistan Council's official membership was limited to the following three individuals: Parmar, Chohan, and another medical practitioner named Mangat Singh (Goulbourne 1991, 156). As both Chohan and Parmar recount, in the early years, most fellow Sikhs regarded them as "insane" and disapproved of their anti-Indian demonstrations and activities. They continued, however, to single-handedly disseminate their message to a largely unsympathetic and unreceptive audience (Tatla 1999; Goulbourne 1991). At one event in Birmingham attended by hundreds of Sikhs, Chohan unfurled the Khalistani flag to the marked embarrassment of the event's organizers. In another instance, he organized a demonstration in Hyde Park and displayed several

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[250] In an interview with Chohan, he stated that he had originally been a staunch Leftist and had viewed religion as a "crutch of the weak." However, when he was in his early thirties, he had experienced an epiphany of sorts and realized the fundamental importance of religion. This,

placards proclaiming Sikh sovereignty. In October 1971 (just prior to the start of the Indo-Pakistan war over Bangladesh), Chohan attended birth anniversary celebrations at Guru Nanak's birthplace in Nankana Sahib in Pakistan, and announced plans to set up a "Rebel Sikh Government" (Goulbourne 1991; Helweg 1988). His publicly delivered remarks about an independent Khalistan were immediately seized upon by the Pakistani press and the ensuing publicity resulted in Indians hearing about Khalistan for the first time.[251] The reaction of Sikhs in India to the idea of a separate Sikh homeland echoed the reaction of Sikhs in Great Britain. Many considered Chohan to be mentally unstable and viewed his preoccupation with Khalistan as a manifestation of an expatriate's unfettered nostalgia. Undeterred, Chohan took out a half page advertisement in *The New York Times* on October 13, 1971, in which he justified his separatist position.[252]

At the time, Chohan's public anti-Indian displays were a constant source of embarrassment to the leadership of the British Sikh community. Issuing formal edicts against what they termed "unpatriotic" behavior, numerous gurdwaras imposed sanctions again Chohan and barred him from attending religious services (Interview with author, June 19, 1998). The leader of the Akali Dal in Great Britain, Dr. A. K. S. Aujala, sent a thinly-veiled message to Chohan and his associates by placing a full page advertisement in a Punjabi newspaper in which he warned against "traitors" in the community. Most British Sikhs (including those who considered themselves extremely devout) viewed the Sikh homeland

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allegedly, is what motivated him to agitate for a separate Sikh homeland (Interview with author, June 19, 1998).

[251] Initially Pakistan strongly supported such a move because India was aiding the rebel government in East Pakistan (Akbar 1985).

[252] The advertisement states that "At the time of partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 it was agreed that the Sikhs shall have an area in which they will have complete freedom to shape their lives according to their beliefs. On the basis of the assurances received, the Sikhs agreed to throw their lot with India, hoping for the fulfillment of their dream of an independent sovereign Sikh homeland, the Punjab" (previously cited in chapter three [Tatla 1999, 103]).

movement as both extreme and unnecessary. Additionally, the leadership of the Akali Dal, both in Great Britain and in India (including Sant Fateh Singh), publicly denounced Chohan's "radical" statements and expelled him from the party.

In an attempt to thwart the growth of the nascent separatist movement, the Indian government arrested one of Chohan's supporters, Giani Bakhshish Singh, when he traveled to the Punjab in November 1972. Bakhshish Singh was detained for a year without trial and was discharged only after the British government lobbied for his release. The Indian government's action only served to further fuel separatist sentiments, and a core group of Sikh separatists began to increasingly highlight their grievances in the Punjabi vernacular press in Britain. In a letter published in the weekly Punjabi publication, the *Des Pardes*, dated December 12, 1971, Charan Singh Panchi cautioned that

> Sikhs have to realize that there is no future in India dominated by Hindus. The honour and prestige of the community cannot be maintained without state power. Sooner we realize the challenge the better it will be for us to set our objective of establishing a sovereign Sikh state in the Punjab. We cannot keep ourselves in bondage for ever. Our leaders act like beggars in New Delhi (cited in Tatla 1999, 104).

Panchi's missive sparked considerable debate within the British Sikh community and various groups of Akali, leftist, and politically unaffiliated Sikhs wrote angry letters condemning Panchi's anti-Indian stance. Despite negligible support from the community, the separatist faction tirelessly continued to propagate its message. The separatists were temporarily bolstered by the unexpected election of Zoravar Singh Rai, a Sikh Homeland Front activist, as president of the British Akali Dal in June 1972. One of Rai's more vituperative directives stipulated that the Indian High Commissioner was to be prohibited from entering any gurdwara in Great Britain. Rai's order was, however, not supported by the other membership of the Akali Dal, and the organization fragmented into

194

two competing factions. The main body of the Akali Dal was subsequently headed by Joginder Singh Sandhu, the publisher of the Punjabi weekly *Shere Punjab*, who continued to maintain cordial relations with the Indian government. The dissident group was composed primarily of members of the Sikh Homeland Front. In their first major public demonstration, the group protested outside the Indian High Commissioner's Office on August 15, 1973, the anniversary of Indian independence. In 1975, the Sikh Homeland Front disintegrated due to ideological differences between the extroverted, charismatic Chohan and the more introverted, reticent Panchi. During this time, Chohan continued to agitate for the cause by organizing more protests and marches. When the Akali Dal was reelected in the 1977 Punjab legislative assembly elections,[253] Chohan left for India and remained there for the three years that followed.

Chohan returned to England in 1980, at which point the Indian authorities revoked his passport. Although it did not request Chohan's extradition, the Indian government exhorted Great Britain, Canada, and the United States to suppress the political activities of the small group of Khalistani activists who were residing within their jurisdictions. The host governments refused, citing their commitment to free political expression and the fact that no laws were being violated in their respective countries.[254]

Between 1980-1983, the movement gradually gained momentum and expanded to include a small group of transnational volunteers and supporters. This expansion may also be viewed in terms of developments in the Punjab. At this time, the Akali Dal was campaigning for more autonomy from the Central government (see later section in this chapter). In April 1980, Shri Balbir Singh Sandhu (who had been appointed the Secretary General of the National Council of Khalistan by Chohan) announced the establishment of an eleven member

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[253] They had been out of power from 1972-1976.

Council of Khalistan that would serve as the vanguard in the worldwide struggle for Sikh sovereignty. In June, Chohan also sent out press releases under the auspices of the International Council of Sikhs to the British media. The dispatches proclaimed that the Khalistan government would establish consulates in Great Britain and other parts of Western Europe and further specified the geographical dimensions of the aspirant state. In the vision of Chohan and his supporters, the new state of Khalistan would encompass territory spanning from Porbander on the Arabian Sea to Chamba in Himachal Pradesh and would be 850 miles long. At its widest point, Khalistan would measure approximately 200 miles. The map stated that it was "approved by the All Parties Sikhs Conference London" (Helweg 1989, 315). The Khalistan leadership's plans included establishing an exile government and organizing a 10,000 strong rebel army in the United States. "Official" Khalistan state documents such as passports,[255] currency,[256] and stamps were also printed in order to add legitimacy to the nascent separatist movement (see illustrations 5.1 and 5.2).

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[254] According to Tatla (1993, 178), Chohan was briefly arrested in 1982 for burning the Indian flag.

[255] The Khalistan passport looks very similar to its U. S. counterpart. According to one of my interlocutors, a Sikh illegal immigrant was allowed through U.S. immigration on a Khalistan passport because the U.S. official was unaware that Khalistan was not a real country.

[256] It is interesting to note that the currency is "Dollars" as opposed to "Rupees." Also, the Canadian influence on the currency is evident from the languages printed on the notes: English and French.

Illustration 5.1. Republic of Khalistan Currency. *Source:* Ron Wise's World
Paper Money Homepage <http://aes.iupui.edu/rwise/countries/
Pakistan.html>. Reprinted, by permission, from Ron Wise.
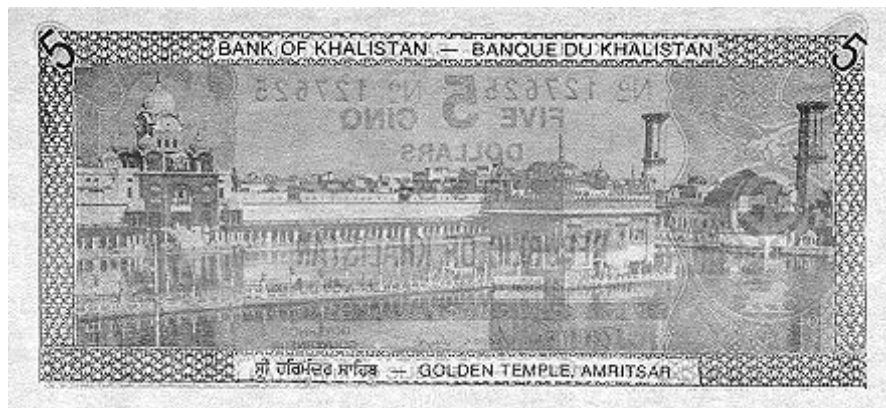
Illustration 5.2. Republic of Khalistan Currency. *Source:* Ron Wise's World
Paper Money Homepage <http://aes.iupui.edu/rwise/countries/
Pakistan.html>. Reprinted, by permission, from Ron Wise.

197

Another objective that consumed much of the leadership's energies was to obtain observer status in the United Nations (their bid was subsequently denied in 1987 as there was no consensus on who constituted the group's legitimate representatives). On June 8, 1980, Sandhu made the movement's first formal broadcast from a radio transmitter at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, proclaiming the creation of the state of Khalistan. He also issued several press releases that formally announced the establishment of a government of Khalistan (Helweg 1989).

Chohan's ally in Canada was a Sikh named Surjan Singh. On January 26, 1982, Surjan Singh attempted to further formalize the creation of a Republic of Khalistan by establishing a "Consul General Office." Surjan Singh also waged a campaign to rally public support by publishing pro-Khalistan resolutions and letters in the Punjabi press. Additionally, Chohan visited Canada several times with the specific intent of drumming up support for Khalistan. However, the Canadian Sikh response was similar to that of British Sikhs. Apart from a handful of committed activists, the majority of "ordinary" Sikhs largely disregarded Chohan's separatist message. Illustrative of the widespread unpopularity of the movement is that during a Vaisakhi parade that took place in Vancouver in April 1982, several Sikhs assaulted Khalistan activists and prevented them from joining the procession until they took down their anti-Indian placards.

In the United States, Ganga Singh Dhillon (a naturalized U.S. citizen and President of the Washington based Sri Nankan Sahib Foundation[257]) was quick to adopt the cause and was instrumental in its promotion. In March 1981, Dhillon visited Pakistan en route to India and held a meeting with Pakistani president Zia-ul-Haq, ostensibly regarding the administration of Sikh shrines in Pakistan. Dhillon was also appointed as president of the Sikh Educational Conference organized at Chandigarh from March 13-15 by the Chief Khalsa Diwan, an

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[257] This is a prominent, highly-respected Sikh Philanthropic organization.

organization whose mission was to promote Sikh education and culture. Chohan and Dhillon enlisted the services of General Daniel Graham, co-chairman of the American Security Council (a private organization), in order to communicate with certain factions of the political leadership in Pakistan. These communications also extended to a meeting with Pakistani Foreign Minister, Agha Shahi. Additionally, the Khalistanis succeeded in enlisting the support of key American political figures, including Senator Mark Hatfield, Senator Jesse Helms, Senator Sam Nunn, and Representative James C. Corman (see Helweg 1989, 313-6). However, despite this "international" base of support, most Sikhs paid scant attention to the issue of Sikh separatism, and even at the beginning of 1984, the Khalistan struggle was still largely limited to a tightly-knit cabal of activists. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was thus largely correct when she declared in 1980 that, "There is no Khalistan issue. It is only in the United States…." (cited in Singh 1982).

The catastrophic events that took place in India in the post-June 1984 period, however, dramatically altered the course of the movement both inside and outside India. June 1984 marks a milestone in the movement's history. Many Sikhs who had originally criticized the separatist movement for being too radical increasingly embraced Sikh self-determination as their only means of ethnopolitical survival. As several scholars (Tatla 1999; Mahmood 1995; Goulbourne 1991; Helweg 1989; Singh and Malik 1985) maintain, the role the Indian government played in contributing to the almost exponential popularity of the movement during the 1980s is indisputable. Mass support for Khalistan during the mid-1980s was a manifestation of the deep-seated fear and insecurity felt by an erstwhile allegiant community that had almost overnight been transformed by the realization that the Indian State viewed it as the "enemy within."

Overview of Punjab's Political Situation

The 1980s and early 1990s marks a turbulent phase in the history of Punjabi politics in which Sikhs experienced unprecedented levels of violence at

the hands of both the Indian government and Khalistani militants. The causes that led to the conflict in the Punjab are deeply embedded in the region's post-independence history and have been thoroughly chronicled in numerous scholarly accounts (Ahmed 1999; 1996, 112-36; Tatla 1999; Singh 1998; Gupte 1996; Hardgrave 1994, 77-9; Mehta 1994, 35-59; Oberoi 1993; Singh 1991; Eimbree 1990, 113-32; Jeffrey 1987, 1986; Singh 1987; Samiuddin 1985; Chopra, Mishra, and Singh 1984; Lal 1984; Major 1985; Wallace 1986, 1985; Talib 1982; Wallace and Chopra 1981; Singh 1978; Rai 1965).

It is adequate to note, within the context of this analysis, that the roots of the recent conflict in the Punjab may be traced back to the post-independence Congress Party's policies that concentrated power at the center and heavily infringed on states' rights and autonomy. While a federal political structure was thought to be the natural solution to governing a territorially large, populous, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-religious country such as India, the policies of successive post-independent Congress regimes, were in fact, heavily skewed to augmenting and consolidating centralized power at the expense of the states (Singh, Gurharpal 2000; Vohra 1986). Processes of state-building were conflated with "nation-building" and were designed to shape "one India" out of an ethnolinguistic mosaic. As events in numerous other post-colonial Asian and African states attest, this strategy has met with strong resistance from various minority groups. Urmila Phadnis (1989) posits that "the processes 'modernization' and development are caught up in the dialectics of their own dynamics; *combating ethnic loyalty on the one hand and stimulating ethnic consciousness on the other*. Consequently, whatever the level of development of the state, ethnic conflicts need to be viewed as part of an ongoing process which have to be coped with and managed, but cannot be resolved once and for all except through the total assimilation or elimination of a particular group" (1989, 18 [emphasis mine]).

As stated in chapter four, although Sikhs comprise about two per cent of India's total population, they constitute a majority (approximately sixty per cent) in the Punjab. Due to the central government's rapidly expanding powers during the post-Independence era, the Akali Dal began to express apprehension with regard to Congress's intentions concerning Punjab's political future. As certain authors (Tatla 1999; Dhillon 1993) note, many Akali leaders also felt that the Congress leadership's purported secular credentials were suspect and, in fact, viewed the party as a manifestation of thinly-concealed Brahminical, Hindu domination. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, the Akali Dal started to champion the cause of greater autonomy and advocated a radical renegotiation of powers between the center and the states. Their demands for devolution were grounded in grievances concerning linguistic issues, appropriation of river waters, price allocation for agricultural products, specific taxation privileges, the shared status of the state capital Chandigarh (which the Punjab shared with its neighbor, the predominantly Hindu state of Haryana), and formal state recognition of Amritsar as a holy city. Underlying all these concerns, however, was the desire by Punjabi Sikhs for greater autonomy and the central government's unwillingness to relinquish control.

These matters were never adequately addressed to the satisfaction of the Akali leadership, and despite protracted negotiations, three Akali coalition governments were dismissed by the central government between 1967-1980. A crucial precipitating factor of the region's political unrest was Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's cavalier dismissal in 1980 of Punjab's elected state legislature, which was for the first time controlled by the Akali Dal. The Akali leadership's frustration were further exacerbated when Gandhi's Congress Party was elected by a narrow margin in the state elections held in May that same year.

In response to what they viewed as the central government's intransigence, the Akali Dal revived the Anandpur Sahib Resolution to articulate

their demands.[258] The Charter was phrased in the Sikh idiom and sought to "preserve the distinct identity of the Sikhs" and demanded Punjab's autonomy within several constitutional, cultural, economic, and religious spheres (Tatla 1999, 27). In 1981, the Akalis mobilized the Sikh peasantry and launched the *Dharam Yudh Morcha* (righteous struggle) in order to bolster their demands.

The Rise of Sant Bhindranwale

During this same period, a young reactionary Sikh guru, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, emerged on the Punjabi political scene. It is widely believed that the Congress leadership of Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay supported Bhindranwale in the late 1970s in order to counter the influence of the prevailing Akali Dal-Janata Dal coalition (Tatla 1999; Wallace 1998; Ahmed 1996; Jeffrey 1986; Tully and Jacob 1985). Bhindranwale's power lay in the fact that he was a charismatic religious leader from a rural (Jat) background who could effectively harness the frustrations of young, educated, unemployed Sikh villagers and farmers disenchanted with the Punjab's depressed post-Green Revolution economy. Despite this support from a segment of the rural population, the Sant was generally considered too militant and puritanical by the larger Sikh community and did not cut a popular political figure (Pettigrew 1987). Most Sikhs viewed him with varying degrees of trepidation, as an extremist or fundamentalist with whom they had little in common. His lack of mass appeal is evinced by the fact that despite the Congress Party's large-scale support, the Sant's candidates won only four seats during the 1979 gurdwara elections (Wallace 1998).

The leadership of the Congress Party soon became aware, however, that they had seriously miscalculated their ability to control Bhindranwale and by the early 1980s, the disagreements between the two had become visibly acrimonious.

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[258] The political goal as stipulated in the Charter reads as follows: "The political goal, without doubt, is enshrined in the commandment of the Tenth Lord, in the pages of Sikh history and in the

The relationship between Congress and Bhindranwale ultimately culminated in unfeigned hostility and Bhindranwale became more vocal and insistent in his calls for Sikh "autonomy."[259] Many of Bhindranwale's followers, protesting what they perceived as the central government's "subjugation" of the Punjab, began to adopt violence as a form of resistance. In September 1981, a leading Hindu journalist and publisher was assassinated. Bhindranwale's disciples were named the prime suspects and he himself surrendered to the police, but was released less than a month later. By this point, Bhindranwale had firmly established his position among a group of militant supporters and was becoming increasingly hailed as a cult figure by the peasantry. Far from creating a pliable political puppet, the Congress Party leadership realized too late that it had instead created a "Frankenstein's Monster" (Wallace 1997). Bhindranwale's rapidly growing popularity among young, rural Sikhs and his fiery brand of revivalist, militant oratory fueled the fears of the Indian government, which swiftly responded with widespread repression. Episodes of guerilla violence began to increase during the 1981-1984 period and the government countered this with heavy-handed police action and the curtailment of many civil liberties. Contrary to their desired effect, the repressive measures employed by the government to contain the militancy of Bhindranwale and his supporters only served to expand his popularity (Banerjee 1996). As subsequent events would starkly demonstrate, the intrigue spawned by Indira Gandhi's Congress Party in the 1970s would have far- and wide-reaching political consequences in the decades to come.

The Critical Event: Operation Bluestar and After

Incidents of political insurrection continued to rise in the Punjab with both the militants and police resorting to escalating levels of violence and counter

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very heart of the Khalsa Panth, the ultimate objective of which is the preeminence of the Khalsa through creation of a congenial environment and a political set up" (cited in Tatla 1999, 226).

violence. By October 1983, Punjab was declared a "disturbed area" and President's Rule (direct rule by the central government) was imposed. Government agencies claimed that there were roughly twenty-five hundred "suspected terrorists" in early 1984 (Mahmood 1996, 82). In April 1984, militant cadres launched a series of organized attacks against thirty-seven railway stations in order to disrupt Punjab's transportation system as part of their overall plan to destabilize the region. In the following weeks, the forty thousand member-strong All India Sikh Students Federation (a militant student group) was banned and the Central Reserve Police Force and the Border Security Force were dispatched to the Punjab. The militants continued their attacks on Hindu civilians and "non-cooperative" Sikhs, robbed banks and armories, assassinated "political opponents," and unleashed a general reign of terror and intimidation (Human Rights Watch 1994).

During this same period, it became known that Bhindranwale and his coterie were setting up a garrison within the precincts of the Golden Temple complex. Rumors abounded about terrorist training camps and the sounds of firearms being shot at night in the compound (a vast area, covering approximately seventy-two acres). Journalists Mark Tully and Satish Jacob (1985) recount that during a May 1984 visit to the Golden Temple, they encountered buildings within the compound that were heavily barricaded and fortified. In mid-May, the Indian Army was deployed into the Punjab "in aid of civil authorities," but there was no known plan of an impending offensive on the Golden Temple Complex.[260] The army set up a command post near the entrance of the shrine as well as laying blockades at thirty-seven other gurdwaras throughout Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh, which were thought to be harboring militants. Both the Akali

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[259] As numerous authors note (Tatla 1993; Tully and Jacob 1985), he did not call outright for an independent state but rather advocated "autonomy" for the Sikhs.
[260] Information in this section is derived from Tatla (1999), Mahmood (1996), Goulbourne (1991), and Tully and Jacob (1985).

Dal leader Harchand Singh Longowal and Bhindranwale called for the immediate withdrawal of the troops and threatened large-scale demonstrations if the government did not comply. On June 2, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made a broadcast on national television and appealed to all Punjabis "not to shed blood, but to shed hatred" (quoted in Mahmood 1996, 99). It subsequently became known that while she made this impassioned plea she had also sent command to top military personnel to launch an assault on the Golden Temple if the militants refused to cooperate (Mahmood 1996; Tully and Jacob 1985).

On the following day (June 3), all communications between the Punjab and the outside world were completely severed. Train services were suspended, journalists were expelled, and a state-wide curfew was strictly enforced. June 3rd was also the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev (the fifth guru) and thousands of pilgrims were visiting the Golden Temple complex when the curfew was imposed. The complex encompasses the Harmandir Sahib (the actual "Golden Temple" situated in the Sikh baptismal lake), the Akal Takhat (the Sikhs' religious/political center), the Sikh Reference Library, other religious buildings, offices of major Sikh organizations, the Langar (common kitchen), and large hostels designed to accommodate pilgrims. By this time, the militants had moved from the hostel that they had originally occupied to the inner sanctum of the heavily fortified Akal Takhat. The hostels thus housed hundreds of visiting pilgrims who would later be caught in the crossfire between the militants and the army.

On June 4, the military operation code-named "Bluestar" was set into motion. In the next few days an estimated 15,000 Indian troops took part in the assault. It took three full days of fighting before the resistance of Bhindranwale and his supporters could be overcome. On June 4, intermittent fire was exchanged throughout the day between the army and the militants. As the military action had been originally designed to "flush out" the militants, the army would announce

during lulls in the fighting that pilgrims should leave the complex. Many were terrified and few obeyed army instructions. Despite the knowledge that there were hundreds of pilgrims within the compound, military commanders, nevertheless, planned to implement the major thrust of the assault on June 5.

On the evening of June 5, tanks of the 16th Cavalry Regiment of the Indian army started moving up to the Golden Temple Complex. The plan to flush out the extremists involved a massive frontal attack on the Akal Takhat and tanks began to move into the complex.[261] The deployment of heavy duty armored tanks inflicted heavy structural damage to the Akal Takhat; the entire front section of the edifice was demolished, many of the interior rooms containing religious relics were destroyed by fire, and the signature dome was badly damaged. When army personnel finally entered the Akal Takhat on June 7, they discovered the bodies of Bhindranwale and two of his close associates, Shabeg Singh and Amrik Singh. Scores of other bodies (including those of the militants and pilgrims) lined the Parikrama (the pavement which surrounds the sacred tank). Because of the strict enforcement of the curfew, it is difficult to accurately determine the number of those killed in the attack. Varying estimates range from 1,600 to 3,000, with most Sikhs citing the higher figure. Many of Bhindranwale's followers captured during the operation were summarily executed and over 6,000 Sikhs were detained (Tully and Jacob, 1985). The fact that the military offensive coincided with Guru Arjan martyrdom commemorations further served to underscore the perception among Sikhs that they had historically been, and continued to be, a threatened community.

During the final stages of combat, a fire broke out in the revered Sikh Reference Library and it was decimated. All its contents including irreplaceable copies of the Guru Granth Sahib, archives of documents from every period of

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[261] The use of Vijayanta tanks was probably the most controversial aspect of the military operation. See Mahmood (1996, 90) and Tully and Jacob (1985, 166)

Sikh history, and artifacts of the lives of the gurus, were destroyed beyond recognition. Given the high status accorded the written word in Sikh religious tradition, the destruction of the library was tantamount to an attack on the very recesses of the Sikh "soul" (Mahmood 1996). One Sikh man recalls that

> I stood there watching the smoke, black at first then a kind of gray, curling over the rooftops around the Golden Temple Complex. When I found out later that it was the library that had burnt I kept seeing that smoke, smelling that smoke in my mind. It seemed to me that I could feel the pages burning, the precious pages of my Guru Granth Sahib. It seemed like that smoke was stinging my eyes. I cried and cried when I found out about the library. Many people had died, but I was crying most about my Guru [Granth Sahib] (quoted in Mahmood 1996, 92).

Both Indian and diasporan Sikhs considered the army attack as the ultimate assault against their religion. Sikhs around the globe reacted with profound grief and disbelief at the desecration of a holy site that was in both material and symbolic terms the mainstay of their existence as a religious community. The attack on the Golden Temple was viewed by the Sikh community not only in immediate but in deeply historical terms. It evoked other battles in the past in which enemies attacked, laid siege to, and decimated the sanctum sanctorum (Mahmood 1996). The perception among many Sikhs that the Indian government was intent on annihilating them as "a people" was further reinforced by events that took place after Operation Bluestar. As political scientist Darshan Singh Tatla (himself a Sikh) asserts, Operation Bluestar was *the* "critical event" that marked the beginning of the Sikh community's sense of collective insecurity and shifting loyalties away from the Indian state. While numerous Sikhs had previously rejected the extremism of Bhindranwale and his supporters, there was now a sense that the militants had been correct in their original assessment of the Indian government. The horror at the atrocity was palpable among all strata of the community, regardless of religiosity or political affiliation.

Several prominent Sikh public figures were vocal in their condemnation of the attack and publicly returned honors bestowed on them by the Indian

government.[262] Likewise, two Sikh Members of Parliament and a few high-ranking Sikh army personnel immediately resigned their position and several Sikh regiments mutinied (Tatla 1999, 28; Tully and Jacob 1985, 192-217). Countless numbers of diasporan Sikhs, who until this point had regarded India as their "motherland" and retained their Indian passports, began acquiring the citizenship of the countries in which they resided. Statements such as the following were frequently voiced: "Let us burn our Indian passports, we no longer belong to India…. We are Americans and Sikhs and proud to be so. We are not just American Sikhs"[263] (Tatla 1999, 196). The Sikh community, which had hitherto been deeply divided on the issue of separatism, was transformed almost overnight into one that was united in their opposition to the actions of the Indian State. Bhindranwale himself could not have envisioned or engendered the kind of solidarity that Sikhs exhibited in the post-Operation Bluestar period—a solidarity, ironically, that was wrought by the actions of the Indian government.

Operation Bluestar was followed by Operation Woodrose that was designed as a "clean up" offensive to "eliminate" any residual elements of the militant movement. As numerous human rights reports attest, in the months that followed, thousands of young Sikh men were arbitrarily arrested (often on trumped-up charges) and brutally tortured (Singh, Gurharpal 2000). Many of them died while in police custody or alternatively were officially reported as "missing" or "disappeared." On October 31, 1984, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two of her Sikh bodyguards in what was considered a retaliatory act (Tatla 1999; Gupte 1985; Tully and Jacob 1985). Gandhi's assassination sparked widespread anti-Sikh riots, one of the most violent episodes in Delhi's recent history (Tambiah

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[262] Noted writer and scholar, Khushwant Singh (a strong opponent of separatism) returned an award that had been bestowed on him by Indira Gandhi. Bhagat Puran Singh (known as the "bearded Mother Theresa" for his efforts on behalf of the homeless) did the same.
[263] I often heard statements like this during my own interviews with diasporan Sikhs.

1996, 101-62; Gupte 1985; Kothari and Sethi 1985).[264] Mobs dragged Sikhs off buses and trains, brutally beat them and tore off their turbans, burned and destroyed their property (and looted any remaining items), and in several instances poured gasoline on them and burned them alive (Mahmood 1996, 133-43; Tambiah 1996, 110-27; Citizens' Commission 1984). Ostensibly, the mobs were intent on "avenging Indira Gandhi's death" and were determined to "teach the Sikhs a lesson." However, the pogrom-like quality of the riots has been noted by several scholars (Tatla 1999; Banerjee 1996; Tambiah 1996; Van Dyke 1996; Das 1990; Mulgrew 1988; Tully and Jacob 1985; Singh 1985), who contend that the massacres were not so much a manifestation of spontaneous grief, but rather an organized state-sponsored effort to humiliate the Sikhs as a community.[265] The government's inaction in containing the violence and the overt complicity of certain government, army, and police personnel in aiding and abetting the mobs further contributed to Sikh alienation.[266].

The Punjabi term *ghallughara* (holocaust) is invoked by many Sikhs to describe the events of 1984, which they view as a concerted effort by the Indian government to obliterate them as a community. Similarly, in much of the Sikh-produced literature (Jaijee 1995) that focused on this period, the word "genocide" is routinely employed to describe anti-Sikh violence that was committed or

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[264] Describing the organized nature of the massacres, Mark Tully and Satish Jacob state that "The government itself admits that throughout India more than 2,717 people were killed in the anti-Sikh riots. Almost all of them were Sikhs. Some 2,150 of them died in Delhi. There the rioters were mainly brought in from the slums to the areas they attacked. Many Sikhs said that local Hindu residents sheltered them from the mobs. Still, according to official estimates, 50,000 Sikhs fled from the capital of their country to Punjab for safety. Another 50,000 took refuge in special camps set up by the government and voluntary agencies" (1985, 7).

[265] Accountability for the riots remains a controversial issue. To date, the Indian government has created six commissions to probe charges of governmental involvement in the riots, and thus far, the issue has not been resolved to the Sikh community's satisfaction. As recently as January 2000, the Akali Dal urged the government to actively consult them during the most recent investigation. See, "Consult Us on Riots Body, Say the Akalis," in *India Abroad*, January 28, 2000.

[266] When informed of the anti-Sikh violence, Rajiv Gandhi's (Indira's son) official response was that "the earth shakes at the fall of a big tree." Gandhi's unfeeling statement, in the wake of the carnage, further served to estrange an already-disaffected community.

condoned by an increasingly "chauvinist" Indian state. Many Sikhs felt, during this time, that separatism, constituted the most logical response to what they perceived as "Brahminical tyranny" (Mitra 1996, 23). Operation Bluestar, Operation Woodrose, and the Delhi massacres would permanently mark the collective memory of Sikhs both within and without the diaspora. Sikhs in India felt that they could no longer trust the Indian state to safeguard their rights, while overseas Sikhs were frustrated by their impotence in alleviating their compatriots' suffering. These two factors greatly contributed to the mass political mobilization of Sikhs in the mid-1980s and led to the Khalistan movement's largest expansion during that same period.[267] Even moderate Sikhs within and without India now regarded the notion of a separate state, which had previously been eschewed by much of the community, as a reasonable and viable option. As one of Mahmood's young interlocutors stated, "'If the Indian army attacks the Golden Temple,' Bhindranwale used to say, 'the foundation for Khalistan will be laid' " (quoted in Mahmood 1996, 83).

North American Khalistani Activism

As news of the Indian government's assault on the Golden Temple reached North America, there was a palpable sense of grief and disbelief in the diasporan Sikh community. Sikhs in both Canada and the United States congregated in neighborhood gurdwaras and community centers to offer prayers for the victims of the army attack and commiserate with each other. In the immediate aftermath of Operation Bluestar, numerous diasporan community leaders raised questions regarding the future of Sikhs in India. For the first time, many of them publicly endorsed the notion of a separate Sikh state and exhorted the community to mobilize behind the cause. Tejinder Singh Kahlon, president of the Sikh Cultural Society in New York, characterized the army invasion as

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[267] For in-depth analyses on the Khalistan insurgency within India, see Pettigrew (1996, 1995).

"outrageous and immoral" and maintained that by initiating the army action, "Mrs. Gandhi was laying the foundation of a separate Sikh state."[268] On June 10, 1984, thousands of Sikhs marched in demonstrations in several cities including Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles (Tatla 1999, 113-4). Numerous protestors displayed pro-Khalistan placards such as Khalistan Zindabad! (Long live Khalistan!) while others denounced India and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and called for revenge. The following day, approximately 2,500 Sikhs protested outside the United Nations Building in New York and marched to the Indian Consulate shouting anti-Indian and pro-Khalistani slogans (Helweg 1989, 318).

In the post-June 1984 period, many North American Sikhs abandoned their initial skepticism about self-determination and were quick to rally around the homeland cause.[269] This shift in orientation was easily discernible in many Punjabi and English language Sikh publications as several editorials, letters and articles championed the notion of Sikh sovereignty and highlighted approaches to advance the separatist agenda. An editorial in the Sikh News (a diasporan English language weekly) stated that "The Sikh nation's cause has to be fought simultaneously on three fronts each requiring a different strategy, tactics and weapons. The three fronts are (a) the hearts and minds of our own people; (b) the international community; (c) the Indian government. We cannot neglect any front, or we may win the battles but lose the war" (cited in Tatla 1999, 115). In August 1984, the Sikh Society of Calgary and the Federation of Sikh Societies in Canada jointly placed three half-page advertisements justifying the case for separatism, which appeared in three consecutive issues of the Calgary Herald. The advertisement makes reference to a pledge made by Mahatma Gandhi to the

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[268] *The New York Times* 7, June 1984.
[269] For an in-depth account of militant Khalistani activism in Canada during this period, see Mulgrew (1988).

Sikhs, in which he stated that in the case of betrayal, "the Sikhs could take their swords in hand with perfect justification before God and man"[270] (cited in Tatla 1999, 115).

The post-Operation Bluestar period saw a proliferation of pro-Khalistan organizations in both the United States and Canada (see table 5.1). Many of these organizations were headed by political neophytes who tended to be even more radical than the older proponents of Khalistan.

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[270] This particular statement was reiterated to me by numerous Khalistani activists and leaders in justifying their position.

Organization	Year	Center
Canada		
International Sikh Youth Federation	1984-	Vancouver, Toronto
World Sikh Organization	1984-	Edmonton, Vancouver
National Council of Khalistan	1986-	Vancouver
Babbar Khalsa International	1981	Vancouver, Toronto
The United States		
California Sikh Youth	1984-86	New York
Sikh Youth of America	1986-	New York, Fremont, CA
World Sikh Organization	1984-	New York
International Sikh Organization	1986-87	New York
Anti-47 Front	1985-86	Bakersfield, CA
Babbar Khalsa International	1985-	San Jose, CA

Table 5.1. Post-1984 North American Sikh Organizations. <u>*Source*</u>: Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood*. University of Washington: Seattle, 1999, p.117. Reprinted, by permission, from UCL Press, Limited, London, England. Copyright © Darshan Singh Tatla.

Some of the main organizations that were formed during the 1984-1986 period included the International Sikh Organization, the World Sikh Organization (WSO), the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), the National Council of Khalistan, Sikh Youth of America, and the Babbar Khalsa International (which had formed in Vancouver in 1981, but came into prominence in the post-1984

period with the establishment of branches in the U.S., Great Britain, and Western Europe). The organizations, while sharing the common objective of Sikh sovereignty, differed considerably in their choice of leadership, access to resources, and methods of mobilization (Tatla 1999).

Although there was a dramatic increase in support for Khalistan during the latter part of 1984, it must be noted that support was by no means universal and certain prominent Sikhs continued to publicly express their opposition to separatism. For example, in an open letter to Khalistani leaders (which was published in numerous Canadian and Indo-Canadian newspapers), Vancouver lawyer Ujjal Dosanjh[271] wrote:

> I have invited you here simply to state, once and for all, to the world that an overwhelming but silent majority of the Sikhs residing abroad in Canada, United States of America and Great Britain, although aggrieved, are Indians to the core, and want their just place in one India and want very sincerely and strongly to reject the attempts of a handful of individuals to give a separatist tinge to the injured feelings of a community. Khalistan is not our demand, all religious and political grievances are soluble within the context of one united India. The attempts to promote a division of India or violence associated with those attempts are not condoned by the overwhelming but silent majority of the people residing abroad. I ask those of us who have raised separatist slogans to reconsider their position and come and join hands with all of us….We have not only the integrity, communal harmony and unity of India at stake but also the credibility and respect of our community in Canada and other parts of the world (cited in Tatla 1999, 132).

Responding to such dissension in the Sikh community regarding Khalistan, Harbhajan Singh declared in a letter to the *Indo-Canadian Times* (September 7, 1984) that,

> We should be ashamed of ourselves. We are dishonoured,…worthless, just like dead. Undoubtedly, we will build more religious places, become rich, but how will we ever regain our dignity? Where shall we find those priceless manuscripts of Guru Granth burnt by the Indian armies? Our leaders are quarrelling among themselves even now. What for? Is this humiliation not enough? Our youth in custody, many women dishonored, children lodged in jails; for Guru's sake, let us

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[271] He is the current (and first Indo-Canadian) Premier of British Columbia and has been a vocal critic of Khalistan (for more information, see Brook, 2000; Pais and Vinayak 2000). In 1985, he was assaulted at the Ross Street Gurdwara by Khalistani militants and had to receive eighty stitches on his head and right arm.

unite now and forgo small differences. It is time for a calculated and suitable revenge; it is right time for sacrifices (cited in Tatla 1999, 114).

Despite such calls for intra-communal unity on the issue of separatism, deep ideological fissures continued to prevail within the North American Sikh community. Moreover, as previously mentioned, even Sikhs who were united in their shared vision of Khalistan did not always agree on the tactical specifics of the struggle.[272] Thus, while the "critical event" had initially served to forge a strong collective Sikh identity, it soon spawned a new set of political rifts, which served to further polarize the diasporan community. The ways in which these divisions manifested themselves in the Khalistan SDM is highlighted through a survey of North American Khalistan organizations that came into prominence in the post-1984 period.

The World Sikh Organization (WSO)

On July 28, 1984, over three thousand Sikhs (the majority from Canada and the United States and the rest from Great Britain, Europe, and the Far East) convened at New York's Madison Square Gardens to formally denounce Operation Bluestar. The meeting constituted a public forum for the affirmation of Sikh sovereignty and saw the historic formation of the World Sikh Organization (WSO). Sikh representatives from across the global diaspora made speeches endorsing the right to self-determination and justified their claims by highlighting the Indian government's action in the Golden Temple. Prominent non-Sikh speakers included James C. Corman, a former Democratic U.S. House of Representatives member, and John Nicas, an aide to New York's then Governor, Mario Cuomo (Helweg 1989, 322).

The WSO's leadership included Didar Singh Bains (a peach farmer/millionaire from Yuba City, California), Jaswant Singh Bhullar (a retired

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[272] For a description of the groups that operated in the Punjab during this period, see Andrew Major's (1987) "From Moderates to Secessionists: A Who's Who of the Punjab Crisis."

Indian Army Major General and former military advisor to Bhindranwale), and Ganga Singh Dhillon (as described previously, a philanthropist and an early advocate of Sikh separatism). The WSO's self-projected image was that of an umbrella organization striving for Sikh sovereignty. To this end, it established a secretariat and two separate wings for its American and Canadian constituencies: WSO-Canada and WSO-America (Tatla 1999, 116-8). The WSO secretariat, headed by Jaswant Singh Bhullar, included forty international members, ten each from the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain, and ten from other countries[273] (Helweg 1989, 322-3). Members of its first National Executive Committee included Ganga Singh Dhillon (president), Lakhbir Singh Cheema (senior vice president), Dr. Manohar Singh Grewal (administrative director) and Bir Ishwar Grewal (treasurer). Secretary General Bhullar, who had left the Punjab in June 1984, was considered by many observers to be the WSO's tactical mastermind (Unna 1985). The organization's patron was Didar Singh Bains, who also performed a variety of diplomatic and lobbying functions.

The WSO's unyielding platform was the establishment of "Khalistan, an independent sovereign country of the Sikh Nation encompassing the present Punjab and the Sikh majority areas of India" (cited in Helweg 1989, 322). However, its leadership, at least publicly, disavowed the use of violence as a political weapon and instead advocated lobbying the international community for formal recognition.[274] Emphasizing the WSO's commitment to diplomacy and non-violence, a section of its Constitution declared that it would "strive for an independent Sikh homeland by peaceful means" (cited in Tatla 1999, 118). Additionally, many of its publicity materials, in their declaration that "the fundamental beliefs of Sikhs are enshrined in the United States Constitution,"

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[273] At an early stage of the movement, there was discussion regarding the possibility of setting up a Khalistan mission in Ecuador.

[274] For details on the WSO's clandestine militant activities, see Blaise and Mukherjee (1987, 6-13).

attempted to appeal to American democratic values (cited in Tatla 1999, 118).

During the mid 1980s, the WSO established offices in several cities including, Washington D.C., New York, Ottawa, Yuba City, and Stockton. In January 1985, its Stockton office launched the English/Punjabi bilingual weekly, *World Sikh News*, which aimed to "project the voice of Sikhs across the world," provide news on the "independence struggle," and highlight the role of Sikh contributions to American "social and cultural life" (cited in Tatla 1999, 118). The *World Sikh News*, which vocally chastised India's treatment of its minorities, on numerous occasions, forewarned of the inevitable disintegration of the Indian state. For example, in a issue dated February 18, 1994, an editorial entitled "On Changing US Perception of India," declared that

> What is being forgotten is the historical inevitability of the collapse of India and the creation of more than 20 nation-states in the subcontinent. This will release tremendous energy of the people now bottled up by the reactionary colonial Indian system….It is quite clear that India's existence is a permanent threat to peace in South Asia where nations are engaged in defensive spending rather than ameliorating the lot of the people. The US administration must look at India in this long term angle rather than a partner in development of trade and commerce….What is important is to build up international public opinion to force India to grant right of self-determination to its people to opt for freedom" (cited in Tatla 1999, 124).

During its zenith, the WSO's membership was estimated at over 17,000, with a significant number of its members drawn from the professional and affluent segments of the North American diasporan Sikh community. Its meetings and rallies were held in gurdwaras and the selection of its officials was decided through a combination of both elections and nominations (Tatla 1999, 118). Much of its funding was obtained from ordinary Sikhs and was channeled through collections taken at local gurdwaras. Thus, the control and administration of gurdwaras was inextricably tied to the organization's financial security and, by extension, to its continued survival. Predictably, this led to fierce competition

over the management of gurdwaras (particularly in Canada) between the more moderate WSO and other powerful militant organizations such as the ISYF and the Babbar Khalsa.

The WSO was successful in its early lobbying efforts, which focused not only on the issue of separatism in India but also on religious discrimination in both the U.S. and Canada. However, from its very inception, it experienced intense factionalism within its own ranks and competition with other groups that comprised the wider Khalistan SDM. During the first two years of its establishment, the organization's leadership became divided over the dismissal of secretary-general Bhullar, who was subsequently discharged from the organization because of his engagement in "suspicious" activities. Similar charges were leveled against Ganga Singh Dhillon, who was also dismissed for engaging in "anti-panthic" activities.

During the late 1980s, the WSO was active in promoting the Khalistan cause in the United States under the guidance of its patron and founding member Didar Singh Bains. However, by the early 1990s, the organization's membership had dwindled significantly and its position within the wider Khalistan movement was marginalized by more vocal organizations such as the Council of Khalistan. Moreover, while Bains had initially been one of Khalistan's most committed champions (claiming in a 1985 interview that "All the Sikhs want Khalistan. Well most. There are some black sheep—Government-paid people[275]"), by the mid-1990s he had gradually begun to distance himself from his early stand. In 1997, in what is considered by many Khalistan activists as one of the greatest setbacks to the movement, Bains publicly recanted his separatist position and accepted Chief Minister Badal's invitation to visit the Punjab as a guest of the Indian government. In addition, he has, in recent years, expressed a strong desire to forge economic ties with the Akali-led government in the Punjab, declaring that the

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[275] Cited in Unna (1985, 2).

"Punjab needs peace and the NRI Sikhs can help it prosper" (Vinayak 1997). Paramount among his many proposals are the creation of a Non Resident Indian (NRI) bank and the establishment of various agro-business ventures. Bains' public recantations of Khalistan, coupled with his recent economic overtures to the Indian government, have caused a furor among the existing Khalistani leadership. Numerous Khalistan publications roundly criticize him as a "traitor to the Panth," while many Khalistan activists continue to denounce him as a "self-interested political opportunist" (a selection of some of these denunciations, which appear on Khalistan web sites is provided in chapter six).

At present, the WSO presence in the United States is negligible and the organization functions in North America primarily through its Ottawa-based Canadian wing. The WSO Canada promotes the Khalistani cause by engaging in a wide range of public relations activities including publicizing human rights abuse in the Punjab and educating Canadians about the distinctiveness of Sikhism. It also plays a significant advocacy role on behalf of Sikh immigrants engaged in legal battles to fight religious discrimination in areas such as education and employment and has established legal defense funds for this purpose.

The Council of Khalistan

The Washington, D.C.-based Council of Khalistan was founded in 1986 by former WSO members who were disgruntled with the tactical and administrative strategy adopted by a faction of the original WSO leadership (the formal establishment of the organization resulted from a decision made by the British-based Khalistan Council, which is described later in this chapter). Led by Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, this group of former WSO members had disagreed with the WSO's leadership on a number of key issues (one being the role of Secretary General Jaswant Singh Bhullar and his eventual ouster). In 1986, Aulakh founded the International Sikh Organization with a few of his erstwhile WSO colleagues. The following year, he was appointed by the Panthic Committee in the Punjab to

represent Sikhs in North America and the Council of Khalistan was created. While the Council's initial mission was to serve as an umbrella organization and direct and coordinate the activities of disparate North American Khalistan groups, it has deviated considerably from its original goal. Smaller North American Khalistan organizations have formed their own political agendas and strategies and in certain instances, as is the case with the Khalistan Affairs Center,[276] have worked in direct competition with the Council to gather support for their respective articulation of the struggle.

Aulakh, a charismatic former physician who now functions as the Council's president, has largely ignored the organization's putative role of central overseer, and instead harnessed all his energies into creating an effective lobbying/public relations operation (Wallace 1998). His efforts to promote the cause of Sikh sovereignty among U.S. governmental officials have been aided in part by the long embittered Cold War history of U.S.-Indian diplomacy. Even though U.S.-Indo relations have dramatically improved in recent years, Congress members (particularly Republicans who have traditionally been hostile to India) have been especially attentive to charges of Indian human rights abuse. By framing the right to Sikh self-determination against the backdrop of Indian state repression, Aulakh has managed to garner a relatively broad spectrum of bipartisan congressional support for Khalistan. Notable among these supporters is South Carolinian Republican Senator Jesse Helms, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, and Indiana Republican Congressman Dan Burton, head of the Campaign Finance Reform Committee.

While congressional support has tended to be drawn overwhelmingly from the Republican Party, some Democrats have also voiced concerns regarding charges of Indian mistreatment of its minorities. Republican champions of

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[276] Another Washington-based lobbying group, the Khalistan Affairs Center, also issues media releases highlighting the situation in the Punjab. However, there are strong ideological differences

Khalistan include Rules Committee Chairman, Gerald Solomon (R-New York), Vice Chairman of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Peter King (R-New York), Pete Sessions (R-Texas), Richard Pombo (R-California), Dana Rohrabacher (R-California), John T. Doolittle (R-California), Roscoe Bartlett (R-Maryland), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-Florida), and Wally Herger (R-California). Prominent Democratic supporters include Gary Condit (D-California), Esteban Torres (D-California), Major Owens (D-New York), Cynthia McKinney, and Edolphus Towns (D-New York). Towns (a senior member of the Congressional Black Caucus), in particular, has been vocal in his efforts to call attention to the Sikh struggle and has delivered numerous speeches requesting the imposition of U.S. sanctions against India (Haniffa 2000). Responding to the March 2000 massacre of thirty-five Sikhs in the Kashmiri village of Chati Singhpora, Towns declared that

> America is the bastion of freedom in the world. It is our responsibility to do what we can to ensure freedom for all people. We should cut off India's aid until it learns to respect human rights. The government must stop killing religious and ethnic minorities. It must also punish strongly those who kill and do other acts of violence in [sic] the government's behalf. Amnesty International, which has not been allowed to enter India to investigate human rights abuses since 1978 must be allowed to come into the country. Until then, no money should go to India.

> We should also put this Congress on record in support of democracy in South Asia by calling for a free and fair plebiscite, under international supervision, to decide the political future of Khalistan, Kashmir, Nagaland, and all the other nations occupied by India. These steps are the best way to bring freedom to all the people of South Asia (*Congressional Record*, May 2, 2000).

Towns' Republican colleague Dan Burton was also quick to charge that the Chati Singhpora massacre was state-sponsored, and not, as the Indian government alleged, orchestrated by Kashmiri militants. On April 4, 2000, Burton

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between Dr. Aulakh and the head of the Khalistan Affairs Center, Dr. Amarjit Singh.

made the following remarks to the House of Representatives:

> Mr. Speaker, on the evening of Monday, March 20, 2000, in a Sikh village located in the Indian-controlled side of Kashmir, several armed men roused Sikh villagers from their homes, lined up 35 of the men, and shot them to death. According to Associated Press (AP) reports, witnesses said the gunmen entered the village about 7 p.m., dressed in what appeared to be Indian army uniforms. They knocked on doors, forced the adult men to come out with their identity cards, lined them up in two groups and opened fire.
>
> There has been much speculation about who is responsible for these gruesome murders. India claimed that Kashmiri militants were responsible for the massacre, and accused neighboring Pakistan of supporting the rebels. On the eve of President Clinton's visit to India, and considering Pakistan's current situation, it is difficult for me to believe that Pakistan would take this sort of a risk to their relationship with the United States.
>
> That is why I am inserting into the RECORD a press release from Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan. Dr. Aulakh, who has conducted a peaceful, democratic, nonviolent effort for a free and sovereign Khalistan, suggests that this, as the AP reported, may be the handiwork of the Indian government.
>
> Mr. Speaker, the Indian government has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984; 200,000 Christians in Nagaland since 1947; more than 65,000 Kashmiri Muslims since 1988; and tens of thousands of Assamese, Manipuris, Tamils, and Dalits. With a track record like that, I certainly believe that Dr. Aulakh's assertion merits a closer look (*Congressional Record*, April 4, 2000).

On numerous occasions prior to the Chati Singhpora massacre, Congressman Burton had harshly chastised India, highlighting its poor human rights record and persecution of religious minorities. In July 1997, he introduced the "Burton Amendment" to the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill that would limit American development aid to India until human rights violations were thoroughly investigated and accounted for. Although the bill was subsequently defeated by a wide margin of 342-82, it received support from its usual bipartisan congressional base. In August 1999, again citing human-rights

222

violations, Burton introduced another amendment that would substantially cut U.S. aid to India. However, the Clinton Administration had already reduced its request for aid to India by $10 million, and Burton subsequently withdrew the amendment because Congress finally split the budget into two segments: development aid and aid for child development.

With the aid of supporters such as Burton and Towns, the Council of Khalistan has managed to publicize the case for Sikh separatism in the U.S. media on a regular basis. Moreover, the Council, which is self-described as the "grassroots information center for the Khalistan freedom struggle" also engages in numerous fund-raising activities.[277] Additionally, it publishes a variety of public relations materials including a monthly English/Gurmukhi newsletter. A brochure created in 1999, to celebrate the tercentenary of the Khalsa's formation, is representative of much of the Council's literature. It proclaims that the

> Sikhs are yearning for self-determination in accordance with Articles I and 55 of the United Nations Charter and aspiring for "freedom, justice and peace," as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

> In violation of this international right, Indian executive law declares it illegal for Sikhs or a minority group to peacefully advocate for the independence of their homeland. Since 1984, any Sikh who has peacefully supported an independent Sikh state (Khalistan) has faced imprisonment, torture and even death for themselves and their families.

> The Indian government has maintained that Sikhs have never supported independence for their homeland. However, hundreds of thousands of Sikhs were butchered by Indian security forces in an effort to suppress this supposedly unpopular movement.

> To achieve full reconciliation for all people in the region, it is critical that

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[277] In April 1997, a scandal erupted when *The Hill* (a Capitol Hill newspaper) published that Burton (who had aggressively pursued campaign finance reform) and several other Republican congressional members had accepted "questionable" donations from the Khalistan Council, which is classified as a charitable non-profit group. Amidst allegations of campaign fund violations, Burton returned the donations. For detailed information, see Friedly (1997) and Stuteville and Hasse (1997).

this question be decided in a full and fair vote. A fully independent and internationally monitored plebiscite should beheld in Punjab for all bona fide Punjabis on the following referendum question:

Should Punjab remain within the Indian Union or should Punjab be established as a fully sovereign and independent constitutional democracy with the internationally recognized status of nation state?[278]

Much of the Council's informational materials highlight Indian persecution of religious minorities and human rights abuse in the Punjab, and contains graphic photographs and detailed excerpts from interviews with torture victims and their families.[279] In addition to its physical presence, the Council of Khalistan has attempted to recreate its struggle of resistance in cyberspace. To this end, it administers an e-mail listserve and maintains an elaborate web site <http://www.khalistan.com> that contains daily news updates and hukamnamas from the Punjab (see chapter six).

The International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF)

The North American division of the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) was founded in August 1985 by Harpal Singh, a Khalistan activist who had fled the Punjab in the wake Operation Bluestar. It has a broad international base with branches in several metropolitan regions in North America, Europe, and Asia. Like the Babbar Khalsa with which it is often associated, it is unabashedly militant in its orientation, and has been categorized as a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department (United States Department of State 1998).

The ISYF's Constitution is identical to that of its British counterpart and expressly mentions the "establishment of a sovereign Sikh state." It further states

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[278] Excerpts taken from *The 300th Birth Anniversary of the Sikh Nation*, a brochure published by the Council of Khalistan, Washington, D.C.

[279] For example, in the March 2000 massacre of Sikhs in Kashmir, the Council of Khalistan sent out numerous dispatches via regular and electronic mail alleging that the killings were sponsored by the Indian government.

that in order to achieve this end it will strive to make the Sikh community aware of its "religion, the past struggle for independence, unique identity, and its status as a separate nation and national flag" (cited in Tatla 1991, 141). The ISYF was formally established in Canada during two conventions organized in Vancouver and Toronto in which several thousand Sikhs supported resolutions demanding independence from India. A relative of Bhindranwale, Lakhbir Singh, spearheaded the organization's political mobilization efforts and in the late 1980s the ISYF emerged as the largest Canadian Khalistani organization with a membership totaling over 20,000 (Tatla 1999, 119). Although it was centered in Vancouver and Toronto and drew the bulk of its members from these two regions, the ISYF also had several branches in other cities in Canada and the United States and maintained an active presence in San Jose, Fresno, and Los Angeles. The ISYF's first National Panel consisted of president Satinderpal Singh and officers Gurdial Singh (Toronto), Barjinder Singh Bhullar (Calgary), Amarjit Singh Saran (Edmonton), Hardial Singh Garcha (Vancouver), Manjit Singh Dhami (Vancouver), Jasjit Singh Aujla (Montreal), Harminder Singh (Montreal), and Gurdev Singh Sangha (Kitchner, Ontario). Other members on the National Panel included Surinder Kaur, Jagtar Singh Sandhu, and Pushpinder Singh.

In rallying diasporan support for an independent Sikh homeland, the ISYF's preferred strategy has been to obtain control of a gurdwara and use its resources and funds to disseminate the ISYF's separatist message. As stated previously, this has resulted in intense internecine fighting among the Khalistan camp as ISYF leaders attempted to gain control of gurdwaras from the ostensibly "moderate" WSO. After engaging in a series of political deals and compromises with local Sikh community leaders, the ISYF gained control of the Delta Surrey gurdwara in 1986. In 1990, the ISYF mounted an aggressive and systematic campaign to challenge the WSO-led administration of the Ross Street Gurdwara (Canada's wealthiest and most prestigious gurdwara) but were subsequently

225

defeated.[280] In 1992, it finally managed to dislodge the WSO administration; however, in the mid-1990s, waning support for Khalistan returned the gurdwara to a moderate coalition (see discussion in chapter three).

Like other groups within the Khalistan SDM, the ISYF was plagued by numerous internal rivalries and experienced its first major schism in 1988. The once-revered founder of the North American branch of the organization, Harpal Singh, was accused of having ties to Indian intelligence and bitter disputes ensued between his supporters and detractors. A major blow to the group came in the form of the *volte face* of Jasbir Singh Rode, the founder of the ISYF's British "parent" organization (see later section in this chapter). Rode, who had been in jail for engaging in militant activities, recanted his earlier uncompromising separatist position upon his release. His public declaration in which he abandoned the idea of Khalistan in favor of greater Sikh autonomy within the territorial confines of India was seen by many as an unprecedented betrayal and contributed towards further fracturing the ISYF in North America. A rival ISYF organization was established under the guidance of Satinder Pal and a majority of the original ISYF members and officers defected to this new group. This resulted in continued conflict as both ISYF groups attempted to retain control of gurdwaras and community centers. It also led to further clashes with the WSO. At the Delta Surrey gurdwara, the Rode faction was ousted by the new ISYF faction, which subsequently gained control over the weekly publication, the *Chardi Khala*. With the establishment of the newer and more militant ISYF bloc, membership in the original Rode group declined rapidly in the late 1980s. It disintegrated even further with the departure of its key political convener, Lakhbir Singh, who returned to Pakistan after his application for Canadian asylum was rejected. Continuous leadership disputes and frequent infighting thus contributed to the

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[280] There were constant clashes between ISYF and WSO supporters and the ISYF's ex-president Bikar Singh Johal was the target of an assassination attempt.

organization's overall lack of credibility and authority among many diasporan Sikhs.

Babbar Khalsa International

The ultra-militant Babbar Khalsa ("Tigers of the True Faith") was formed in 1978 and like the ISYF has been profiled in several countries' lists of terrorist organizations. In Canada, however, it has continued to register itself as a religious non-profit institution although it recently lost its tax-exempt status due to an accounting infraction. The organization, an extremist offshoot of the *Akhand Kirtani Jatha* (whose followers are known for their strict adherence to orthodox Khalsa practices and nightlong *kirtan* [hymn] sessions), first came into prominence in the aftermath of the Bhindranwale-Nirankari clash in 1978, when it became one of the most strident defenders of Sikh orthodoxy. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, it claimed responsibility for killing several Sant Nirankaris in the Punjab justifying the murders as part of its mission to "preserve the true faith." The Babbar Khalsa International has a well-established presence in Vancouver and maintains offices in Toronto, New York and California (as well as in London and other parts of Europe) and is regarded by observers as an "effective but closed organization" (Anand 1997). Despite the diasporan context within which it operates, the extremely secretive Babbar Khalsa has maintained intimate ties to its parent organization in the Punjab and striven to keep close to its founding ideals. Like the ISYF, the Babbar Khalsa is unrepentant about its stance on violence and many of its formal declarations and publicity materials have explicitly endorsed a militant strategy.

The Constitution of the Babbar Khalsa is clear in its articulation of a Sikh theocratic state founded on Khalsa principles. It states that the purpose of the organization is "to work for the establishment of Khalsa rule where there would be no distinction on the basis of caste, colour, race, religion, origins or regional differences" (cited in Tatla 1999, 120). At its inception, the largely secretive

227

group confined itself to fighting what it perceived as the heretical and secular encroachment on Sikh orthodoxy. However, in the post-1984 period, it formally joined the armed struggle for Khalistan, providing many of the "soldiers" who were subsequently "martyred" in suicide missions and other anti-government attacks.

One of the Babbar Khalsa's most notorious members, Talwinder Singh Parmar, settled in Canada in the 1970s and it was during this time that he established a BKI branch in Vancouver. In 1982, Parmar returned to the Punjab to join the Sikh autonomy struggle, during which time he was implicated in several acts of terrorism. He subsequently fled the Punjab but was arrested in Germany where he served a prison sentence from June 1984 to July 1984. He was then extradited to India to face two murder charges. He managed to secure his release after Operation Bluestar and returned to Vancouver where he emerged as one of the most militant proponents of Khalistan. It is widely believed (Blaise and Mukherjee 1987; Bolan 1998) that he along with other Babbar Khalsa activists orchestrated the bombing of Air India flight 182, and over the course of a two-year period, Parmar was repeatedly questioned about his involvement in the incident. In 1988, he left Canada for Pakistan in order to coordinate the activities of Sikh militants who had set up a base there. During this time, however, he lost favor with other segments of the Babbar Khalsa leadership who accused him of collaborating with Indian intelligence and expelled him from the organization. He was subsequently killed in a "police encounter" in the Punjab and his charred remains were disposed of anonymously by the authorities. His "martyrdom" has been the source of considerable controversy; while Parmar's supporters have advocated special commemorations to mark his death, families of the victims of the Air India tragedy and government officials in both India and Canada have been vehemently opposed to such celebrations. Parmar's defenders also claim that he was unfairly framed by rival Babbar Khalsa leaders, resentful of his mass

appeal and charisma (Tatla 1999, 120-1).

Parmar's death ultimately served to split the organization into two camps. The breakaway organization, referred to as the "Babbar Khalsa - Talwinder group," is led by Ajaib Singh Bagri and endorsed by Chatar Singh, Massa Singh, and Jassa Singh. The original organization's leadership includes Guradev Singh in Vancouver and Rampal Singh in Toronto. The 1992 death of Sukhdev Singh, the head of the Babbar Khalsa in the Punjab, also contributed to the erosion of the diasporan organizations' overall authority and influence. Following Sukhdev Singh's death, it was discovered that the orthodox militant leader had enjoyed a decidedly unorthodox lifestyle replete with a luxurious house and mistress. News of his profane conduct shocked and angered many of the organization's orthodox rank and file members, and the Babbar Khalsa's image as "the preserver of the true faith" was irrevocably tarnished.

The Babbar Khalsa was again embroiled in controversy in the mid-1990s, when it aligned itself with the ISYF and waged a violent campaign to regain the administration of moderate-controlled gurdwaras in Vancouver and Toronto (see chapter three). In 1998, when moderate *Indo-Canadian Times* publisher Tara Singh Hayer was assassinated by an unknown assailant, allegations abounded in the diasporan community that Babbar Khalsa members were implicated in the murder (Bolan 1998; Walkom 1998). More recently, the Babbar Khalsa attracted considerable media attention when the first arrests were made on October 28, 2000 in the 1985 bombing of Air Indian flight 182. One of the two accused, Ajaib Singh Bagri, was a prominent Babbar Khalsa activist and served for several years as one of Talwinder Singh Parmar's key lieutenants. Bagri, who is renowned for his anti-Indian invective,[281] had also been previously charged with the 1988 shooting of Tara Singh Hayer, which left Hayer a paraplegic. By its unrelenting

militant stance and public proclamations advocating the use of violence, the Bhabbar Khalsa, in particular, has reinforced the Canadian public's suspicion concerning the movement's extremist tendencies.

Although the Babbar Khalsa's popularity has drastically declined in the last decade in both the Punjab and overseas, its use of intimidation and extremist tactics enable it to exert a disproportionate amount of influence in the diasporan community (particularly in British Columbia). Moreover, certain intelligence reports indicate that the organization is spearheading a campaign to revive dormant militant groups in the Punjab and has thus undertaken the recruitment of new immigrants to the separatist cause (Vinayak 1999). However, like other Khalistani groups, the organization continues to be beset by rampant factionalism. In August 1999, an Indo-Canadian woman named Gurbax Kaur was found murdered in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh. An investigation revealed that she was a prominent Babbar Khalsa activist who had raised considerable funds for the militants and her murder has been attributed to rivalry between factions within the Khalistan SDM (Jain 2000b).

Summary of North American Khalistani Activism

While Khalistani Sikhs in the United States have been relatively successful in portraying the struggle as one that is grounded in human rights infringement, their Canadian counterparts have been less successful in garnering governmental or public support for their cause. Canadian Khalistani groups have been generally regarded in a negative light by most Anglo-Canadians, who tend to perceive Khalistani Sikhs as an "irksome minority" that instigates violence and supports terrorism (see chapters three and four). This view has been reinforced further by the spate of violent incidents that occurred within the Canadian

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[281] For example, in April 1989, Bagri gave a speech at the Ross Street Gurdwara in which he publicly threatened Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. According to various accounts, Bagri is reported to have said, "Rajiv, your mother has been killed and now it's your turn" (Bolan 2000a).

Khalistani community regarding ideology, leadership, and strategy. In addition, the constant infighting has also greatly contributed to undermining the movement's credibility not only among mainstream society but also among North American Sikhs, some of whom were formerly supportive of a separatist agenda.

British Khalistani Activism

As Goulbourne (1991) asserts, the special historical relationship that exists between Great Britain and the Sikhs coupled with the size of the current Sikh population in the United Kingdom grant British Sikhs a powerful voice on issues pertaining to their homeland. Moreover, given that a large proportion of the non-white British population is of South Asian origin, there is an attentive audience to which groups can appeal regarding their grievances. When British Sikhs received news of the Indian army's assault on the Golden Temple, they reacted with extreme anger and grief and ensured that their community's feelings were publicly known. The assault was perceived by many as a premeditated act of brutal sacrilege, a gesture of contempt, the manifestation of a conspiratorial plan to annihilate Sikh traditions and humiliate the Sikh nation. The desecration of the Golden Temple resulted in moderate Sikhs reassessing their earlier loyalties towards India and reasserting their collective Sikh identity. Many Sikhs, who prior to 1984 had regarded themselves as "moderate," became increasingly sympathetic to the hard-liners' separatist position.

In Great Britain, frenetic political activity followed Operation Bluestar, with British Sikhs turning out *en masse* on June 10 at a London demonstration protesting the "desecration of the holiest shrine" (Tatla 1999, 137). Over 25,000 Sikhs from diverse backgrounds took part in a march that began in Hyde Park and ended outside the Indian High Commission office. Carrying banners proclaiming *Khalistan Zindabad!* ("long live Khalistan!"), they vociferously denounced the actions of the Indian government and proclaimed their demand for a separate state. Similar demonstrations were organized by gurdwaras in Birmingham,

Bristol, Coventry, and other cities containing large Sikh populations.

Sikh outrage over the army action in the Golden Temple was expressed in a variety of forms. For example, several young British Sikhs volunteered their services in response to a call in the Punjabi media to "liberate the Golden Temple." Plans to return to the Punjab were swiftly aborted, however, by India's introduction of stringent visa regulations designed to curb "Sikh extremism from abroad" (see Tatla 1999, 138-9). Punjabi newspapers in Great Britain continued to be filled with vitriolic editorials, articles, and reader correspondence denouncing the Indian government's actions. There was a widespread boycott of Indian banks and other Indian-managed institutions and numerous Sikh individuals and organizations transferred their accounts to British banks. Photographs of Bhindranwale, Shahbeg Singh, Amrik Singh, and other Sikhs killed during the operation began to be displayed prominently next to the ubiquitous portraits of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh in many homes and gurdwaras.[282]

In the aftermath of Operation Bluestar, several new Khalistani organizations were formed with the intent of mobilizing the Sikh diaspora to support a separate state (for a list of British Khalistan organizations, see table 5.2).

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[282] When I conducted my research in 1998, fourteen years after Operation Bluestar, many Khalistan supporters still prominently displayed portraits of these three "martyrs."

Organization	Year	Center
Khalistan Council	1984	London
International Sikh Youth Federation (Rode)	1984	London, Midlands, North
ISYF (Damdami Taksal [DT])	1984	London, Midlands, North
ISYF (Chaheru)	1984	London, Midlands, North
Babbar Khalsa	1978	Midlands, North
Dal Khalsa	1984	London, Birmingham
Punjab Unity Forum	1986	London

Table 5.2. British Sikh Organizations Post-1984. *Source*: Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999, p.139. Reprinted, by permission, from UCL Press, Limited, London, England. Copyright © Darshan Singh Tatla.

Two separatist organizations that gained prominence were the Khalistan Council and the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), both of which were unrelenting in their demand for the establishment of a sovereign Sikh State. The Babbar Khalsa also became a conspicuous and vocal presence on the British Sikh political stage. Many of these organizations and smaller groups such as the Dal Khalsa[283] and the United Akali Dal had alliances with parallel groups in the

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[283] The British branch of the Dal Khalsa comprised a small radical group including Jaswant Singh Thekedar, Manmohan Singh, Mohinder Singh Rathore, and a few others who arrived as refugees and illegal immigrants. The original Dal Khalsa rose to prominence after an Indian plane was hijacked to Lahore by Gajinder Singh (who was subsequently jailed for the hijacking). The Dal Khalsa has since disintegrated under accusations of being "paid agents" of Indian intelligence.

Punjab. While these groups shared the common objective of the formation of an independent Sikh state, as in the case of their North American counterparts, their respective strategies of mobilization differed markedly.

A common feature shared by all the main diasporan Khalistan organizations in Great Britain was their close but fluctuating links with particular groups and leaders in the Punjab. The fluid alliances that existed between militant groups within the Punjab since 1987 and the formal endorsement by Punjabi militant leaders of their "authentic" overseas representatives have also engendered bitter internecine disputes within the Khalistan SDM (Tatla 1999, 122-35). Additionally, many British Khalistani groups have, in addition to fostering links with the Punjab, formed alliances with other Sikh diasporan associations in Europe and North America, and this has further exacerbated existing factionalism. The situation in Great Britain has been remarkably similar to that of North America, in which the early unity of British Khalistan groups rapidly faded due to constant infighting. These power struggles, coupled with the formation of organizations that were increasingly driven by a cult of personality rather than a unified set of objectives, greatly contributed to the movement losing mass support. A survey of some of the main British Khalistani organizations are provided in the section that follows.[284]

The Khalistan Council

The election of the Khalistan Council on June 23, 1984, in Southall marked a watershed in the history of British Sikh mobilization vis-à-vis homeland politics. Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan, once ostracized by the Sikh community for his radical separatist leanings, was invited to lead the Khalistan movement in Britain. The governing Panthic committee of the Khalistan Council comprised Gurmej Singh of the Babbar Khalsa, Sewa Singh of Akhand Kirtani Jatha, Harmander

Singh from the reorganized Akali Dal, and Karamjit Singh who was the youth representative. The Council established its headquarters in Central London in a building aptly named "Khalistan House" and it is from here that it formally launched its campaign to agitate for a separate homeland.

On April 29,1986, the Khalistan Council's Panthic committee appointed a sub-committee that would head the international movement henceforth known as the "Council of Khalistan" (the organization that is based in Washington, D.C., previously described in this chapter). The Khalistan Council's strategy was to frame the movement as a "common struggle against a Brahmin-led Indian state,"[285] and to this end, it organized informational meetings and presentations in gurdwaras across Great Britain. Since 1984, in conjunction with other Khalistani organizations across Britain, it has held annual demonstrations in front of the Indian High Commission in London on Republic Day and on the anniversary of Indian independence (see illustration 5.3). With a few exceptions, the rallies have been mostly peaceful and protest activities have been largely symbolic (these have included setting fire to the Indian flag and then collectively trampling it). Additionally, many of the marchers have carried placards highlighting Indian human rights abuse in the Punjab and slogans such as "India out of Khalistan!" "Stop torture and disappearances in India," and "Stop butchering innocent Sikhs" have been common.

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[284] I draw extensively from Tatla (1999) in providing details of the organizations surveyed in this section.
[285] A phrase that figures prominently in the organization's literature.

Illustration 5.3. Khalistan Protest Rally Outside the Indian High Commission
          Office in Aldwych, London, August 15, 1998 (Anniversary of
          Indian independence). Photograph by the author.

The Council has also attempted to obtain the support of other ethnopolitical secessionist groups[286] with grievances against India such as the Kashmiris, Nagars, and Assamese. Small groups of Assamese and Nagars have been present at Khalistan-sponsored anti-Indian demonstrations and delivered speeches denouncing Indian "imperialism" (see illustration 5.4).

Illustration 5.4. Assamese Separatist Placard at Khalistan Protest Rally Outside
the Indian High Commission Office in Aldwych, London,
August 15, 1998 (Anniversary of Indian independence).
Photograph by the author.

British Kashmiri separatists, in particular, have been vocal in their support
of Khalistan, and have coordinated their protest activities with the Sikhs on
numerous occasions (see illustration 5.5).

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[286] The *Jain Commission Report* also suggests that as early as 1987, Khalistani organizations had
established links with diasporan LTTE groups fighting for a separate homeland in Sri Lanka. For
more information, go to <http://www.India-today.com/ jain/vol13/chap11.html>.

Illustration 5.5. Kashmiri Separatists Demonstrating at Khalistan Protest Rally Outside the Indian High Commissioner's Office in Aldwych, London, August 15, 1998 (Anniversary of Indian independence). Photograph by the author.

Relations between the members that comprised the Khalistan Council's original Panthic Committee began to disintegrate within the first two years of the organization's establishment. While the dominant faction within the Khalistan Council consistently emphasized the creation of a secular state and expressly eschewed violence, certain representatives (who were simultaneously affiliated with militant groups) did not support such a vision. Because of these ideological differences, the Babbar Khalsa representative Gurmej Singh Gill left the group in 1986 to form his own "Government-in-Exile" in Birmingham, while another founding member, Karamjit Singh, resigned from the organization. They were

replaced by moderates, such as Ajit Singh Khera, who subsequently became the coordinator of the Sikh Information Centre (it was renamed the Panjabi Information Centre in 1998).

While the ISYF and the Babbar Khalsa have couched their separatist rhetoric in terms of religious freedom and targeted their message exclusively to Sikhs, the Khalistan Council has, in recent years, attempted to promote the idea of a pan-Punjabi homeland that would encompass all Punjabis regardless of religious affiliation.[287] To this end, the organization's Constitution, political documents, correspondence, flyers, brochures, and other publicity materials downplay the group's Sikh affiliation and instead focuses on its members' Punjabi heritage. This commitment to promoting a pan-Punjabi heritage is enshrined in the governing instruments of the organization. For example, an examination of the Panjabi (*not* Sikh) National Charter (issued by the Panthic Committee and the Council of Khalistan on April 29, 1998) reveals that the word "Panjab" or Panjabi" is invoked a total of 21 times.[288] While the terms "Khalsa" and "Khalistan" appear in the document, the term "Sikh" is conspicuous by its absence (see Appendix A). Other resolutions passed at the 1998 UK Delegates Session of the Annual Conference of the Council of Khalistan also emphasize the notion of a shared pan-Panjabi ethnic and cultural heritage.[289] In all of these

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[287] In my first meeting with Khera he stated that "in the past, Sikhs were not politicized as they were busy 'establishing themselves' but now it is up to the younger generation to mobilize and press for a Panjabi homeland" (Interview with author, June 19, 1998). Khera further affirmed that Khalistan would be a place of religious toleration where the rights of all Punjabis, Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims would be respected.

[288] The terms "P*u*njab" and "P*u*njabi" are sometimes spelled as "P*a*njab" and "P*a*njabi" in this chapter. While both ways of spelling denote the same thing, some people (including many Khalistani activists that I interviewed) contend that "Punjab" spelt with a "u" is a colonial British label and that the "authentic" spelling of the word should be with an "a"— "P*a*njab'—meaning, "land of five rivers." Therefore, when citing information obtained from Khalistan publicity materials, I use the spelling as it appears in the respective documents.

[289] Khera states that "India is a British concept" that has no relevance to the peoples that are bound within present day Indian territorial boundaries (Interview with author, June 19, 1998). He and several other British Sikhs argue that they have more in common with a Pakistani Punjabi than with an Indian Tamil or Gujerati. A young British Sikh reiterates, "This idea of India makes

documents, the term "Sikh" is replaced by the "Panjabi" moniker.[290] A brochure published by the Panjabi Information Centre, the public relations division of the Khalistan Council (formerly the Sikh Information Center) appeals for Khalistan by stating that:

> To ask such a region to unite on the basis of religion or a shallow "Indian" identity is as unwarranted as the notion that the diverse peoples of Europe should become one country on the basis of being "European" or that they should create political arrangements on the basis of religion. A country of "Europe" is as unfeasible as a a country of "India". Europe's development saw the creation of natural political divisions along the lines of distinct cultural heritages. Spain is different from France which is different from Germany and England. Likewise it must be recognized on a political level that Punjab is different from Tamil Nadu which is different from Kashmir, Assam, Nagaland, and so on….Today Khalistan is a political term which literally means "Sovereign Land" and refers to the Punjabi areas under Indian occupation.[291]

The Khalistan Council has also consistently cited human rights abuses in the Punjab in its attempt to lobby the British government to impose sanctions on India. Human rights activists have been rewarded by the creation of a standing Parliamentary Panjab Human Rights Group headed by MP John McDonnell.[292] At a meeting of this group, which I attended on July 23, 1998, Joyce Pettigrew (a professor at the Queen's University of Belfast and a prolific author on issues pertaining to the Punjab) presented her report, "Lives Rich in Terror," which chronicled a series of Indian human rights abuses. Although the presentation was

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no sense. What do I have in common with a South Indian? Nothing. We don't look alike, we don't speak the same language, we are different races, I have nothing in common with him and he has nothing in common with me. Why do we both have the same label "Indian"? (Interview with author, July 2, 1998). While there are presently no statistical analyses that support this rhetorical shift in ethnic identification from Sikh to Panjabi, there is a discernible transformation in the way that young British Sikhs increasingly view themselves. The Khalistan Council, has, in part, contributed to this identity transformation in its effort to "sell" the movement as a "pan-Panjabi" agitation (Gunawardena 2000a)

[290] Council of Khalistan documents.

[291] Brochure published by the Panjabi Information Centre.

240

framed as a Punjabi human rights issue, the "Punjabi" component of the audience was predominantly Sikh. Additionally, the content of the report focused almost exclusively on the impact of political unrest on the Sikh community and was unequivocally sympathetic to the Sikh predicament.

During the last few years, the Khalistan Council has not been particularly successful in mobilizing support for a separate Punjabi homeland despite its concerted effort to promote a vision of Khalistan that is both tolerant and inclusive. Moreover, even among British Sikhs, the organization's appeal has largely faded and current active members are limited to a core of committed activists. Chohan claims that this has been largely a result of India's extensive intelligence force infiltrating the organization in order to compromise its legitimacy. However, the schisms that developed in the organization's early phase also contributed to this erosion in support.

The International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF)

The International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) was the brainchild of one of Bhindranwale's nephews, Jasbir Singh Rode. Following a period spent working as a contractor in Libya, Rode arrived in Great Britain in July 1984. On September 23, that same year, Rode and Harpal Singh,[293] formally established the ISYF during a convention in the Midlands town of Walsall. Given the familial ties of its founder, the ISYF formally pledged full support to providing financial and other kinds of support to Bhindranwale's family.

The ISYF was designed to serve as the overseas branch of the militant All India Sikh Students Federation (as stated earlier in this chapter, the latter organization was banned by the Indian government until mid-1985). The ISYF group in Britain initially comprised a 51-member panel headed by Dr. Pargat Singh and was designed to appeal to the younger, more radical elements within

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[292] Incidentally, the researcher for this group is Iqbal Singh, Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan's nephew.

the Sikh community. Like the Khalistan Council, the ISYF was committed to nothing less than a separate state and its own self-proclaimed aim is "[t]o pursue the Sikh nation's right to self determination."[294] As stated previously, the British ISYF's Constitution is identical to that of its North American counterpart and expressly proclaims the organization's ultimate goal of establishing "a sovereign Sikh state." While the group's primary focus has been the issue of Sikh sovereignty, it has also been active in campaigning against legislation deemed discriminatory towards Sikh immigrants. For example, a 1997 "Memorandum to Prospective Members of Parliament," while highlighting grievances against the Indian state, also focuses on Sikh migrant concerns in Britain. It specifically discusses the need to reform immigration policy to favor Sikh refugees and the need to enact legislation that would permit Sikhs in the British armed forces to wear turbans.[295]

A few months after the ISYF was officially founded, it had established 21 branches in several cities across Great Britain. At the peak of the Khalistan movement's popularity in 1985, its overall membership was estimated at around 16,000 with the Southall and Birmingham branches each claiming over a thousand members. During the mid-1980s and early 1990s, the ISYF strategy in Great Britain mirrored that of its sister organization in North America as the organization launched a systematic campaign to gain control of the country's gurdwaras. Its ultimate success in assuming control of a number of major gurdwaras may be attributed to both chronology and to its large membership base at the time. The ISYF won a number of highly contested gurdwara elections in several midlands cities including Derby, Leicester, and Nottingham. It also took over the management of the prestigious Singh Sabha gurdwara in London as well

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[293] He subsequently founded the organization's North American branch.

[294] ISYF memo dated 1997.

[295] This right was subsequently granted in February, 1999. See Vijay Dutt, "Sikhs in UK Army Can Have Kirpan," in *The Hindustan Times*, February 1, 1999.

as others in Luton and Smethwick. In Coventry, ISYF efforts were challenged by the Babbar Khalsa, an organization that was equally aggressive in its attempts to gain control over the local gurdwara. Such scenes were replayed in other cities as the IYSF battled both moderate groups and other militant factions to secure the control of gurdwara management committees. In Kent, for example, violence erupted as ISYF members clashed with other factions during gurdwara elections, while in certain other cities, the fight to control gurdwaras led to prolonged litigation.

By the mid-1980s, the ISYF had firmly entrenched its position within the management committees of numerous gurdwaras across the country. The organization's administration of a large number of gurdwaras also accorded it considerable legitimacy and authority among the larger British Sikh community. Most importantly, gurdwaras constituted an ideal venue in which to propagate the organization's separatist message while simultaneously raising monies to fund the armed struggle. In gurdwaras administered by the ISYF, pro-Khalistan meetings and rallies became the norm with gyanis (preachers) urging their congregants to support the cause both financially and emotionally. The ISYF was also active in forging and maintaining ties with ISYF branches in other parts of the world. To this end, it organized several international conventions, lectures, and symposia, which were attended by ISYF delegates from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe.

Like many Khalistani groups in both North America and Great Britain, the ISYF became susceptible to fragmentation during the early stages of its formation. In December 1984, Rode was deported from Britain because he publicly endorsed the use of violence in the campaign for Khalistan. He subsequently traveled to Pakistan where he was arrested and extradited to India for his role in the militant movement. He was held without trial until late 1988 at which point he was released. Shortly after his arrest, he softened his separatist

243

stance, arguing instead that Sikhs should pursue their cause by employing constitutional methods. As mentioned earlier, Rode's metamorphosis and subsequent demand for "Sikh rights within the Indian national framework" was interpreted by many as a public refutation of the Khalistan movement (Tatla 1999, 142). His followers became deeply divided, with several expressing profound disillusionment at what they considered an outright capitulation to Indian government pressure.

Rode's statement caused a split in the ISYF along broadly north/south regional lines. In the north of England most branches continued to follow Rode while in the South the ISYF became linked to Dr. Sohan Singh, an ardent advocate of Sikh sovereignty. Another group broke away and formed their own organization, which became known as the ISYF (Damdami Taksal [DT]) faction. For a short time, it was headed by Gurmel Singh, but he was soon discharged from his position because of infighting within the new organization. Personality clashes and ideological differences also led to the further splintering of the ISYF and by 1988 it had fractured into three main factions: ISYF (Rode), ISYF (DT), and the ISYF (Chaheru).[296]

By the mid-1990s, the ISYF's popularity, like that of the larger Khalistan movement, had waned considerably. In recent years, while the various ISYF factions have been marginalized by more moderate groups, ISYF leaders continue to promulgate their respective vision of a sovereign Sikh state. Certain reports claim that there has been an effort to rejuvenate the movement by recruiting members who are illegally settled in the West (see chapter seven). It is also alleged that the ISYF is involved in an ongoing effort to destabilize the Punjab by remitting arms and ammunition to the region (*Rediff on the Net*, February 8, 1998).

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[296] This faction was led by Balwinder Singh Chaheru.

The Babbar Khalsa

The Babbar Khalsa in Great Britain maintains close ties to its parent group in the Punjab as well as to its sister organization in Canada. It also shares their ultra-orthodox ethos and has on many occasions publicly advocated the use of violence as a viable political strategy. While the organization was never as popular as the ISYF, its support expanded during the immediate aftermath of Operation Bluestar when it attracted a number of newly-baptized Sikhs. During the late 1980s, the Babbar Khalsa battled both the ISYF and moderate groups to gain control over several gurdwaras but was blocked by the numerically stronger ISYF. However, during the late 1980s and early 1990s it enjoyed partial control over three gurdwaras, two in the Midlands and one in the North. During the height of the insurrection in the Punjab, its monthly publication, the *Wangar,* which was published between 1987-1994, routinely paid tribute to those "martyred fighting for the faith" and demanded that their "murders be avenged."

As stated previously, one of the organization's stalwarts, Gurmej Singh Gill, was initially nominated to the Khalistan Council as one of its founding members. However, ideological and personality differences led to Gill leaving the Council. Given the negative light in which the Babbar Khalsa is perceived, Gill has attempted to publicly disassociate himself from the Babbar Khalsa designation and reinvented his faction as the seemingly more legitimate "Government-in-Exile," of which he is the current Prime Minister. Additionally, in 1992, Gurdeep Singh, one of the organization's most prominent leaders, recanted his militant and separatist position in a highly publicized confession, which created a power vacuum in the organization. The subsequent appointment of Balbir Singh to head the group resulted in intense power struggles because certain segments within the organization fiercely opposed his nomination. Like its sometime ally and sometime rival the ISYF, the Babbar Khalsa has been frequently plagued by schisms from within. These cleavages, however, have been

245

rooted more in conflicts over personality rather than in any real differences in ideology or strategy. While the activities of the Babbar Khalsa have been largely constrained in recent years due to severely dwindling members and resources, certain recent reports indicate that key activists are attempting to gradually reassert its influence (Jain 2000b; Vinayak 1999; Swami 1998).

Summary of British Khalistan Activism

In Great Britain, during the period immediately following Operation Bluestar, support for Khalistan mirrored the situation in North America. Large numbers of British Sikhs joined existing pro-Khalistan organizations or in some cases formed new ones, in order to lend support to the insurgency in the Punjab. Militant organizations such as the ISYF and Babbar Khalsa battled both moderate groups and each other for control over gurdwaras and their substantial memberships and resources. Such conflict, however, had become endemic by the early 1990s, and many supporters became increasingly disillusioned with the movement's leadership. As one erstwhile supporter stated,

> They [certain Khalistani leaders] had got totally out of control even as early as 1988. The power had totally gone to their heads. Most of them could not care less about Khalistan or what is good for the Sikh people. They just wanted to control the gurdwara committees, tell us what to do, what to think, and then take our money. I am not even sure whether it actually went to Punjab. It is bad enough what the Indian government has done but it is really sad when you see Sikhs doing this to Sikhs (Interview with author, August 3, 1998).

Moreover, the waning influence of the Khalistan ideology exacerbated existing rivalries as Khalistani organizations engaged in even more intense competition to garner whatever support they could for their respective organizations. This constant internecine conflict, however, ultimately served to alienate a large segment of the British Sikh population who felt that its interests were displaced by the narrow agenda of a few organizations. Furthermore, diasporas constitute an amalgam of identities, and the hierarchical rankings of

246

these identities are gradually being transformed, as is revealed by the case of British Sikhs. As described in chapter four, during the early period of their settlement, Sikhs identified themselves not as Sikhs but as Punjabis. During the last thirty years, the aspect of their identity that became dominant was their "Sikh" heritage. Paradoxically, in an effort to protect that heritage, organizations such as the Khalistan Council are now re-emphasizing the "Panjabi" roots of their present and potential constituencies, and in essence, attempting to recreate a pan-Panjabi ethnic consciousness. This strategy, however, is one that is not shared by other more militant factions such as the ISYF and the Babbar Khalsa, and while the struggle for Khalistan continues in Great Britain it has been greatly diminished in both size and vigor.

Variations in the Scope of Khalistani Activism

As Tatla (1999, 155-181) maintains, the scope of diasporan separatist activism has to a certain extent been shaped by the political institutions in the host countries in which the Khalistani groups operate. In the United States, with its multiple access points and long history of ethnic and diasporan lobbying, organizations such as the Council of Khalistan have been relatively successful in eliciting sympathy for the cause. Thus, while the U.S. State Department classifies both the ISYF and the Babbar Khalsa as "terrorist organizations,"[297] the Council of Khalistan has succeeded in acquiring a bi-partisan base of support. Moreover, because Sikhs are not concentrated in one particular region (except for Yuba City, California), many Americans, including governmental officials, are largely ignorant of the precise nature of the movement.

For example, in March 1997 the Council of Khalistan shot into the limelight when Vice President Al Gore's office sent the organization a letter that appeared to endorse the establishment of Khalistan. As Sanjeev Anand (1997, 52)

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[297] See United States Deaprtment of State (1998).

maintains, the ensuing controversy was in fact "a classic case of miscommunication in the age of form letters and automatic signatures." After writing to the Vice President about the situation in the Punjab, Aulakh received a response, which stated: "Thank you for writing to me regarding the ongoing civil conflict in Khalistan. I appreciate hearing your views on this serious situation.… your views are very important to us as the President and I formulate policies to advance the cause of peace around the world" (cited in Anand 1997, 52). Aulakh immediately interpreted this to mean that "by acknowledging the 'civil conflict' in Khalistan," the Vice president had provided tacit United States support for an independent Sikh homeland. In the wake of angry protests and condemnation from state authorities in New Delhi, an extremely embarrassed White House immediately issued a formal apology for the *faux pas*. White House Spokesman Michael McCurry promptly clarified the government's official position in an unambiguous statement: "the US does not and never supported the establishment of an independent state of Khalistan.... It was an inadvertent error by the Vice President's staff that led to that letter" (cited in Anand 1997, 52). At the State Department, spokesperson Nicholas Burns also attempted to salvage the situation with his formal pronouncement that "the US does recognize the Punjab as an integral part of India; always has and, I believe, always will in this case. We do not recognize any kind of Republic of Khalistan" (cited in Anand 1997, 52). While these formal statements decried any support for an independent Sikh state, the controversy was successful in generating significant publicity for the Council in the national media.

In contrast to the United States, Sikhs form a highly visible presence in Canada given their high concentration in metropolitan Vancouver and Ontario. Because of the frequency of violent incidents in the Canadian Sikh community, the Khalistan issue continues to draw media attention, which (in contrast to the United States) has been largely negative. Because militants have tended to

dominate the separatist discourse, many Canadians, including governmental officials, view Khalistani activists as terrorists or potential terrorists. The recent arrest of Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri for their role in the Air India bombing has served to further reinforce such perceptions. According to Anne Lowthian, executive director of the World Sikh Organization, "The average Sikh is detrimentally affected every time Air India is brought up" (Moore 2000).

While Canadian public opinion has been largely critical of Khalistani activism, the country's strong commitment to multiculturalism and relatively lax immigration policies have contributed in part to the success of religious militant groups such as the Babbar Khalsa. Generous tax exemptions to "charitable institutions," coupled with a refugee policy that is one of the least restrictive in the western world, have provided Khalistani groups with considerable latitude to employ a variety of political tactics. However, as mentioned in chapter four, many Canadians are becoming increasingly resentful that their country is being used as a springboard for overseas terrorism. While there have been few attacks on Canadian soil, officials claim that many foreign extremist groups use the country as a "safe haven" in which to raise funds, purchase arms, proselytize, disseminate propaganda, and fade into obscurity among large coethnic immigrant communities (Jeyaraj 2000a, 2000b; Canadian Security Intelligence Service 1999). In recent years there have been increasingly vocal calls for more stringent immigration requirements and counterterrorism measures, and this trend appears to be growing. In addition, Canada's parliamentary system thwarts migrant groups from engaging in the kind of ethnic lobbying common in the United States. Moreover, given the deep suspicion in which they are held, Khalistani groups have generally had little success in obtaining sympathy or support from the Canadian government. For example, despite strong lobbying by the WSO against the ratification of an extradition treaty with India, the Canadian government ignored its pleas and was swift in its enactment of the accord (Tatla 1999, 172). A

249

few MPs with large Sikh constituencies have, however, attempted to speak on behalf of the Khalistani Sikh community particularly on the issue of civil liberties. Some of the more vocal have included Stevnd J. Robinson (Burnby, BC) and Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-islands).

Similarly, Britain's institutional political framework has also served to largely stymie Khalistan lobbying efforts. While Khalistani activists have been aided in part by a long history of ethnic diplomacy in the United States, Great Britain with its parliamentary system has not proved as accommodative of their efforts to influence Indo-British diplomatic relations. Moreover, Britain's relationship with its former colony has meant that governmental officials have (at least publicly) been reluctant to incite India's anger.[298] Nevertheless, as Tatla (1999, 158-65) notes, the British stand on Sikh-Indo issues has been largely one of "non-interference."

For example, in the immediate aftermath of Operation Bluestar, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) broadcast a segment in which Jagjit Singh Chohan made a formal statement castigating the Indian government for the assault. This resulted in a major diplomatic dispute in which the Indian government accused the British of providing media coverage to "extremists" (Tatla 1999; Malik 1997). Britain's Foreign Secretary at the time, Sir Geoffrey Howe, appointed Minister of Parliament Timothy Renton to act as the liaison with India on the issue of Sikh militants in Britain. While Britain initially refused to comply with India's request for a bilateral extradition treaty, after years of pressure it agreed to sign the treaty in January 1992. On September 22, 1992, the treaty "covering the tracing, freezing, and confiscation of terrorist funds and the proceeds of serious crime, including drug trafficking" was presented to Parliament and passed with a wide margin (123 to 38). Significantly, it was also

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[298] However, despite Britain's efforts to placate India, Indian officials argue that it does not go far enough in trying to contain Sikh extremism within its borders. See chapter 3 in Malik (1997).

supported by Sikh Labor MP, Piara Singh Khabra, who represents a heavily Sikh constituency (see Tatla 1999, 160-4). In response to Indian allegations that funds for Khalistan were collected in gurdwaras, Britain also agreed to implement an amendment to its Charities Act that was designed to curb the flow of monies from British gurdwaras to the militant movement in the Punjab. The Amendment proscribed religious and charitable institutions from raising monies that would be used to finance any type of group deemed "terrorist" by the British authorities (Malik 1997, 118-9).

Because of Sikh concentration in certain regions, a few British MPs have voiced concerns in Parliament regarding the "Sikh issue" (for example, see Pritam Singh 1992). These have tended to focus almost exclusively on the Indian government's human rights record in the Punjab. Two of the most vocal champions of the Sikh community, Max Madden (Labour MP for Bradford West) and Terry Dick (Conservative MP for Hayes and Harlington) who both have large Sikh constituencies, have worked in close conjunction with Sikh human rights groups. Both the ISYF and the Khalistan Council have lobbied on behalf of British Sikhs whose relatives have been tortured, killed, or have "disappeared" while in police custody. An ex-president of the ISYF, Dr. Jasdev Singh Rai, founded the independently-operated Sikh Human Rights Group in Southall, while the ISYF established its own Khalsa Human Rights group in 1992 (which operates out of a gurdwara in Leicester). These organizations have been active in publicizing instances of Indian human rights abuse while simultaneously alerting the media and sympathetic MPs to cases that involve the deportation of Khalistani activists.

In addition to lobbying host country governments, Khalistani groups have also taken their struggle to the international political arena. In a 1987 memorandum to the United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, WSO president, Dr. Manohar Singh Grewal entreated:

251

Sikh nation is in agony….Your excellency, as Secretary General of the World Organization, you represent the conscience of humanity and the UN inspires hope for freedom and justice….Thousands of innocent Sikh orphans, widows and older parents whose loved ones have been lynched, for them freedom of religion and expression have been reduced to the 'right to cry in the wilderness'….Their voices, though inaudible amidst the media blitz of misinformation and deception, are appealing to the world community and the UN to urge the ruling regime of India to stop the genocide of the Sikhs (cited in Tatla 1999, 180).

Khalistani activists have also petitioned various United Nations sub-committees to act in their favor in issues relating to India. In 1987, they submitted a request to the UN that the "Sikh commonwealth" be accorded formal NGO status. However, the subcommittee (comprising delegates from Cyprus, Sri Lanka, Malawi, France, Bulgaria, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the United States) denied the request on the basis that it would undermine the "sovereignty of a member state." At the UN World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, various Khalistani groups carrying banners and placards demonstrated against the Indian delegation. They have also staged protest rallies at various other international human rights meetings and conventions attended by Indian state delegations. Khalistani activists were partly rewarded for their efforts after a seminar on the Indian state and Sikh freedom held by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Following the seminar, Norway linked its foreign aid to India to its human rights record (Tatla 1999, 181). In 1993, the Council of Khalistan managed to obtain membership for a brief period in the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). However, it was subsequently rescinded because the committee did not feel that the Council adequately represented the interests of the larger Sikh community. According to the committee chair, "The steering committee considered a number of serious complaints concerning the Council of Khalistan's admission as a member of the UNPO. The issue does not concern the admissibility of the Sikh people to the

UNPO but is limited to the question of the representative character of the Council of Khalistan as representing the Sikh nation" (cited in Tatla 1999, 180).

Conclusion

In 1992, the Indian government's violent and expensive[299] counter-insurgency (that had been waged since the early 1980s) finally succeeded in crushing the militant movement in the Punjab. Several authors and human rights agencies (Pettigrew 1998, 1995; Thandi 1996b; Human Rights Watch 1994) maintain that the campaign was both brutal and indiscriminate in its targeting of "subversives" and that rural Sikhs unduly suffered.[300] That same year, the government held state elections in the Punjab, which were considered a farce by many observers (Tatla 1999; Singh, Gurharpal 2000, 1992). Consequently, the elections were boycotted by all the major political parties including the Akali Dal and voter turnout was roughly 24 percent.[301] Moreover, while voter turnout was low overall it was particularly low in rural Sikh majority areas. In these constituencies, which encompassed 70 of the total 177 assembly seats, turnout was approximately 15.1 percent (Singh, Gurharpal 2000, 157).

In 1995, the central government permitted the Akali Dal to formally reenter the political arena. In the 1997 elections, a coalition (regarded by many as a marriage of strange bedfellows) comprising the Akali Dal and the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came into power (Singh 1997). It was headed by Parkash Singh Badal of the Akali Dal, the current Chief Minister of the Punjab. The ostensible resumption of normalcy to the Punjab and the frequent

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[299] In one account provided by Gurharpal Singh (2000, 167), the cost of the post-1984 counterinsurgency in the Punjab (excluding army operations) has been estimated at 80,000 million Rupees (approximately $2,004 million).

[300] The brutality of the counter-insurgency is captured in Mark Juergensmeyer's following narrative: "A resident of Punjab told me that the Indian government's brutal campaign that effectively quelled the Sikh rebellion in 1992 was often indiscriminate in its targets: 'anyone could be killed,' he explained, if he or she was 'accused of being a fundamentalist'" (1995, 353).

[301] For detailed statistics, see table provided in Gurharpal Singh (2000, 156).

internecine conflicts that arose among various diasporan Khalistani factions have together contributed to the movement's waning popularity in North America and Great Britain in recent years.

As this chapter illustrates, the leadership of the main diasporan Khalistan organizations have employed divergent strategies to gain the support of segments within the Sikh community, host country authorities, and international organizations. While their tactics and rhetoric have been shaped by the political ethos and institutional frameworks of the countries in which they operate, they have also been influenced by considerations of organizational self-preservation.

Scrutiny of any SDM is likely to disclose schisms that mirror those that exist within the Khalistani community. Such internal divisions affect the movement's appreciation of its situation, definition of its interests (both domestic and international) and choice of strategies. As highlighted in this chapter, within the pro-Khalistan camp, internal cleavages have pitted various blocs against each other. Representatives of these competing factions have consistently vied for leadership and influence within the larger Sikh community, and this has manifested itself most clearly in the battle over the control of gurdwaras. The driving force for many of the groups comprising the Khalistan SDM has been the preservation of organizational hegemony as opposed to the common goal of Sikh self-determination. However, this impulse to carve out a hegemonic position in order to garner support for their respective version/vision of Khalistan and gain legitimacy as "the authentic" voice of the "Sikh people" has ultimately led to a decline in support for the overall cause of separatism.

Even though there has been a drastic decrease in diasporan support for Sikh sovereignty, many groups that comprise the Khalistan SDM tirelessly continue to promulgate their vision of the separatist cause. Their efforts have recently been aided by the proliferation of new technologies that have opened up a new "space" in which to wage their political battles. The next chapter explores

the impact of recent technological innovations (in particular, the Internet) on these groups.

Chapter 6: Constructing Cybernationalism: The Creation of a Virtual Khalistan

As documents become more flexible, richer in multimedia content, and less tethered to paper, the ways in which people collaborate and communicate will become richer and less tied to location.

Bill Gates, *The Road Ahead*, 1995.

Introduction

As the previous chapters demonstrate, the Khalistan SDM comprises numerous (frequently adversarial) factions, each with its own vision of how the separatist struggle should be waged and what form the proposed state of Khalistan should take. In recent years, many of these groups have increasingly resorted to disseminating their respective agendas by employing a variety of new communication technologies. The Internet,[302] in particular, has played an important role in promoting the Khalistan cause to the global Sikh diaspora. This has been accomplished by two main mechanisms. First, many of the more prominent Khalistan organizations (and some ardent Khalistan activists) have

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[302] The Internet is a vast collection of computers linked by common communications protocols (ways of exchanging data) to networks within larger networks that span the globe. Like any network, the Internet is not a physical object with a tangible existence, but is itself a set of network protocols that has been adopted by a large number of individual networks allowing for the transfer of information among them (see descriptions provided in Jordan 1999; Kitchin 1998; Post 1995). The origins of the present Internet may be traced to 1969, the height of the Cold War, when the United States Department of Defense designed its precursor ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network). ARPANET was intended to provide a secure (i.e., insulated from nuclear attack) medium in which information could be exchanged between computers in a mechanism not dependent on the physical movement of magnetic tape along freeways. Despite its governmental origins, the Internet has no center and is considered an anarchic space. For a comprehensive account of the Internet's history, see Barrett (1996, 17-33), Giese (1996) or go to <htttp://info.isoc.org/guest/zakon/Internet/History/HIT.html>.

created websites, which provide detailed information about the Sikh separatist struggle. As described in this chapter,[303] many of these groups design these sites in order to portray their respective faction as *the* definitive voice of the entire global Sikh community. The second way, in which the Internet has been deployed to further the Khalistan vision, is through list serves and electronic discussion groups. These virtual chat rooms and message boards function as an "electronic agora"[304] in which individuals may express their views regarding various competing Khalistani groups and discuss issues that affect the Sikh community as a whole.

This chapter thus analyzes the ways in which the Internet has opened a new "space" for separatist Sikh groups to promulgate their message and forge a "hyperreal"[305] Khalistan. Given the novelty of these technologies, the first part of this chapter surveys some of the scholarly analyses that have accompanied these developments. The second substantive segment of this chapter examines the way in which the Khalistan issue is being depicted and debated in cyberspace.[306] To

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[303] A longer version of this chapter entitled "Constructing Cybernationalism: Sikh Solidarity Via the Internet," appears in the *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, vol. 7 no. 2, July-December, 2000. Reprinted, by permission, from the Association for Punjab Studies, London, England. Copyright © Association for Punjab Studies (UK).

[304] Phrase coined by Fisher, Margolis and Resnick (1996, 400).

[305] Term atttributed to French social theorist Jean Baudrillard. In Baudrillard's conception, the shift from the real to the hyperreal occurs when representation gives way to simulation. In this articulation, cyberspace marks the end of the symbolic distance between the metaphoric and the real. It ultimately abandons the "real" for the "hyperreal" by presenting an increasingly real simulation of the world. Thus, the boundary between the image, or simulation, and reality implodes and the image or simulation becomes the thing itself. For a further exploration of Baudrillard's ideas, see Mark Nunes (1997, 1995) or go to <http://pomo.freeservers.com/ Baudrillard.html>.

[306] The term "cyberspace" was originally coined by science fiction writer William Gibson in his fictive work *Neuromancer* (1984), a novel that fused cognitive science with popular culture. Gibson employed the expression to depict an elaborate science fiction scenario in which individuals could directly link their nervous systems to a global network referred to as the "matrix" and experience a form of virtual reality. Gibson's novel generated a new genre of fiction—Cyberpunk—a science fiction sub-genre that blends high technology with outlaw culture. An example of this type of fiction is Hafner and Markoff's (1995) *Cyberpunk: Outlaws and Hackers on the Computer Frontier*. More recently, Gibson's neologism has become embedded in

this end, I first provide a brief overview of some of the main issues relating to the Khalistan agitation that have been discussed on certain Sikh list serves. Second, I examine the content of websites that reflect a pro-Khalistan stance in order to explore the following two interrelated questions: How does the cyber-portrayal of "homeland" impact the formation and consolidation of diasporan identities and sensibilities? Does the existence of the Internet as a new medium of contestation serve to unite or fragment the groups that comprise an SDM?

On the Cusp of Virtuality

The Advent of Transformative Technologies

According to Benedict Anderson (1992, 1994), the globalizing qualities of the Internet and its attendant communications innovations have revolutionized the way in which groups conceptualize notions of "here" and "there," of "community" and "otherness." As numerous geographers (Adams 1998, 1997; Kitchin 1998; Batty 1997; Batty and Cole 1997; Jiang and Ormeling 1997; Taylor 1997; Batty and Barr 1994) highlight, the predominance of "real" geography as a force in shaping community is waning, with the explosion of communication networks and the emergence of a new "virtual geography." In the words of Jonathan H. Spalter and Kevin Moran, "Just as the printing press did five hundred years ago, the global information infrastructure has the potential to revolutionize communities and empower millions of people around the by world by facilitating the free flow of ideas and information" <http://www.cisp.org/imp/ may_99/05_99moran.htm>.

According to cyberspace pioneer Howard Rheingold (1993), the emergence of this new space reinforces the notion of community by creating a site for the construction of a Habermasian transnational "public sphere"—a global

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our global vocabulary to denote "a computer generated public domain which has no territorial boundaries or physical attributes and is in perpetual use" (Loader 1997, 3).

civil society with a shared consciousness in which the notion of community will be transformed and social intercourse will no longer be local but global. Such exchanges have the potential to help engender fresh sites for the creation and forging of new kinds of social formations. Noted globalization scholar Saskia Sassen reiterates this when she maintains that,

> civil society, whether it be individuals or NGOs, is a very energetic presence in cyberspace. From struggles to support human rights, the environment and workers strikes around the world to genuinely trivial pursuits, the Net has emerged as a powerful medium for non-elites to communicate, support each other's struggles and create the equivalent of insider groups at scales going from the local to the global (Sassen 1999b, 53).

The proliferation of what Robert M. Kitchin (1998, 386) refers to as "transformative technologies" has significant implications for diasporan politics. Because of their ability to collapse modernist dimensions of time and space, these technologies have the power to create a new space for human interaction.[307] This phenomenon has led numerous marginalized groups to strategically employ technological tools in order to mediate power relationships, pose challenges to the status quo, and accomplish a wide range of social, economic, and political objectives (see the work of Bunt 1999; Fandy 1999; Jeganathan 1998; Froehling 1997; Smith 1997; Warf and Grimes 1997). As Benedict Anderson's well-known aphorism maintains, "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (1991, 6). In the Information Age in which we live, "imagined communities" are increasingly being reconstituted as cybercommunities, thereby allowing for the maintenance of ties between and the reinforcement of solidarity among coethnics living thousands

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[307] Margaret Wertheim provides a fascinating history of the way in which the notion of "space" has been conceptualized through the ages. See, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet* (1999).

of miles apart.[308] As one scholar (Benedikt 1991) suggests, the emergence of these new communication technologies have, in essence, turned us into nomads who are always in touch.

Cyberspace: A New Site for Civil Society

According to Timothy Luke (1998, 3), while we may not be standing at the end of history, we are in the process of experiencing the beginning of virtuality. The last decade's revolutionary advances in information and telecommunications technologies, such as the Internet, have the potential to generate drastic sociospatial change and render conventional certainties obsolete in ways hitherto thought impossible.

Until the explosion of the World Wide Web in the mid-1990s, cyberspace was essentially a realm of words, not images. Accessing information from data files and text reports was possible, but in most cases too daunting and time-consuming for the average, non-technical user. However, the invention of HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) in 1991 led to the creation of a user-friendly, image-driven Web that expanded accessibility in an unprecedented fashion.[309] "Hypertext"[310] forms the basis of interactive multimedia design, linking text nodes—words, phrases, or images—to other text nodes. Selecting or clicking on a hypertext term or image allows the user to move from one location to the other. According to Michele H. Jackson and Darren Purcell, "Hypertext has created the capacity for multilinear, interactive story forms. Hypertext both enables and limits exploration. The way in which a user jumps from link to link is undetermined and open to the user, but, by deciding what jumps will be offered, the designer

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[308] An interesting early analysis is provided by Amit S. Rai, in his work on the creation and maintenance of a Hindu diasporic consciousness. See "India On-Line: Electronic Bulletin Boards and the Construction of a Diasporic Hindu Identity" (1995).

[309] Invented by British physicist Tim Berners-Lee.

[310] The term "hypertext" refers to the nonlinear documents, in which text nodes are linked to other relevant pieces of information, forming a textual network (Strate, Jacobson, and Gibson, 1996, 10).

controls possible paths" (1997, 221). Thus, what is now popularly referred to as "the Net," is dominated by the World Wide Web (Toulouse 1997).

In the pre-Web era, as Michele H. Jackson and Darren Purcell observe, "Discussion groups, bulletin boards, and chat rooms teemed with conversations, manifestos, diatribes capable of conveying a sense of place; but they were soapboxes or salons not posters, flyers, or newsreels. Now, however, the Web allows cyberspace to be a realm of imagery as much as ideas" (1997, 217). Today, popular browsers such as Microsoft's Internet Explorer® and Netscape Navigator® enable even the most technically unsophisticated computer user to effortlessly access pictures and information and jump from website to website with the mere click of a mouse. In Nicholas Negroponte's words, "In the same way that hypertext removes the limitations of the printed page, the post-information age will remove the limitations of geography. Digital living will include less and less dependence upon being in a specific place at a specific time, and the transmission of place itself will start to become possible" (1995, 165).

Cyberspace transcends Cartesian notions of space and enables the most temporally and spatially diffuse populations to communicate almost instantaneously. Virtual space constitutes a public space that may serve as a representational space or electronic agora for struggles that may then be expanded beyond local confines. The linkage via global computer networks of coethnic groups strung across distance means that place-based relations are being increasingly transplanted by transnational universalized interactive communications. According to Barney Warf and John Grimes,

> easy access to e-mail and the World Wide Web allows many politically disenfranchised groups to communicate with like-minded or sympathetic audiences, publicizing causes often overlooked by the mainstream media and offering perspectives frequently stifled by the conservative corporate ownership of newspapers, television, and other media outlets. Many such outré groups, though far from homogenous, subscribe to opinions that are effectively outside the mainstream and are not always taken seriously by the larger public (1997, 260).

David Resnick further maintains that "one of the greatest advantages of the Web for political activists is that it enables them to access up-to-the-minute information on a huge variety of topics are [sic] relevant to developing their own policy positions and political strategies. Policy relevant research developed by one group and put up on the Web can also be of great value to other groups which share their general political orientation" (1997, 63). The elimination of geographical constraints in cyberspace is underscored in a series of Microsoft commercials that enticingly ask, "*Where* do you want to go today?"[311] (quoted in Shapiro 1999, 84-101; Graham 1998, 166). Because of the ability to technologically circumnavigate the constraints of time and space, the Internet also eviscerates conventional distinctions between private and public and creates significant legal dilemmas in issues pertaining to geographic location and jurisdiction (McIntosh and Cates 1997). According to Kitchin, "space in cyberspace is wholly socially produced with no physical, objective counterpart" and this is one of the main reasons it has captured the attention of so many scholars. The emergence of such " 'spaceless' 'placeless' social spaces"[312] has the potential to engender a paradigmatic shift in the constellation of power relations between states and non-state actors as state boundaries become increasingly eroded.[313]

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[311] The feeling that the world is rapidly shrinking is further captured by IBM' ubiquitous tag line "big solutions for a small planet."

[312] Term used by Kitchin (1998, 403).

[313] The potential of these technologies was most powerfully felt by China's authoritarian regime during the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre when students used fax machines and e-mail to mobilize support. One network in particular, ChinaNet (that operated out of Stanford University and was popular among dissidents), rankled the Chinese government to the extent that in early 1996 it began to curtail access to sites it deemed subversive (Mueller and Tan 1997). It has additionally blocked access to many other sites, including those that are critical of its human rights record. Certain Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, have also instituted stringent controls to stem the influx of anti-Islamic alien values (Gher and Amin 1999) while simultaneously repressing Islamic fundamentalist challenges to the political status quo (Fandy 1997). Paralleling this, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia have all attempted to restrict private satellite dishes and heavily monitor Internet usage, motivated by a fear of "foreign contamination" (Warf and Grimes

Negroponte further predicts that "as we interconnect ourselves, many of the values of the nation-state will give way to those of both larger and smaller electronic communities. We will socialize in digital neighborhoods in which physical space will be irrelevant and time will play a different role" (1995, 7). As location is easily traversed, and less of a factor in determining social interaction and political collaboration between dispersed groups, established forms of governance based on territory, hierarchical control of populations, and policing are becoming weakened (Loader 1997, 9-10). The power of these information and communication technologies to facilitate the creation of a new transnational realm of civil society in which all groups and individuals (at least theoretically) have equal access poses fundamental challenges to the traditional concept of state sovereignty (Fandy 1999; Friedlander 1999). Traditional social scientific modes of inquiry, thus, need to be reevaluated and adjusted to understand the contours and dynamics of this exponentially changing world.[314]

In countries in which ethnic conflict or other oppositional movements threaten the stability and viability of the state, the issues discussed thus far gain further salience. This is exemplified by the Spanish government's shutting down of the Basque separatist Euskadi and Freedom movement's (ETA) web site, ostensibly due to its very palpable effectiveness (Warf and Grimes 1997, 266). Despite such governmental efforts to monitor and control seditious elements, there is an incessant proliferation of websites that challenge the authority and

1997, 263). German prosecutors have used threats of legal sanctions to pressure on-line services to restrict access to web sites providing neo-Nazi propaganda and information useful to terrorists (Resnick 1997, 57). In April 1996, Guatel, the state-owned telecommunications corporation in Guatemala, decreed that private satellite or telecommunications links were illegal.

[314] A significant body of research (particularly in the sub-field of Cultural Studies) has recently emerged that examines some of the sociopolitical implications of cyberspace. See, for example, the Fall 1997 issue of *New Political Science* whose theme centered on "The Politics of Cyberspace," eds. Chris Toulouse and Timothy W. Luke. Also articles in the following edited volumes: Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, ed. *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World* (1999); David Holmes, ed. *Virtual Politics: Identity and Community in Cyberspace* (1997); Lance Strate,

legitimacy of several states. For example, numerous "countrynets" report human rights abuses perpetrated by repressive regimes in China, Burma, East Timor, and Kenya. Other sites are maintained by "aspirant nations" such as the Chechens, Kurds, Kosovars, Kashmiris, Tamils, and Sikhs. In addition to documenting human rights violations, many of these sites provide other kinds of information unavailable through the mainstream media. Employing the case of Khalistani Sikhs, the following section examines the way in which such groups deploy cyber-technologies to disseminate their ideas and promulgate their cause.

The Construction of a "Hyperreal" Khalistan[315]

Representation of Place in Cyberspace

For several years, geographers engaged in the study of space and place imagery have noted the "strategic representation of space," *i.e.,* the mode in which space is employed to promote a particular *weltanschauung* (Ryan 1990; Harley 1992; Pickles 1992). However, the conveyance of place through the Internet is starkly different from other traditional communication media because of the evisceration of time space distinctions. This enables groups to distribute images of varying authority and power and across space in order to establish a hegemonic, indisputable representation of a particular place or space.

Thus, the potential of the Internet is not only to convey an image or representation of place but also to define that place, and this gains particular salience when there may be no authoritative or official definition in existence (Jackson and Purcell 1997). Representations may compete to define what is "real" or "official," and those groups that have access to web technology are accorded

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Ronald Jacobson, and Stephanie B. Gibson, *Communication and Cyberspace: Social Interaction in an Electronic Environment* (1996); Susan Leigh Star ed., *The Cultures of Computing* (1995).

free rein to fashion a "virtual" understanding and subsequently make their interpretation available to a global audience that ultimately shapes "real" geography. According to Stanley D. Brunn and Charles D. Cottle, the "sense of place is converted from a 'grounded' reality to one that is not only virtual but artificially constructed" (1997, 243). Many ethnonationalist groups, in particular, have recognized the technological potential of cyberspace and attempted to create "authoritative" representations of non-electronic, political spaces through the strategic use of technology. Paradoxically, as Jeganathan (1998) observes, cyberspace also constitutes a spatial site in which nationalist movements based on territory become, in essence, deterritorialized.

In the case of the Sikh struggle for Khalistan, international imaginings linking similar historical experiences forge a collective sense of pan-Sikh solidarity and nostalgia for a geographically distant Punjab. For members of the Sikh diaspora, many of whom have never physically set foot in the Punjab, this imagination has most recently been fashioned out of information provided on numerous websites designed to preserve Sikh culture and promote the Khalistan ideal. Several of these sites employ various images and audio-visual technologies in order to create a realm of realistic imagery, which brings to life the sights and sounds of "the Punjabi homeland" and "the Punjabi people." Most sites also incorporate linguistic, religious, and cultural symbols, such as photographs, maps, and other "national" emblems into their overall design. These are designed to evoke a particular emotional response and imbue the space with meaning for Sikhs around the world, regardless of their geographical location.

There are a great number of Internet sites devoted to various aspects of Sikh culture, society, and politics. While there is a certain amount of overlap in the kinds of information provided, these websites can be roughly classified into

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[315] For an interesting discussion that parallels some of the points made in this section, see Aleksandar Boskovic's essay "Hyperreal Serbia" in Digital Delirium (Kroker and Kroker 1997,

three general categories: (1) "Generic" sites, such as Sikhnet <http://www.sikhnet.com>, that provide a variety of informational services such as chat rooms, discussion lists, and electronic news, and are designed as a social forum for the Sikh diaspora; (2) "Religious" sites such as The Sikhism Homepage <http://www.sikhs.org> whose main mission is to disseminate information pertaining to Sikhism and that serve as a resource for individuals (both Sikh and non-Sikh) interested in exploring the religion further, and finally, (3) "Political" sites such as Khalistan.net <http://www.khalistan.net>, which provide interactive media such as message boards and chat rooms in addition to a variety of other informational materials. This latter group of sites expressly advocates the creation of a separate Sikh state and dedicates much of their web space to highlighting political developments in the Punjab (particular attention is accorded human rights abuse and other acts of state repression). As stated at the outset, most of these sites are produced by several prominent Khalistani organizations that comprise the larger Separatist Diasporan Movement (SDM).

Analysis of Khalistani Electronic Discussion Groups

In early 1999, when I initially conducted research for this chapter, there were no list.servs or electronic discussion groups that focused exclusively on Khalistan. Some discussions regarding the viability of a Khalistan state took place on general Sikh websites such as Sikhnet, but they formed only a fraction of the overall dialogue.[316] Since then, however, two electronic discussion groups have been launched that deal exclusively with the Khalistan issue. They are the khalistan@egroups.com electronic discussion group that was formed on April 23, 1999 and a Khalistan message board/chat room on the Yahoo!Clubs website <http://messages.clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/khalistan?s> that was established on

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143).

[316] For an interesting discussion on the dilemmas of "doing ethnography" on the Web, see, David Hakken's *Cyborgs@Cyberspace* (1999).

December 8, 1999. Given the size of the global Sikh community, membership in both groups remains minuscule. As of October 2000, Khalistan@egroups.com had 186 members (see message archive figures in Table 6.1) while the Yahoo! Khalistan chat room comprised a total of nine.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2000	6	11	25	132	133	82	71	103	83	38		
1999				1	30	6		1	11	14	9	9

Table 6.1. Khalistan@egroups.com Electronic Discussion Group: Message Archive By Month <http://www/egroups.com/group/khalistan>.

The message style and content on the Yahoo! site seem to indicate that the members are mostly young diasporan Sikhs. The founder of the Yahoo! site is an eighteen-year old Malaysian mona Sikh named Kiranpal Singh. His first message posted on December 8, 1999 states, "Welcome, This is the Yahoo! Message Board for Khalistan community." The third email on the board is from someone identified as "singh-ji1999 from Leicester, UK," written on February 28, 200 entitled "in your dreams." His message, which outlines his views on Khalistan, reads as follows:

> u aint never get khalistan u idiots . i used to be a supporter of khalistan but when i saw what the isyf was really like i never went to any khalistAN PROGRAMS. all the isyf and all these other jatha bandies like babra khalsa and akhand kirtan jatha dont know anythink about true sikhism . the only way u can lern about sikhism is by follying a sant who follows the guru granth sahib <http://messages.clubs.yahoo.com/club.../bbs?action=m&tid= khalistan&s=1600126275&mid+>.

While not particularly articulate, this missive represents the views of a

267

significant segment of erstwhile Khalistani supporters who are increasingly cynical about the main separatist organizations. Most of the other messages on the site are not particularly substantive and mainly consist of salutations to friends and family members.

The khalistan@egroups.com list.serve, on the other hand, is a more serious forum in which members address a wide range of issues relating to the Khalistan (and wider Sikh) community. Messages are sent via electronic mail on an almost daily basis and each member has the opportunity to respond to previous messages or submit additional comments. Issues that have generated considerable discussion recently include the langar question, the efforts of the RSS to label Sikhs as Hindus, pan-Sikh unity, intra-communal and Intra-Khalistani factionalism, and the role of caste in both Sikhism and the Khalistan movement.

As previously noted, the Sikhnet site also provides a chat room for its members, and between December 1997 and September 2000, there were 414 messages that focused on Khalistan. The messages ranged from strong endorsement of the armed struggle to vocal opposition to the movement as a whole. Such views are reflective of a 1999 informal poll conducted by the Sikhnet website, which was mentioned in chapter one. Of the total number of 450 respondents, 47 per cent indicated support for the movement while 52 per cent opposed it.[317] Four messages[318] posted on the Sikhnet message board during February 1998, which represent both pro-Khalistan and anti-Khalistan views are reproduced as follows:

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[317] <http://www.sikhnet.com/Sikhnet/opinion.nsf/WebResults?OpenForm&PollID=000017>.
[318] Given the large number of spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors in these messages, I do not highlight them here.

Message #1:

I understand the sentiments on the anger at the atrocities commited by the Indian government. The anger is justified. My question is how do we think Khalisthan is the solution.
Firstly, what is the guarantee the sikhs will not bicker amongst each other. Are we not fully aware of the Jat superiority complex. What kind of Sikhs we are, we have not given up the caste system our gurus asked us to give up.
Now the Indian govt. is coming up with all the atrocities. Tommorrow the upper, richer Castes will dominated the poorer lower castes of Sikhs.
Have we not seen Pakisthan and Bangladesh the countries formed on the basis of religion, they have internal fights and are not prospering as a nation.
So I dont think the vision of Khalisthan makes any sense whatsoever.
If we think of that the first thing we need to do is really follow our gurus become humble and throw away the caste bracket.

While acknowledging the Indian government's role in alienating the Sikh community, the author of this message nevertheless raises serious questions about the efficacy of the Khalistan struggle. In particular, her apprehension focuses on the role of caste in the movement. She argues that a Sikh state in which upper castes (such as the Jats) would dominate lower castes would be no less oppressive than the present situation in which Sikhs are marginalized by the Indian state. In defending her position, she cites politically unstable Pakistan as an exemplar of the problems that would accompany the establishment of a theocratic Sikh state. Her views are reaffirmed in the next message (message #2) that also raises concerns about Jat dominance within the movement.

269

Message #2:

Subject:	Re: Wanting a Khalsa Raj is nothing New
Author:	Dharam Singh
Email Address:	
Date:	Friday, 2/13/98 1:12 PM MST

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh

Very well said, Eash Kaur. The basic belief for the need of Khalistan is that it is the solution to the atrocities committed by the Indian government against Sikhs. But the question never asked is in what new problems will Khalistan as it is currently perceived bring?

Here in the Bay Area we have had incidents in Gurdwaras over politics and money where Sikhs actually drew kirpans and attacked each other in front of the Guru during Gurdwara. In Vancouver, there are drug dealing Sikh youth gangs. Every time I go to gurdwara, I see people wearing Jat Sikh shirts.

For me the question is, "How can we have a Khalistan without a Khalsa?" For some people the question is "How can we have a Khalsa witout a Khalistan?" But that seems to me a mistaken view point. A Khalsa is to overcome whatever may happen in the world and only meditate on the Holy Nam. Were we any less oppressed during the time of Guru Gobind Singh? Was he a Khalsa? Were the panj piarre?

Where there is a Khalsa, there is a Khalistan.

I am not suggesting that we accept that which the Indian government has done and continues to do, rather I am asking for a solution that will actually solve the problem, not just replace one problem with another.

My humble suggestion is that Khalistan will start where people rise in the amrit vela and meditate on the One God. From there, all else will follow. Without it, all else will fail.

Dharam Singh

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh

Message #3:

Subject:	Re: Wanting a Khalsa Raj is nothing New
Author:	Jag S Gill
Email Address:	
Date:	Friday, 2/13/98 4:08 PM MST
	(Modified: Thursday, 12/03/98 11:59 AM MST)

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa
Waheguru Je Ki Fateh

Dear Eash & Dharam

I hear what you are saying & appreciate where you are coming from.

But in my humble opinion despite your concerns we still do not have a option. At least we will have our home and have our destiny in our own hands. I totally agree that we would need to ensure that it is governed by worthy Khalsa. But there is no other alternative. We have tried for 50 years to live with hindus [sic]as brothers in India. You don't need me to tell you of our treatment in return.

With respect
Jag

The preceding message is characteristic of much of the rhetoric produced by Khalistani organizations, which maintains that it is better to have Sikh affairs in the hands of Sikhs, even if this is accompanied by a rise in intra-communal factionalism. The author also expresses the feelings of many Khalistani Sikhs who feel threatened by an ostensibly secular state that is becoming increasingly Hindu in its actual orientation. These views are reiterated more vociferously in message #4, which claims that the creation of Khalistan is essential to counter the threats posed by the "Congress government who has blatantly attacked the religion" and the other "Fascist Hindu Party" (meaning the BJP).

271

Message #4:

Subject:	Re: Wanting a Khalsa Raj is nothing New
Author:	S. Singh
Email Address:	
Date:	Friday, 2/27/98 9:50 AM MST

Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh !

Sangat jee,

Briefly my personal views on this matter are:

Khalistan is much more than a 'want', it is a 'NEED'....Veer Yukatand Singh has just quoted Dhan Guru Gobind Singh's Bani....Guru Gobind Singh has told us that without raj , dharam will not prosper....

Can we live in a country where our brother and sisters were butchered alive... can we live in a country where on the one hand you have a Congress government who has blatantly attacked the religion itself and the other a Fascist Hindu party ... do u think any of these Governements want Sikhi to Prosper and flourish ?

No ... much the opposite

So Bhein Jee / Veer Jee the point here is NEED is different to want. It's about survival and freedom , not greed and want.

Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh !

Many issues that are of particular salience to the Khalistan community such as factionalism, the role that caste plays in the movement, and differential support for separatism, are clearly reflected in these messages. Such discussion

272

groups and message boards thus provide avenues for members of the global Sikh diaspora to exchange ideas and interact with each other, and creates, in essence, a pan-Sikh cyber community. It may be argued that this virtual community constitutes a microcosm of the physical Sikh community and serves to mirror the conflict and cooperation that exist in the "real" world.

Analysis of Khalistani Websites

This part of the chapter focuses on the ways in which Sikh separatist groups attempt to intentionally and strategically fashion space and create an authoritative representation of "a Punjabi homeland." To this end, the content of selected Khalistani websites is analyzed. The purpose of examining the content of these sites was not to ascertain the veracity of the presented information but rather to evaluate the symbolisms pro-Khalistani groups invoke in disseminating their message. Additional analysis was accorded to the strategies and symbols each group employed to present its respective vision as being *the* most authoritative. Searches were conducted using web directories and search engines such as Google <http://www.google.com>, Yahoo <http://www.yahoo.com>, Altavista <http://www.altavista.com], and Alltheweb <http://www.alltheweb.com> during the latter part of 1999 and the early part of 2000. The selection of the sites was based on the following criteria: 1) Political affiliation—the site had to be clearly oriented towards Sikh separatism; 2) Multiple cues—the site had to incorporate text, graphics, and other audio-visual techniques to convey information, 3) Depth of content—the website had to comprise more than a couple of pages. Given that all these sites contain graphics of Sikh symbols, brief descriptions of two of the most common, are provided in figure 6.1.[319]

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[319] Information for these descriptions is derived from W. H. McLeod's *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism* (1995) and the Sikhs.org web site <http://www.Sikhs.org/khanda.htm>.

Khanda The khanda, analogous to the cross in Christianity or the Star of David in Judaism, is a symbol that is common in Sikhism and constitutes the modern insignia of the Khalsa. Its name derives from the vertical double-edged sword (also referred to as a khanda) that lies at its center. The khanda symbol comprises a vertical double-edged sword (khanda) over a quoit (chakkar) flanked by two crossed sabers (kirpans). The double-edged sword (khanda) is a symbol of divine knowledge; its sharp edges are viewed as cleaving truth from falsehood. The chakkar or circle without a beginning or an end symbolizes God's eternity. The two Kirpans represent the dual concepts of miri and piri—temporal and spiritual authority—and highlight the importance of both spiritual duties and societal obligations. The Khanda appears on the Sikh flag (Nishan Sahib) and on various religious objects and publications.

Ik Oankar Like the khanda, the Ik Oankar is a symbol that is widely used by Sikhs on a variety of items such as religious artifacts, books, stationery, buildings, and apparel. It is a combination of the figure 1 and the letter O in Gurmukhi script and forms the first part of several verses in the Adi Granth. Ik Oankar represents the unity of God—"One Oanker"

Figure 6.1. Descriptions of Common Sikh Symbols.

The websites analyzed in this section contain a mixture of sites administered by formal organizations as well as individuals who are strong advocates of Sikh separatism. Given that the English language currently dominates the Web, all these sites are scripted in English although many of them contain a few lines of text in Gurmukhi. First, a composite of each site is sketched out and this is followed by a general analysis of the symbols and rhetoric that each employs.

(i) Council of Khalistan <http://www.khalistan.com/>

The Council of Khalistan self-proclaimed "of and for the Sikh Panth" website is largely text-oriented and provides comprehensive information on activities pertaining to the struggle for Sikh self-determination. The home page opens to one of Guru Gobind Singh's famous aphorisms, "Recognize ye all the Human Race as One," which is bordered by two black Khandas (see illustration 6.1). Beneath this, a large orange and white banner (similar to "Free Tibet" placards) contains the text: "India: Free Khalistan Self-Determination Now!" Sikhism's colors of blue, saffron, and white are used throughout the site.

Illustration 6.1. Council of Khalistan Website Home Page
<http://www.khalistan.com/>.

The page scrolls down to several sub-categories: "Recent News & Features," "US Congressional Record Statements," "US Department of State Reports," and "Khalistan Archives." These, in turn, link to various news reports, articles, press releases, and other public relations materials. The hypertext link titled "Today's Hukamnama" directly links to the Burning Punjab site. Another link opens up a page that contains President Gurmit Singh Aulakh's message, of which selections follow:

> Welcome to the sovereign cyberspace of Khalistan! As the government *pro tempore* charged with leading international efforts to free Khalistan from Indian Government occupation, we have the responsibility to provide you with the most accurate and up-to-date information on the Sikh freedom struggle…. Amid Indian government disinformation, negative stereotypes and downplay of the Sikh perspective, the Council of Khalistan offers this website as a reliable source of information on our peaceful struggle to end the Indian government's genocide campaign and to establish a sovereign, independent Khalistan…. Like the Sikh independence movement, this website will change and evolve, often on a daily basis. We will also carry critical news and developments of other South Asian minority peoples and Nations, including the plight of Christian Nagas, Kashmiris, Assamese and Dalits… <http://www.Khalistan.com/pres-mes.htm>.

Given the Council of Khalistan's role in the wider self-determination movement, the site's content is overwhelmingly political and strident[320] in voicing its separatist position. In order to enhance the organization's authority, considerable space is devoted to summaries of United States congressional proceedings and other western journalistic accounts that are sympathetic to the Sikh predicament. The site is relatively easy to navigate and there are few

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[320] Jingoistic language is employed and the tone is almost belligerent in certain places. Loaded phrases such as "the Indian government's genocide campaign," "the Indian terrorist state," and "the massacre of Sikhs" are peppered throughout the site.

graphics to distract the reader from the organization's central message of the paramount urgency in procuring Sikh sovereignty.

(ii) Sikh Youth Federation <http://syf.jaj.com>

The Sikh Youth Federation website is mainly text-based with graphics almost exclusively limited to photographs. The home page opens to a black background with the heading "Sikh Youth Federation HomePages" inscribed in white (see Illustration 6.2). White headers titled "Camps," "Programs," "Retreats" and "SYF Chat" form hypertext links that may be used to access further information. The left part of the page is a separate frame that depicts the letters "SYF" in large saffron text and large gold Khandas in the background. Six more hypertext links titled "Sikhism Overview," "Panthic Matters," "File Section," "Links," "About Us," and "News Archive" may be clicked on for more information. The "About Us" Link opens to the organization's self-proclaimed mission, which is as follows: "Established in 1968, the purpose of the SYF is to educate the future generations of the Sikhs about our hereitage [sic] and to acquaint the inhabitants of North America about the Sikh value system and way of life" <http://syf.jaj.com/aboutus.htm>.
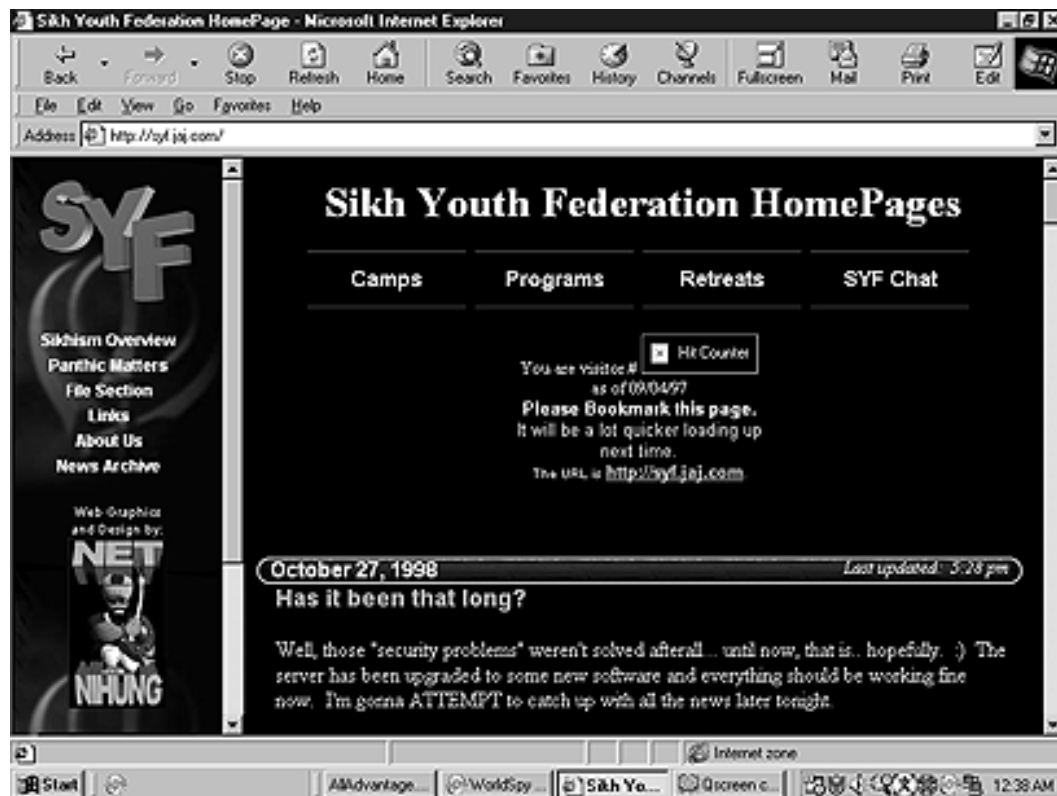
Illustration 6.2. Sikh Youth Federation Website Home Page <http://syf.jaj.com>.

Scrolling down the page takes the viewer to several links to several press releases; the most recent one is dated October 1998. There is information on Sikh camps, support groups, and an article describing the killing of a Sikh by skinheads in Vancouver. Clicking on the hypertext link "Panthic Matters" leads to a subpage with several more hypertext links including links to the World Sikh Organization and Council of Khalistan websites. Some of the headlines include "Ohio Kirpan Case Verdict," "India-A Terrorist State?," "The Construction of Religious Boundaries," "Are Sikh Chairs Serving Sikh Interests?" and "The Future of Sikh Studies at the University of Michigan." While the articles are not dated, it may be

surmised that the latter three articles reflect the furor caused by several academic works published in the mid 1990s, considered heretical by many Sikhs (discussed in detail in chapter three). In the section titled "Current Struggle and Human Rights" there are links to other websites that document Indian state repression, including Khalsa Human Rights, Khalistan Affairs Center, and Khalistan.Net.

Clicking on the header "Abuse of Human Rights of the Sikhs in India" leads to a subpage with a link to a "Picture Gallery" that contains explicit photographs of torture. The Picture Gallery's opening paragraph cautions: "In this area, various pictures regarding the human rights abuses against the Sikhs will be presented. Pictures may contain very graphic material…." Text in the form of headers are interspersed with graphics and include "Torture," "Operation Blue Star," "Harassment," and "Rape Victims." Clicking on each of the photographs leads to several other subpages that contain, as cautioned at the outset, graphic photographs of the 1984 riots, police brutality, and the destruction of the Golden Temple. The "Torture" section here depicts graphic photographs of victims of police brutality and includes several pictures of individuals allegedly killed while in police custody (see illustration 6.3).
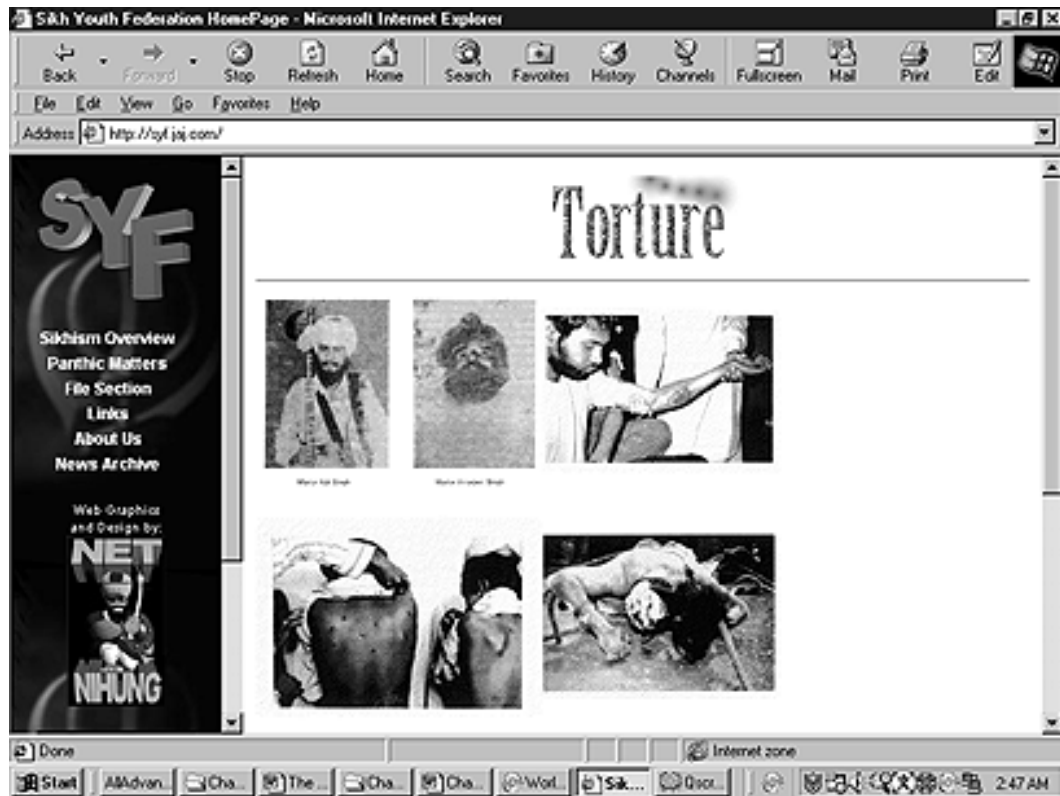
Illustration 6.3. Sikh Youth Federation Website: Victims of Torture
<http://syf.jaj.com/>.

Numerous pages are devoted to the Delhi riots of 1984 and detail the many atrocities that were inflicted on the Sikh community. Several photographs show angry mobs pulling Sikhs off trains and beating them. Others depict burning people, buildings, and vehicles. Some of the more disturbing images include photographs of decomposing (allegedly Sikh) bodies being eaten by dogs. Illustration 6.4 shows a vehicle and building engulfed in flames while police impassively observe the scene. The photo caption reads: " The picture on the left shows a Sikh man's taxi being burned. The picture on the right shows the police standing by, watching a Sikh owned shop being completely destroyed" <http://syf.jaj.com/>.

280

Illustration 6.4. Sikh Youth Federation Website: The Delhi Riots and Police
Collusion <http://syf.jaj.com/>.

Additionally, numerous subpages provide details of the military attack on
the Golden Temple (Operation Bluestar). Several pages contain photographs of
the aftermath of the military operation. Many include the heavily-damaged Akal
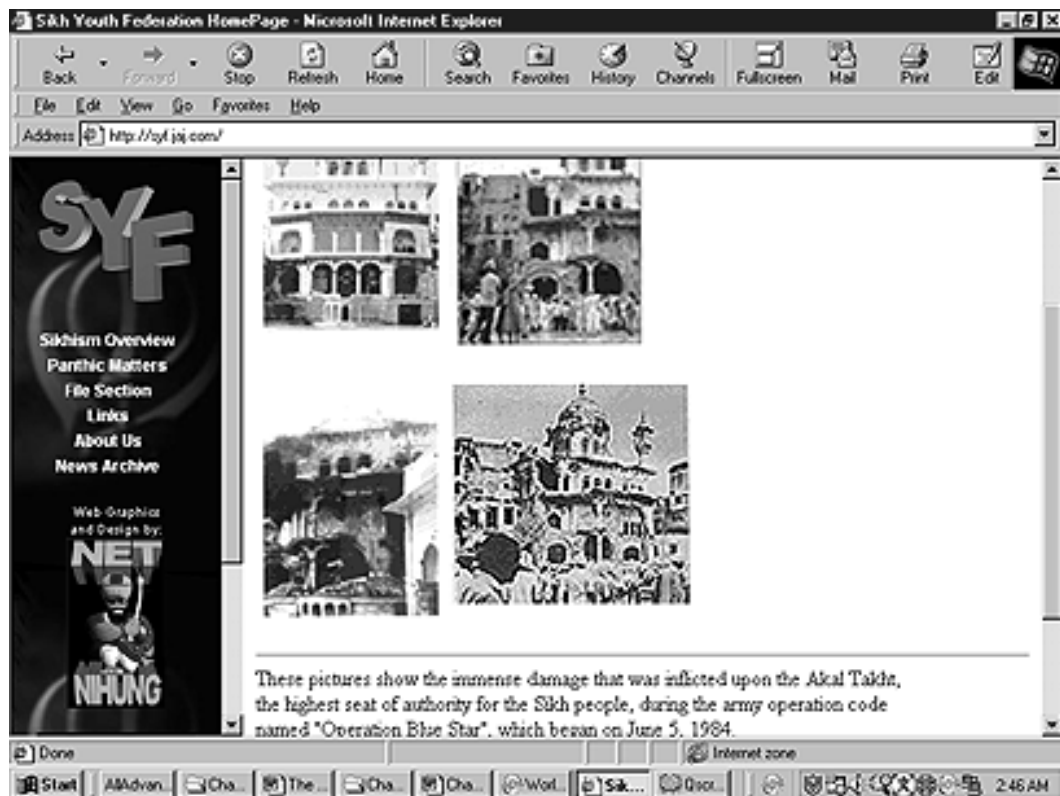Takht in the background (see illustration 6.5).

281

These pictures show the immense damage that was inflicted upon the Akal Takht, the highest seat of authority for the Sikh people, during the army operation code named "Operation Blue Star", which began on June 5, 1984.

Illustration 6.5. Sikh Youth Federation Website: Operation Blue Star
<http://syf.jaj.com/>.

The Sikh Youth Federation website contains a copious amount of information pertaining to both the political situation in the Punjab and immigrant Sikh concerns. The site has a number of internal and external links that direct the viewer to other relevant resources. In a series of articles, Kuldeep Singh, the organization's President, laboriously argues certain points justifying the pro-separatist position. Additionally, numerous photographs portraying the more brutal aspects of the Indian state are displayed to underscore the Sikhs' beleaguered position as a religious minority. Topics guaranteed to elicit a strong emotional response from all Sikhs (regardless of political affiliation), such as

Operation Bluestar and the Delhi Riots, are accorded considerable space. The site attempts to provoke a strong emotional reaction in order to garner support for the Khalistan movement. Given that it also contains information on Sikh youth camps and activities in North America, the Sikh Youth Federation may have the potential of attracting young diasporan Sikhs to its cause.

(iii) Burning Punjab Site <http://www.burningpunjab.com>

According to its homepage, the Burning Punjab website is "Panjab's first ever media site on Sikh holocaust" [sic] and is being operated by the International Human Rights Forum[321] <http://www. burningpunjab/ com/>. Adhering to its mission, the site contains graphic images chronicling various aspects of human rights abuse. The site's home page opens to portray four graphic colored images of violence perpetrated against the Sikh people. The first constitutes a representation of the Akal Takht encircled in flames. The second picture depicts tortured bodies (presumably Sikh) strewn upon the Indian flag. The third is a portrait of a Sikh man whose body is engulfed in flames while a dagger is simultaneously thrust into him, leaving a trail of gushing blood. A photograph of the badly burned Akhal Takt, in the immediate aftermath of Operation Blue Star, forms the fourth image.

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[321] The site's designer is identified as Sukhbir Singh Osan, "a Law graduate from Punjab University, Chandigarh" <http://www.burningpunjab/ com/>.
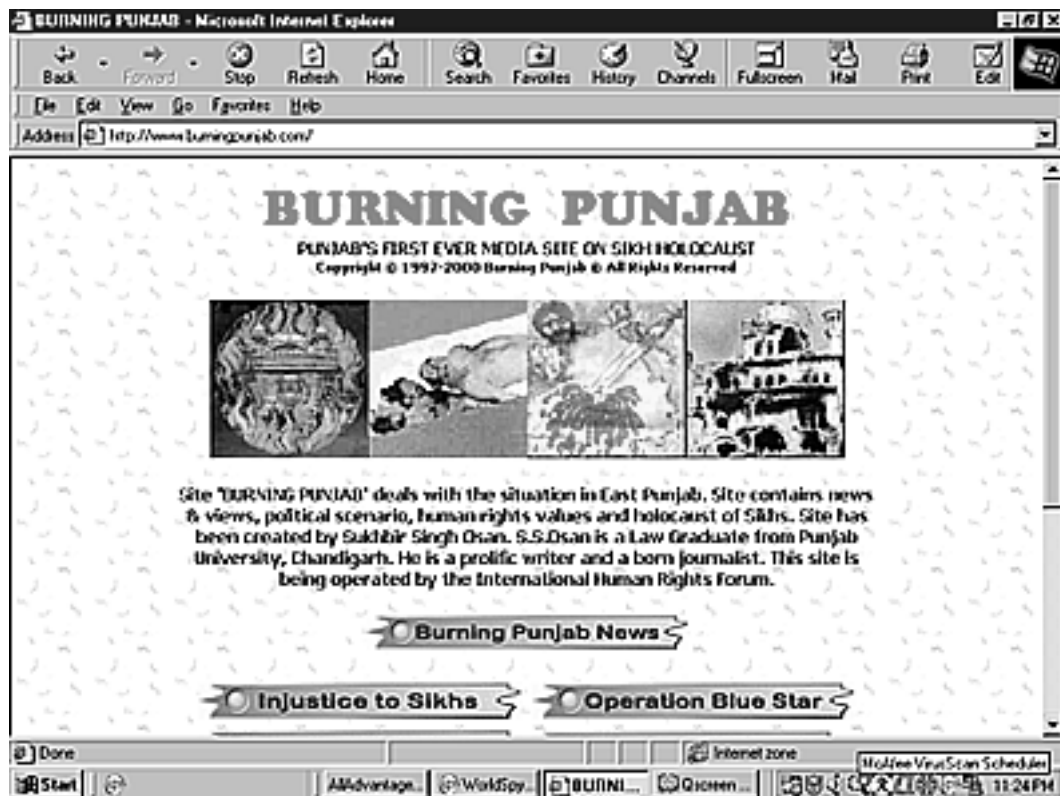
Illustration 6.6. Burning Punjab Website: Home Page
<http://www.burningpunjab.com/>.

Like the SYF site, the Burning Punjab site has a large section devoted to Operation Bluestar that contains several photographs of a badly-burned Golden Temple. The right part of the page shows a destroyed Akal Takht set against a background containing a visage of a weeping woman (see illustration 6.7).
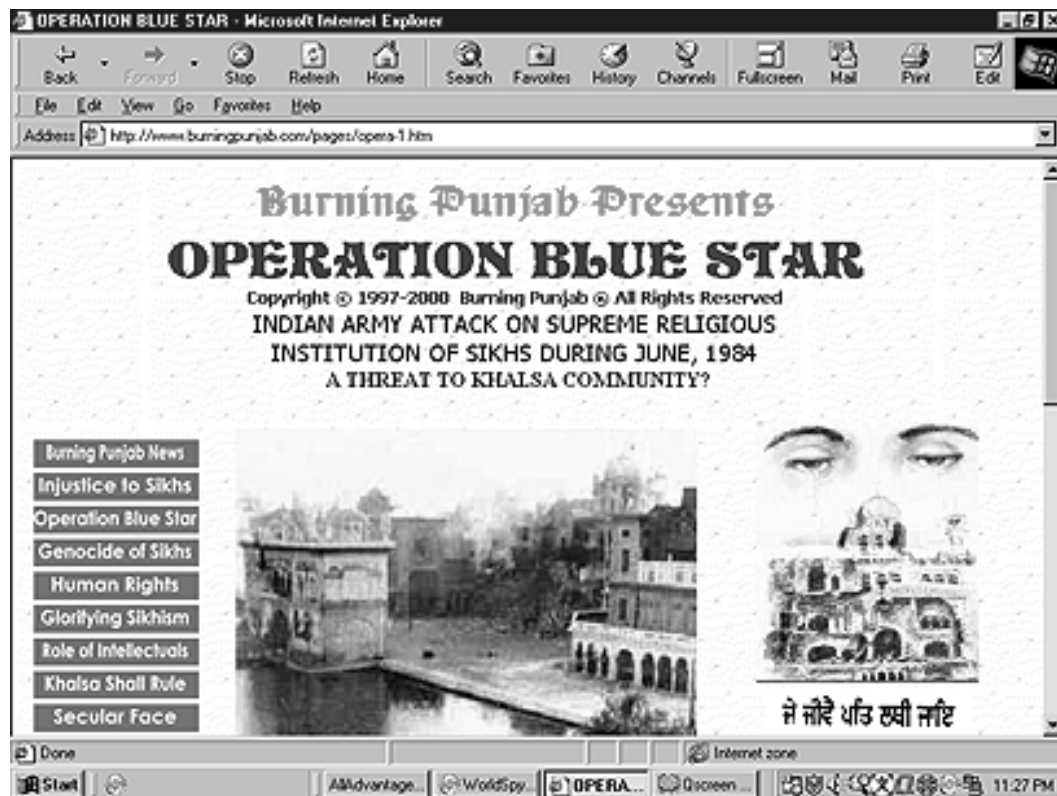
Illustration 6.7. Burning Punjab Website: Operation Blue Star
<http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/opera-1.htm>.

Several other pages also open to graphic photographs and eyewitness accounts of Operation Bluestar and the Delhi massacres. A vividly colored picture of a man's blood-drenched hands bound by the Indian flag appears at the top left hand corner of all the pages in the Operation Bluestar section. These subpages contain detailed photographs of the Akal Tahkt's destruction. Additionally, the pages include numerous photographs of Sikhs who were detained and killed during the military assault (see illustration 6.8).
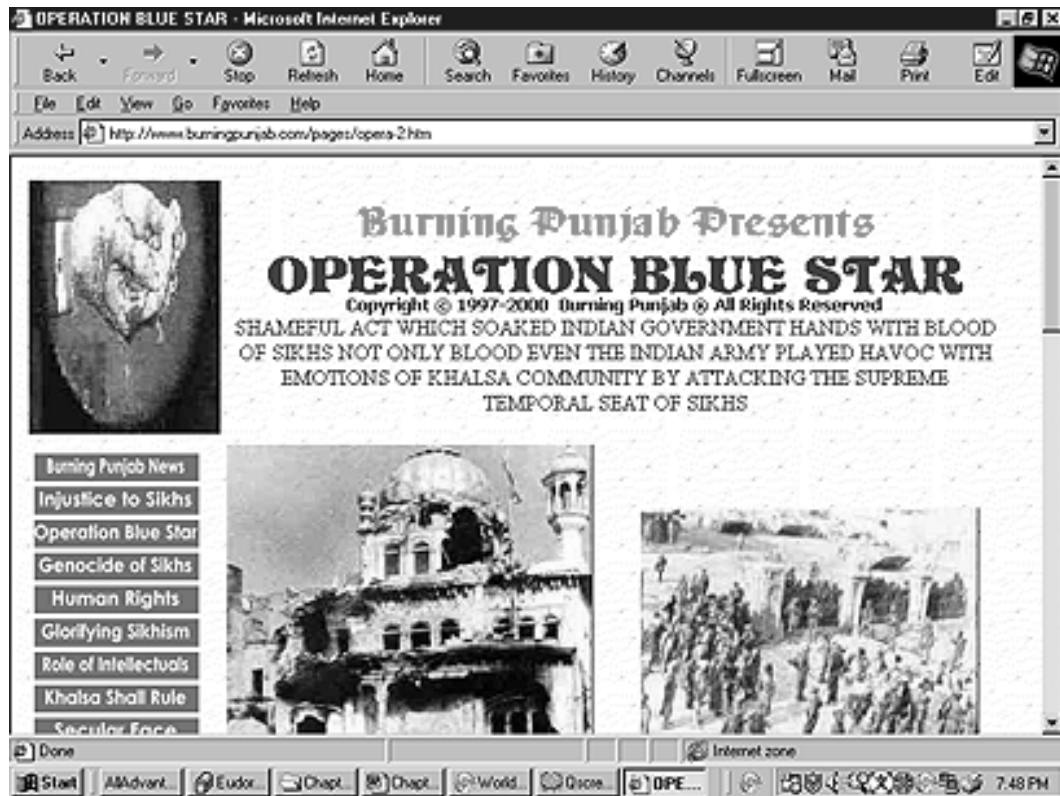
Illustration 6.8. Burning Punjab Website: Operation Blue Star <http://www. burningpunjab.com/pages/opera-2.htm>.

Two entire pages are dedicated to Bhindranwale (who is described as the "Great Martyr of Sikh community") and contain numerous photographs and excerpts from his speeches (see illustration 6.9). An oft-quoted dictum of Bhindranwale is inscribed below his photograph: "Physical death I do not fear, death of conscience is a sure death" <http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/ opera-2.htm>.
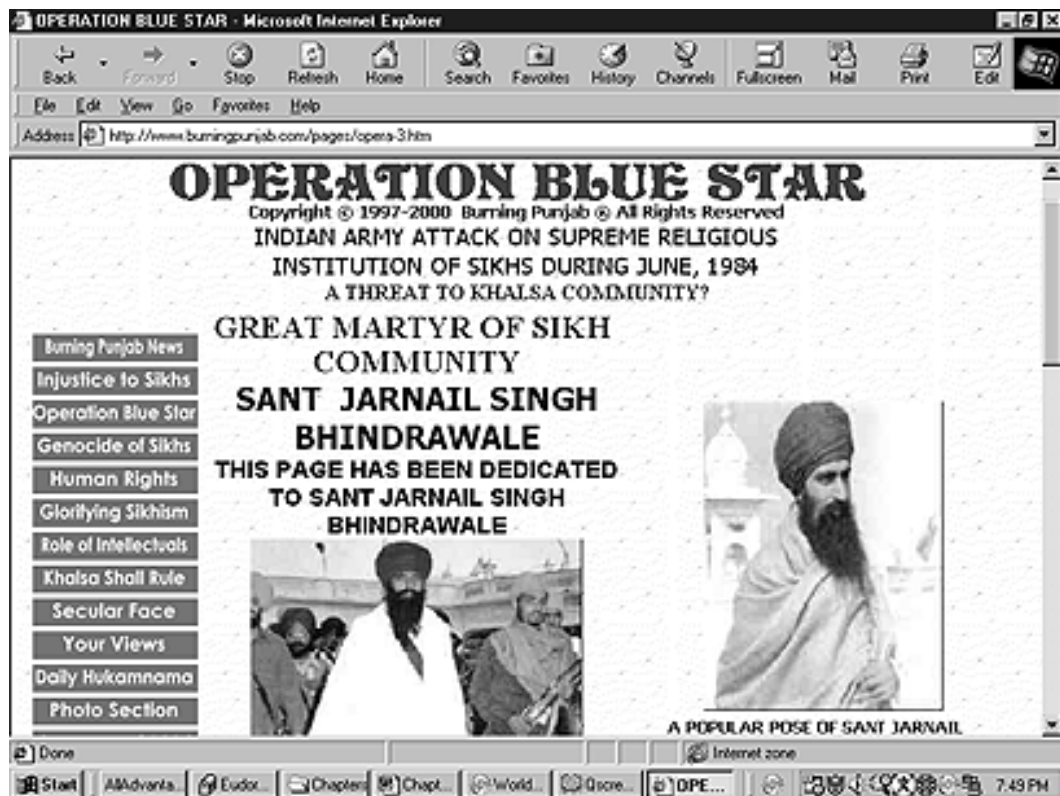
Illustration 6.9. Burning Punjab Website: Page Dedicated to Bhindranwale
<http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/opera-3.htm>.

The site also dedicates considerable space to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and provides a timeline detailing events that occurred in the immediate aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination. Explicit photographs, pictorials, newspaper reports, eyewitness accounts and other personal testimonials that recount the atrocities committed against the Sikh community are also included. Illustration 6.10, for example, shows photographs of Sikh-owned taxis being set ablaze and looting mobs rampaging through the streets.
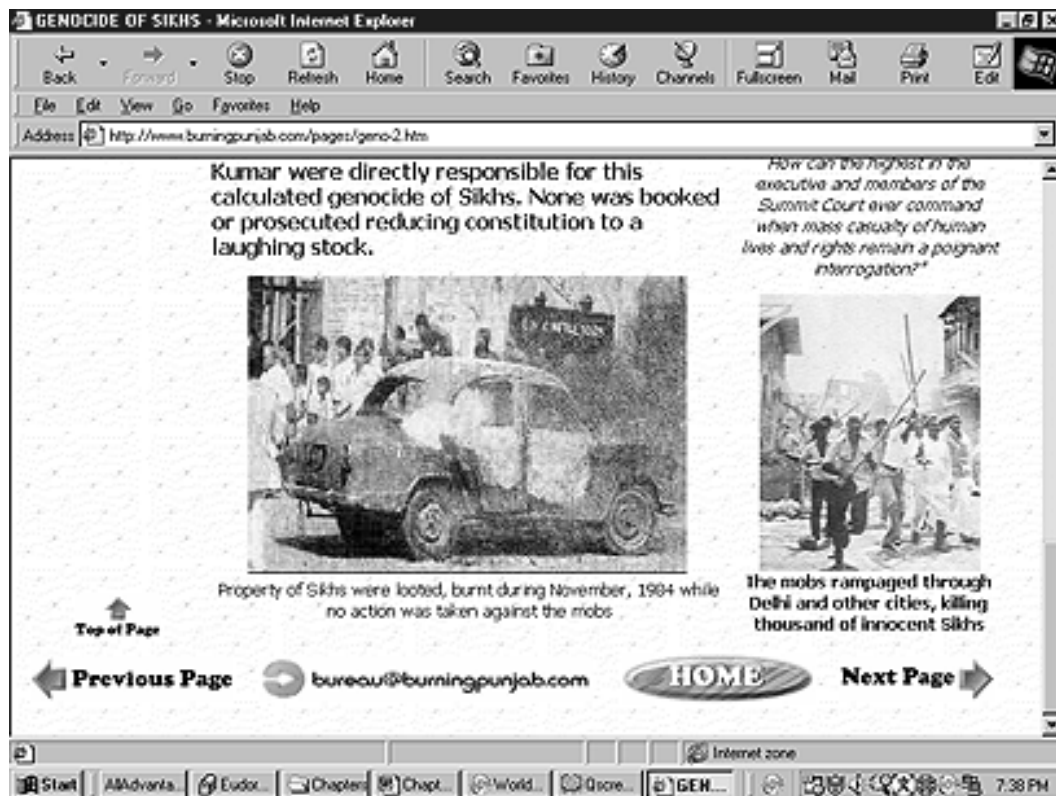
Illustration 6.10. Burning Punjab Website: 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots <http://www.
burningpunjab.com/pages/geno-2.htm>.

Several other pages contain gruesome photographs that are
sometime almost too disturbing to view. They include Sikhs murdered on trains,
Sikhs being burned alive, and decomposing Sikh corpses being eaten by dogs.
The site quotes the mobs as saying: "Kill them. Burn them. Get all the bloody
Sardars. Let no Sikh survive. Loot them and burn their houses. Let nothing remain
of the community, not a trace. They killed our leader, let no child of their live.
Burn their turbans" <http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/carnage-1.htm>. Rajiv
Gandhi's official response to the riots, "the earth shakes at the fall of a big tree,"
is inscribed above photographs of weeping Sikh women and children

288

<http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/geno-1htm>. Other photographs show
burned-out gurdwaras and Sikh-owned stores and houses. Reports of refugees and
women and children left widowed and orphaned, as a result of the massacre are
also documented (see illustration 6.11). Numerous articles highlight the
complicity of the police and government officials and note the pogrom-like
quality of the riots.

Illustration 6.11. Burning Punjab Website: 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots <http://www.
burningpunjab.com/pages/geno-3.htm>.

The Burning Punjab website also provides a window into the friction that
exists within the Khalistani community. Clicking on the link "Photo Section"

opens with a page with the caption "Who is Faithful?" This section contains photographs and brief descriptions of various Akali Dal and Khalistani leaders and notes the ways in which each has "betrayed the Panth." The site maintains that Didar Singh Bains, Dr. Sohan Singh, Simarjit Singh Mann, and Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan (among others), have been occasionally "used by anti-Panthic elements" and have not been faithful to the ideals of the cause. Former WSO official Didar Singh Bains, in particular, is singled out for harsh criticism. His recent recantation of the Khalistani struggle serves as the focus of much of the viewer mail. The "Your Views" section, for example, contains numerous letters sent via e-mail that condemn his actions, two of which are reproduced below.

From: "Ranbir S. Bhalla" [rbhalla@erols.com]
To:[bureau@burningpunjab.com]
Subject:Traitor Bains
Date:Sun, 1 Feb 1998 02:50:26 -0500

Didar Singh Bains will go down in history as a weak-willed traitor to the Sikh nation. It is a shame that Sikhs like him have lost their once fervent resolve for independance just because minor obstacles have come upon the path to freedom. At least he has done us a favor by exposing his true character. All Sikhs in America should boycott Didar Singh Bains and his politics.

Khalistan Zindabad,
Amardeep Singh Bhalla

From: JAGRUP [JAGRUP@aol.com]
Date: Thu, 1 Jan 1998 05:06:06 EST
To: bureau@burningpunjab.com,
Subject: Didar Singh Bains,

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa,
Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

I agree with your comments over Didar Singh's character that he is a big traitor of khalsa panth. He was a multi-millionare that's why he was excused

290

from all those sins, and was allowed back in the country as a guest of Pb. Govt. by those big traitors of Khalsa Panth.

Sincerely,
Jagrup Singh.

Such messages, with their sharp denunciations of "traitors of the Khalsa Panth," reflect the movement's fragmented nature. The site also contains a link titled "Daily Hukamnama" that provides an updated letter of command from the Akal Takht. Incidentally, several North American and European-based websites provide hypertext links to the Burning Punjab website's "Daily Hukamnama" link.

Even a cursory glance at the Burning Punjab site reveals that it is created with the explicit intent of eliciting a specific reaction, namely, horror and anger at the brutality of the Indian state. Graphic images of state violence or suggested violence are pervasive and are some times so extreme they end up caricaturing the very brutality that is intended to draw sympathy from the viewer. Additionally, the language used throughout the site is hyperbolic and vitriolic with phrases like "Sikh holocaust," "Sikh genocide" and "Government organized carnage" routinely employed in numerous headers and titles. Nationalistic symbols are adopted strategically—one image portrays blood-soaked hands bound by the Indian flag while another graphic depicts the bodies of three men (allegedly Sikh victims of state repression) lying on the Indian tri-color. The site makes graphic use of two events that have permanently marked the Sikh psyche—Operation Bluestar and the Delhi riots—in order to garner support for the separatist agenda. Moreover, practically every page contains direct or veiled references to the Indian government's ominous intentions vis-à-vis the Sikh community. Such a strategy is deliberately designed to provoke fear and anger in viewers in order that they may be now persuaded to support the Khalistani cause.

(iv) Khalistan.net <http://www.khalistan.net>

The Khalistan.net website is a relatively elaborate site that includes numerous subpages that contain detailed information and colorful graphics. As illustration 6.12 depicts, the home page opens to a world map, across which the phrase "Khalistan: The New Global reality" is emblazoned in blue and yellow. Below this, a red Ik-Oankar symbol is framed by blue edges and two khandas and globes border the page.
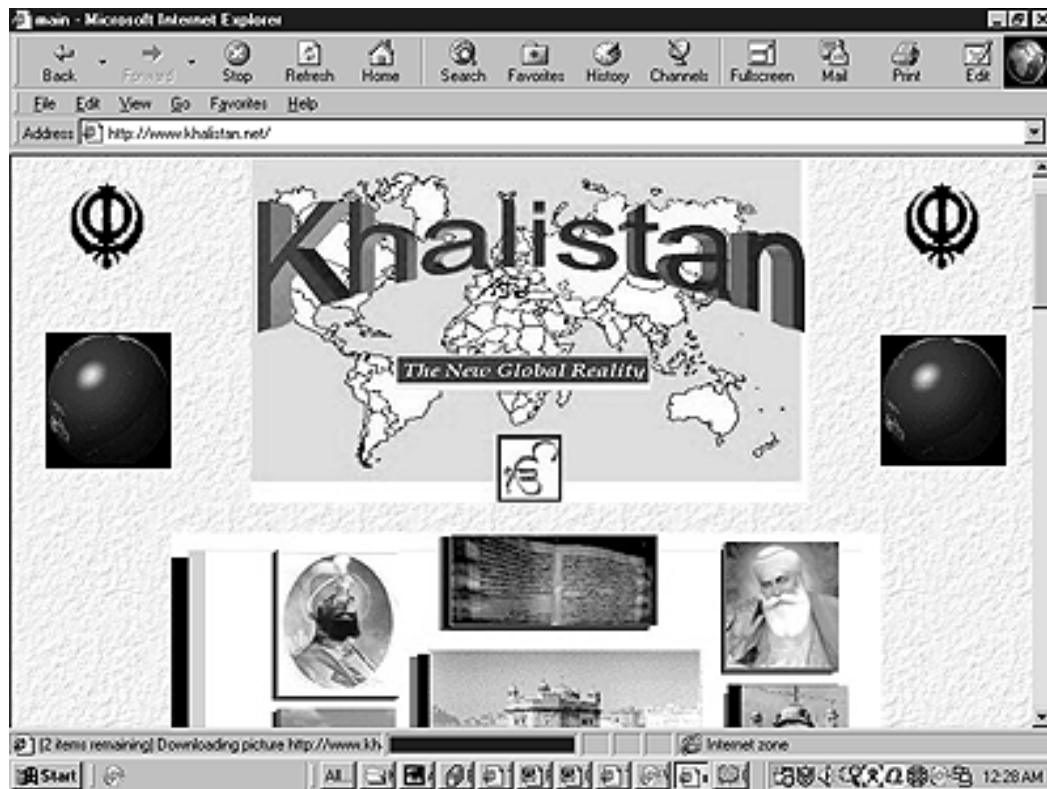

Illustration 6.12. Khalistan.net Website: Home Page <http://www.khalistan.net>.

The homepage states the following: "Welcome! Thanks for visiting Khalistan, the New Global Reality. This site is dedicated to the Khalsa Panth, and

to the men and women who have laid down their lives to uphold the principles of freedom, justice, and righteousness, and for the liberation of Khalistan" <http://www.Khalistan.net>. Beneath this, an animated marquee with the Sikh salutations "Wahe Guru ji Ka Khalsa! Wahe Guru Ji Ke Fateh. Khalistan Zindabad!" ("The Khalsa belongs to God and to God alone belongs the victory," "Long live Khalistan!") rotates on the page.[322] The site further maintains that, "Khalistan.Net is a non-profit Sikh Nation's cyber-site, projecting the vision of the future for the Khalsa Panth into the next millennium" <http://www.khalistan.net>.

In addition, the home page contains a montage of photographs and pictures that represent important figures, symbols (including a map of Khalistan), and events in Sikh history. Numerous United States Congressional resolutions as well as a variety of publicity materials such as articles, press releases, and correspondence that pertain to Khalistan are included on the site. A selection of some of the articles includes, "Is Punjab (Khalistan) economically viable?," "Sikhs are Sikhs and not Hindus: A Separate Religion and Identity," and "Collapse of Brahminist Empire." Clicking on the "Operation Blue Star" button leads to a series of articles and photographs that recount events surrounding the Indian army's invasion of the Golden Temple. Illustration 6.13 for example, shows smiling Indian army personnel standing in front of a badly burned Akal Takht. The caption above the photograph (which is not visible in this frame) states: "Attack on the heart of Sikhism."

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[322] This popular Sikh salutation appears on several other sites as well.
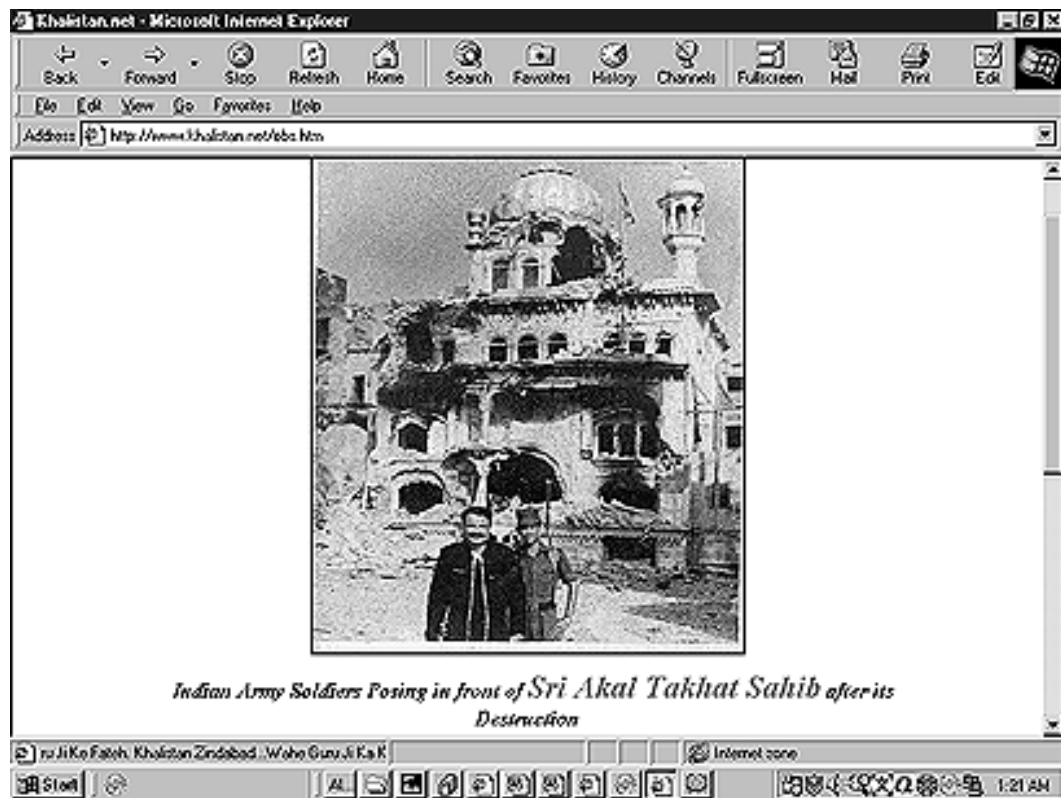
Illustration 6.13. Khalistan.net Website: Destruction of the Akal Takht
<http://www.Khalistan.net/obs.htm>.

The link "Indian State Terrorism" opens to another page that contains several other hypertext links to books, articles, and photographs that graphically illustrate some of India's human rights violations. Illustration 6.14 depicts a page entitled "Glimpses of Genocide" that provides explicit colored photographs of victims of both the Delhi riots and of police torture.
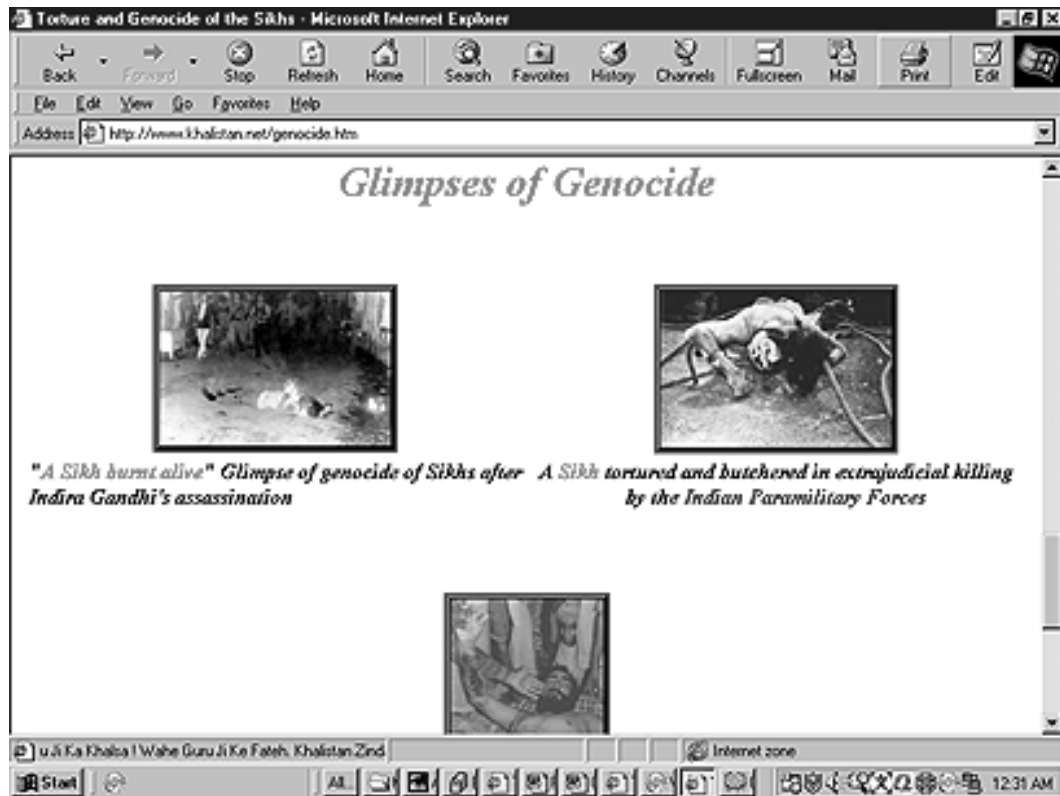
Illustration 6.14. Khalistan.net Website: Glimpses of Genocide <http://www. Khalistan.net/genocide.htm>.

In previous years, the Khalistan.net home page opened to a graphic portrait of a bleeding Punjab.[323] While this has since been replaced with a world atlas, the bleeding Punjab icon (deep red on a bright saffron background) is prominently employed in several places throughout the site (see illustration 6.15).

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[323] The homepage of the Khalistan.Net website opened to a large icon of a bleeding Punjab, as recently as December 1998.
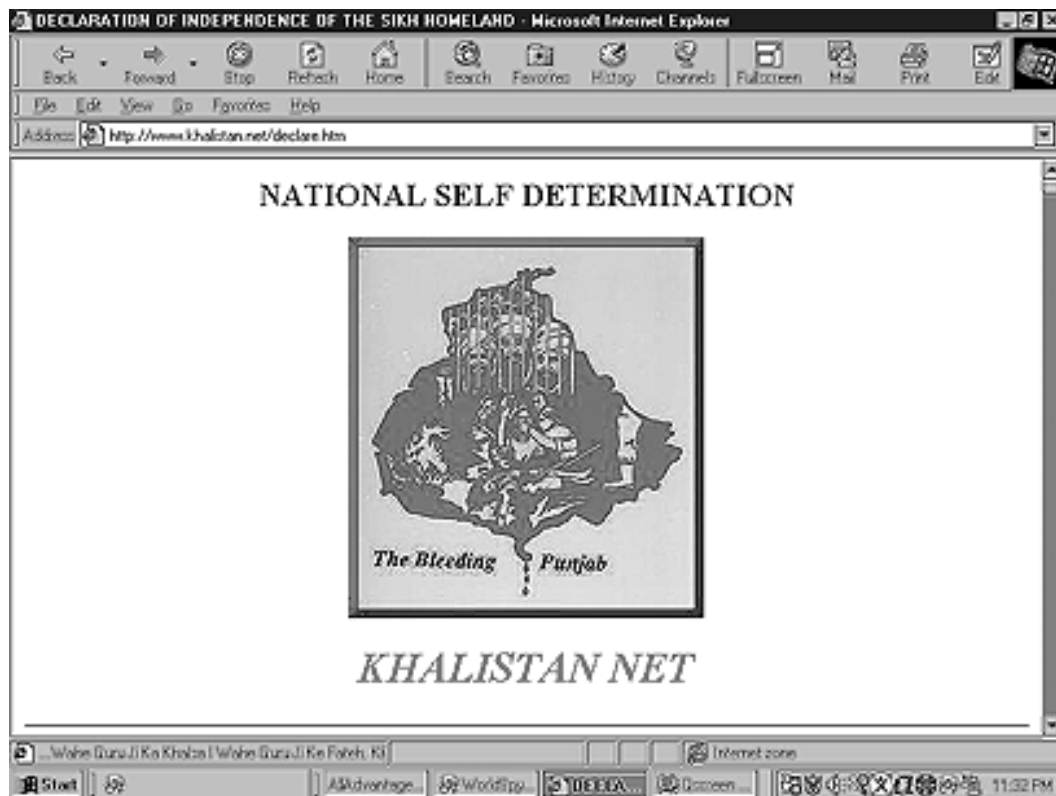
Illustration 6.15. Khalistan.net Website: Icon of the Bleeding Punjab
<http://www.khalistan.net/solution.htm>.

The Khalistan.net site contains a large volume of information relating to the movement and has several hypertext links to external sources of information. While it is not given to as many excesses as the Burning Punjab site, it nevertheless retains some of the latter's incendiary tendencies. It is similar to several of the other sites examined, with a tone and language that is flagrantly anti-Indian. Considerable space is accorded to highlighting "Indian State Terror" and the "Torture and Genocide of the Sikhs." This is a site that makes no effort to hide its underlying agenda and strategically uses graphic nationalistic symbols (such as the bleeding Punjab icon) to trigger a powerful emotional response. The

site's motivations are patently transparent—it is a site of cyber resistance, single-mindedly dedicated to the creation of a sovereign state of Khalistan.

Cyber-Symbolism and Cyber-Nationalism

As certain authors (Brunn and Cottle 1997; Jackson and Purcell 1997) observe, the adoption of symbolism confers authority and legitimacy on political communication, and the Khalistan websites examined in the preceding section illustrate this point well. All of the sites (to varying degrees) make use of symbols such as the Khanda and Ik-Oanker in order to carve out a space that is palpably and intrinsically "Sikh." Additionally, national colors such as bright saffron and blue, and common Sikh salutations such as "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh," are employed to enhance this sense of "Sikh-ness." Most significantly, the symbolism associated with the territorial Punjabi homeland is also readily apparent on all of these sites.

According Jackson and Purcell, "Cyberspace technology offers a toolbox to communicators who wish to send out a specific version of the truth. Through the strategic use of technology, the message can be made *more authoritative, more legitimate, more correct*" (1997, 236-7 [emphasis mine]). For diasporan groups in general, and for organizations that comprise SDMs in particular, the "truths," myths and symbols of homeland take on epic proportions. The authoritative definition of space on the Internet thus serves to make a place become familiar and unambiguous and strengthens the viewer's perception of, and ties to, that place.[324] Questions such as "What it is the Punjab?" or "Where is the Punjab?" are, in essence, settled by the web designer's interpretation and authorship of place. Moreover, groups and individuals that operate these Khalistan websites are aware that symbols of a Punjabi motherland invoke a deep

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[324] See Jeganathan's discussion on how a specific sense of "place" is constructed by the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora (another "aspirant nation") in "eelam.com: Place, Nation, and Imagi-Nation in Cyberspace" (1998).

297

longing for home and that these nostalgic feelings have the potential of translating into tangible support for the Khalistan movement.[325] Several of these sites employ a powerful iconography of homeland centered on graphic pictures of a violated Punjab and a tyrannized Punjabi, i.e., *Sikh people*, in order to propagate their agenda. Illustrative of this, is the Burning Punjab site, which explicitly invokes the image of a subjugated Punjabi homeland that needs to be restored to its former glory. Another example is the Khalistan.net site that contains a map of the Punjab enveloped in dripping blood.

While the promotion of new imagery is important in creating and projecting a sense of place, the preservation of certain other collective memories is equally, if not more, fundamental to the maintenance of a pan-Sikh identity. The politics of memory forms the cornerstone of much of the material provided in these sites. The imagery of certain events must *never* be erased and this is highlighted by the fact that all the sites accord considerable space to Operation Bluestar and the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Graphic pictorials of an obliterated Akal Takht, brutally tortured political detainees, and women and children rendered husbandless, fatherless, and homeless in the wake of anti-Sikh violence, serve to ensure that events of 1984 will never, and *should* never, be forgotten.[326] Eyewitness accounts, human rights organizational reports, and other scholarly testimonials are also heavily relied upon to further reinforce the importance of remembering.

Many of these sites use these collective memories as a springboard for political mobilization. The sites enjoin Sikhs of the global diaspora to join in the struggle against Indian "Brahminical tyranny" and create a refuge for *all* Sikhs,

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[325] For example, on some of these web sites, "Sikh history," "Sikh culture," and a "Sikh homeland" become synonymous with "Punjabi history," "Punjabi culture," and a "Punjabi homeland."

[326] For a study of how collective identities are constructed and reconstructed using electronic technology, see Dona Kolar-Panov's work on a migrant Macedonian/Croatian community in Australia: *Video, War, and the Diasporic Imagination* (1997).

wherever they may live. By framing the Khalistan issue in terms of providing a safe haven for Sikhs around the world (many of whom are increasingly marginalized and alienated from mainstream society in the western countries in which they reside) there is an attempt to develop a pan-Sikh solidarity that is not bounded by geography or physical territoriality.

The ability to access common information and interact with fellow Sikhs across the globe has certain implications with regard to the creation of a global Sikh consciousness. First, the notion that Sikhs are cut off from each other is gradually beginning to diminish. There is now a sense that although they are separated territorially, in terms of the exchange of information and ideas, access to rapid and inexpensive communication has shrunk the geographic space between them. Second, this type of trans-national communication will have a corresponding psychological effect. Sikhs will increasingly view themselves *first* as members of the Sikh community rather than as members of the territorial state in which they reside. Most importantly, this new space also constitutes what the diaspora collectively remembers as "the homeland."

Additionally, because many diasporan members of the second-generation have little knowledge about the political developments of the homeland, such sites provide many separatist groups an opportunity to present their version of history while simultaneously promoting their particular brand of nationalism. In terms of intra-communal factionalism, the Internet thus becomes not so much a new, but an extension of transnational territory, in which to contest and legitimize the separatist "ideal." As several of the websites presented in this chapter illustrate, each group emphasizes different aspects of the struggle, which in turn are intimately linked to their respective separatist visions. The Council of Khalistan's preoccupation with garnering international support and maintaining itself as the authoritative voice of "the Sikh people" may be gleaned from the various photos of its leader Dr. Aulakh with various pro-Khalistan members of the US Congress.

News items and congressional proceedings, which report on events that enhance the status of the Sikh community while detracting from India's democratic image, also serve to portray the Council of Khalistan as a respected, legitimate player in international politics. In contrast, sites such as Burning Punjab and Khalistan.net attempt to mobilize support by appealing to the primordial instinct of self-preservation.

Given the various schisms that have developed within the Khalistan SDM, it is somewhat surprising that most Khalistani organizations have not waged these battles more visibly on their websites. With the exception of the Burning Punjab website (which condemns the various "traitors" of the Khalsa Panth by name), most of these websites while tacitly or explicitly claiming that their respective organization is the authoritative voice of "the Sikh people," do not publicly denigrate competing factions. It may be surmised that because these websites are readily accessible by a non-Sikh audience, that Sikh unity is emphasized over internal differentiation.

The Impact of Cyber-technologies on Separatist Diasporan Movements (SDMs)

In the present digital epoch, people from New York to New Delhi are instantly connected with the stroke of a computer key and are transported (with a little help from Microsoft and AT&T) to *wherever* they want to go on *any* given day. The ability to easily access and disseminate large volumes of information results in people having instant and intimate knowledge of occurrences on the other side of the globe. As space shrinks phenomenologically, people in widely dispersed places experience the same events at the same time (Fandy 1999, 124). With the elimination of the "middleman," diasporan groups now have the power to effect political and economic change thousands of miles away, from their laptops, within the comfort of their living rooms. Moreover, according to Fred Riggs, the Internet has the power to transform migrants into nationalist

"transmission belts"—as they increasingly encounter nationalist exclusiveness in their hostlands, they become more passionately nationalistic vis-à-vis their homelands (1997, 7). As Friedlander concludes "…the result is that the conduct of international relations is no longer the sole province of formal diplomacy among the Wise Men but can take place unpredictably, through multiple parties, at multiple levels, and in a cacophony of radio and television broadcasts, newspapers, web sites, and electronic bulletin boards and discussion lists" (1999, 1).

The Internet facilitates the organization of resistance, particularly diasporic and exile movements, because it produces new modes of large scale organization that are available to individuals, private associations, political factions, states, and multinational corporations, regardless of institutional affiliation or composition. The changing dynamics and the effects of the new, technologically-driven systemic interactions between state, non-state, and international organizational actors can be clearly seen in the recent peasant uprising in Chiapas. As Oliver Froehling (1997) recounts in his article, "The Cyberspace 'War of Ink and Internet' in Chiapas, Mexico," this case provides a vivid example of the Internet's ability to destabilize conventional territorialization and state control of information. In the case of Chiapas, Zapatistan guerilla commandants made strategic use of the Internet to present their demands to the Mexican government while simultaneously highlighting their grievances to the international community. As many authors (Froheling 1997; Kellner 1997, 184-5; Cleaver 1996) suggest, international scrutiny coupled with global moral outrage were largely responsible for compelling the Mexican government to end the shooting war and to protect the Zapatistas from extermination. The Zapatistas were extremely successful in employing the Internet to incite widespread sympathy, mobilize international support for their cause, and influence both domestic and international policy. This resulted in an otherwise obscure group

being propelled on to the center stage of international politics. Further, it plainly exposed Mexico's inequitable treatment of a segment of its citizenry and opened the State's domestic politics to the scrutiny of international public opinion. The power of the Internet is thus exemplified in the transformation of these localized, disenfranchised indigenous peasants (who are barely aware of its existence) to a visible political presence. It also underscores the point that the regime was unable to control electronic dissent, and in turn, effectively harness its indigenous "rebellious" factions. For many nascent ethnonationalist movements, cyberspace constitutes an ideal site in which to re-imagine the homeland and concretize the abstractions of nationalist myth. Moreover, the very nature of cyberspace makes it particularly conducive to the creation and maintenance of ethnonationalist imaginations.[327]

The potential of the Internet to radically empower marginalized groups, or alternatively to further perpetuate the hegemony enjoyed by dominant forces, has been at the heart of considerable debate and generated a significant body of literature (see for example, the work of Shapiro 1999; Adam and Green 1998; Eisenstein 1998; Haywood 1998; Holderness 1998; Carter 1997; Kellner 1997; Loader 1997; Luke 1998, 1997; Poster 1997; Wise 1997; Barrett 1996, 220-8). The "utopian" view emphasizes the decentralized, non-hierarchical, democratic, citizen-empowering aspect[328] of the Net while the "dystopian" view fears technocratic domination and stresses its ability to harness global power for the major corporations. The divide between the utopians versus the dystopians or what I refer to as the "cyber-optimists" versus the "cyber-pessimists" is rooted in

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[327] For ongoing research on this topic, see "The Insurgency Online Project" conducted by Michael Dartnell at York University's Centre for International and Security Studies <http://www.yorku.ca/ research/ionline/insuron.htm>.

[328] Not every one agrees on the value of the power of these technologies to empower all groups equally. Some argue that the power that outré groups have to operate websites and disseminate information is not an entirely a positive phenomenon. Michael Whine (1999, 1997) argues, for example, that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) greatly extend the range and scope of extremist/terrorist groups and constitutes a new brand of terrorism.

issues of power and accessibility. Cyber-optimists such as Nicholas Negroponte (1999, 1995), Howard Rheingold (1993), Alvin Toffler (1999), and Bill Gates (1995) view these technologies as inherently empowering and egalitarian. In the vision of these "Digerati,"[329] cyberspatial technologies constitute the panacea for a wide range of social, economic, and political problems. In contrast, cyber-pessimists such as Jean Baudrillard (1997, 1983) and John Streck (1997) fear that these same technologies have the potential to widen the gap between the information haves and have-nots and reinforce hegemonic values even further. Moreover, the Internet is essentially still a largely Anglophone world, and many that comprise the latter group feel that "as virtual reality comes to mirror the real world. Cyberspace simply becomes another arena for the ongoing struggle for wealth, power, and political influence" (Resnick 1997, 53).

How do these two views translate into the context of ethnonationalist politics? There are two divergent outcomes. The first is that oppressed peoples become increasingly empowered to challenge the hegemony of coercive regimes in various territorially bounded states. Thus, there is the potential for the emergence of bottom-up, grass roots movements (such as the Zapatistas), in which otherwise marginalized peoples are afforded a voice to air their grievances, communicate with coethnics and sympathizers around the world, and make their case to the international community. Conversely, given that from a global perspective, only a privileged minority now enjoy access to on-line services, ethnonationalist movements also have the potential of being increasingly elite-driven (and is some cases diaspora-driven) and waged from the top down.[330] The digital phase of nationalism might then enable elite blocs to impose their own particularistic sets of rules and interpretations, as a result of operating the

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[329] Term coined by Timothy Luke (1997, 125).
[330] For a comprehensive analysis of Internet use in the developing world, see John A. Daly, "Measuring Impacts of the Internet in the Developing World," in *Information Impacts Magazine*, May 1999.

ethnonationalist websites and controlling the kinds of information disseminated in cyberspace.

Conclusion

For diasporan resistance groups (who are generally wealthier than their native counterparts and have access to such technologies) in particular, cyberspatial technologies allow for a quick and intimate link to homeland politics. In conclusion, although diasporas have a long history of being involved in the political fortunes of their homelands, technological advances have and will continue to exponentially expand their scope of influence.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Assessing the Role of Separatist Diasporan Movements in International Politics

> No reason exists why—in addition to states—nationalities, diasporas, religious communities and other groups should not be treated as legitimate actors in global affairs.
>
> Samuel P. Huntington, *Time*, May 22, 2000

Introduction

As elaborated in chapter two, the research inquiry that underpins this dissertation arose from a process of induction. When I embarked on my fieldwork, although I was aware that there were disputes between the pro- and anti-Khalistan blocs, I was largely ignorant of the degree or type of rivalry that existed between groups that comprised the separatist faction. My theoretical framework was thus conceived in light of certain contradictions observed during my time in the field. The questions that consequently emerged from my observations included the following: Why is the Khalistan coalition so weak, given its constituent members' consensus on the ultimate goal of secession? Why do pro-Khalistan groups who possess a common adversary (the Indian state) choose competition over cooperation given that the latter would be more expedient in realizing their political objectives? Accordingly, the research question that guided this dissertation focused on the reasons behind the divisions within the diasporan Khalistan movement.

In highlighting these divisive factors, this concluding segment first summarizes the empirical findings that emerge from the preceding chapters. I then examine the scope and limitations of the Separatist Diasporan Movement model that was employed in this investigation. Lastly, I draw out implications of this study to issues pertaining to ethnonationalism and international migration, more

generally.

Roots of the Schism

As chapter three reveals, one of the main sources of conflict within the Khalistan SDM hinges on differing conceptions of Sikh identity. The question of who may be categorized as "a Sikh," which has historically been problematic, continues to be fiercely contested even today. The problem is further compounded by the tendency of some Khalistan groups to conflate Sikh and Punjabi identity. Such definitional imprecision raises troubling issues for a movement that ultimately aspires to statehood. Is it possible to justify fighting for a "Sikh homeland" if there is no consensus on whose behalf the battle is being waged? If the state is to be founded on narrowly interpreted theocratic principles as many orthodox groups envision, what becomes of Sikhs who do not conform to the Khalsa code? Does their nonconformity proscribe them from accessing full citizenship rights? Conversely, if, as certain "progressive" Khalistan organizations purport, the proposed state is to be a more inclusive secular "Punjabi homeland" for all Punjabis regardless of religious affiliation, what becomes of the Hindu and Muslim Punjabi communities that are unanimously opposed to the creation of such a homeland?

Even if it were possible to resolve the questions posed in the previous section, the mere existence of such disparate views creates tension within the movement. As history reveals, any discussion on Sikh identity has been refracted through the prism of Sikh doctrine on which there is also little agreement. The constant bickering over doctrinal minutiae, however, is not merely ideological but has profound material consequences. This is made clear by events that have taken place in recent years in British Columbia's Khalistan community.

As many observe, the internecine conflict that resulted from the "langar controversy" had much less to do with the interpretation of doctrinal subtleties than with struggles over authority, legitimacy, and resources. The potential of

gurdwaras to raise monies from their congregations, along with their sizeable budgets, make them highly prized institutions for which there is intense competition. Additionally, the management of these gurdwaras has important symbolic value as it accords governing elites much sought after authority and legitimacy. During the 1985-1995 period, the militant faction that controlled many gurdwaras in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain also controlled the direction that the diasporan Khalistan movement followed as a whole. This provided the militant wing's leadership the opportunity to implement its particularistic strategy while claiming that it was not merely the authentic representative of the Khalistani community but of the *entire* Sikh diaspora. Its extremist tactics and rhetoric, however, served to alienate many moderates within the Khalistan SDM who were opposed to violence being employed as a political strategy. Thus, many Khalistani moderate activists abandoned the movement in protest while other moderate groups waged a systematic campaign to wrest control of gurdwaras from the militants. The disputes that accompanied the contestation of the status quo resulted in a further erosion of support within the wider diasporan community. Thus, by the mid-1990s, there was a perceptible shift in Sikh attitudes away from Khalistan.

Additionally, in the Sikh case, matters of identity and ideology are intrinsically linked to caste practices and perceptions. Although many Sikhs claim that in contrast to Hindus they attach little importance to caste, it continues to play a central role in the community's social and political relations. As described in chapter four, Sikh diasporan populations in Britain, Canada, and the United States are highly heterogeneous communities and this factor accounts in large part for the cleavages manifest in the Khalistan SDM. Several non-Jat Sikhs, for example, contend that the militant ethos that dominates some Khalistani organizations may be traced to traditional Jat militancy. In addition, as the discussion in chapter four reveals, variations in patterns of migration and settlement have also left their

distinct imprint on inter-caste dynamics. Although in the immediate aftermath of Operation Bluestar, caste identities were temporarily subsumed under a pan-Sikh "national" identity, they have been quick to resurface in their original form. Apprehensions that Ramgarhias and other non-Jat castes have about a potentially Jat-dominated homeland have also translated into ruptures within the movement. Thus, while the relative importance of caste identity decreased with the rise of a pan-Sikh communal consciousness during the height of the Punjab crisis, caste remains a firmly entrenched, potentially divisive, pre-coalition identity.

As chapter five demonstrates, a crisis in the homeland is one of the most powerful catalysts in engendering diasporan solidarity. The Indian government's military assault on the Golden Temple, the anti-Sikh riots of November 1984, and the widespread state repression that followed, largely account for the expansion of support for separatism during the mid-1980s. The initial unifying impact of these events was, however, short-lived, and the Khalistan SDM soon began to splinter on lines of ideology, strategy, and leadership. James Q. Wilson's (1973) compelling insight into the power of organizational survival instincts elucidates why numerous Khalistan groups pursued paths that compromised the Khalistan SDM's early unity and eventual political goal. Many of these participant groups were based on individual personalities rather than on a coherent and unified set of political objectives. Moreover, even when groups shared a common agenda, they frequently exaggerated ideological and tactical differences in order to attract a wider membership to their respective organization. Thus, for many of the constituent members of the Khalistan SDM, the long-term aspiration to Sikh sovereignty was supplanted by a short-term preoccupation with organizational preservation. Additionally, as the annals of the ISYF, Babbar Khalsa, and WSO evince, even within individual organizations, personality clashes and intra-organizational conflicts were common. Such internecine friction frequently resulted in the creation of splinter groups, each with its own agenda and vision of

the aspirant state. The proliferation of breakaway Khalistani organizations and the attendant coalitions, alliances, and oppositional relationships that they spawned further contributed to the movement's general instability.

The differences that existed in the Khalistan SDM were also affected by the extensive factionalism that existed within the insurrectionist movement in the Punjab. Many of the main diasporan Khalistani groups maintained close but shifting alliances with particular groups and leaders in the homeland, and infighting in the domestic movement quickly transposed itself onto the diasporan front. Linkages with domestic separatist groups and the formal endorsement by Punjabi militant leaders of the "authentic" overseas representatives thus contributed to increased competition among the various constituent factions of the diasporan Khalistan movement. Moreover, the Khalistan SDM's largely transnational character further exacerbated the issue as many sub-groups, in addition to fostering links with the Punjab, formed ties with sub-groups in other countries.

The political implications of an SDMs' transnational character are further examined in chapter six. As this chapter demonstrates, new communication technologies such as the Internet contain the power to both unite and divide diasporan communities. While homeland web sites and electronic discussion groups have the capability of constructing or rekindling diasporan consciousness, their universal and egalitarian attributes also simultaneously contribute to undermining existing solidarity. Such technologies allow for multiple voices and accord various marginalized groups the power to contest "official" versions of the truth. Hence the Internet, by facilitating the proliferation of such groups, has promoted internal dissidence and challenges to the governing elites within the Khalistan SDM.

As discussed in chapter six, competing factions within the Khalistan SDM have erected their own websites and strategically employ these cyber spaces in an

309

attempt to garner mass support for their particular organization. As some scholars argue, cyber-technologies, while putatively regarded as egalitarian, are in practice available only to a relatively small, affluent, and technically sophisticated elite. Khalistani groups that have access to these "transformative technologies" have the power to propagate their brand of separatism while marginalizing other groups and suppressing internal dissent. Thus, paradoxically, cyber-technologies form compelling sources of both unity and disunity within an SDM.

In summary, it might be argued that state tyranny serves to strengthen an SDM by unifying its constituent groups against an "external" threat. Conversely, it might also be suggested that in the absence of state-sponsored violence, an SDM's agenda rooted in hatred and vengeance against the state becomes superseded by concerns that are more prosaic. This point should thus be accorded paramount importance when governments formulate policy to deal with their more militant ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities.

Scope of the Model

According to King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, 49), "A *model* is a simplification of, and approximation to, some aspect of the world. Models are never literally 'true' or 'false,' although good models abstract only the 'right' features of the reality they represent." Accordingly, the Separatist Diasporan Movement model employed in this thesis attempts to capture some of the aspects and features referred to in the preceding statement. However, any effort to delineate the explanatory capability of a theoretical model must also acknowledge its limitations and weaknesses. Therefore, I first recapitulate the explicatory sequence that runs through this dissertation and then highlight some theoretical limitations of this analysis.

As noted previously, findings from the Khalistan case suggest that SDMs are intrinsically unstable, weak coalitions that are generally incapable of maintaining the internal unity necessary to achieve their political goals. I further

contend that this instability is based on the following factors: First, because of an absence of a universally accepted overarching authority there is intense competition among participant groups in an SDM to proclaim their respective organization as *the* "authentic representative" of the movement as a whole. Second, because many SDMs are formed voluntarily following a crisis in the homeland, the initial unity they display (particularly vis-à-vis the international political community) conceals competing and deeply-embedded pre-coalition identities. In the post-SDM formation period, groups need to maintain continued solidarity in order to achieve their political ends. However, because of their disparate, strong, pre-coalition affiliations, many groups diverge on political strategy and ideology and, consequently, frequent infighting ensues. The third reason for an SDM's weakness lies in its transnational character. Sub-groups are forced to operate in conditions of uncertainty because their continued organizational existence is contingent upon the political largesse of the various host countries in which they are physically located. Such an uncertain environment drives many sub-groups to focus on individual organizational survival at the expense of the movement's overall political objectives. For these reasons, intra-coalitional factionalism serves to undermine the movement's credibility within both the wider diasporan audience and the international political community. Ultimately, this jeopardizes the effectiveness of an SDM in achieving its foremost political goal, i.e., the creation of a separate state.

Findings from the Khalistan case seem to support my initial hypotheses that a lack of authority and strong pre-coalition identities account for the fragmentation that emerges within SDMs. The realignment of diasporan Sikh attitudes away from Khalistan during the mid-1990s also appears to confirm the related argument that friction within the movement had undermined its overall political strength. However, it must be conceded that the Khalistan movement is an "easy" case against which I apply this theoretical model. The historical

evolution, universal egalitarianism, and multiple loci of authority associated with the Sikh tradition dovetail nicely with my theoretical speculations. Additionally, the presence of diverse caste, sect, and settlement identities within the Sikh diasporan community also lends itself to my claim that strong pre-coalition identities emerge as soon as an external threat recedes. The data from the Khalistan case seems readymade for my theoretical framework.

Given that a central task of social science is to make meaningful generalizations about a class of events, it is necessary to address this issue of validity.[331] How applicable is the SDM model to other cases? Could the SDM model weather a more difficult case, one in which, for example, a diasporan community is relatively undifferentiated and in which there is a strong domestic separatist movement? Would the outcome be similar to that of the Khalistan case or would it be markedly different? To answer these questions with any degree of certainty the model would have to be applied to a variety of other cases that are differentiated on both temporal and geographical lines. Thus, it would be useful to apply the SDM model to other diasporan groups such as the Tamils,[332] Kurds, Basques, Kashmiris, Jews,[333] and Croatians, who are aspiring to or have already obtained a separate homeland. If, upon examination of such varied cases, my initial hypotheses receive support, my approach to understanding the capabilities and contradictions of these movements could be seen as successful.

Limitations of the Study

This study is intended to be more suggestive than definitive and its limited scope compels me to leave some questions open or completely unaddressed. Thus

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[331] This charge is elaborated further in King et al (1994, 10).

[332] While there are currently no scholarly analyses of this, a great deal of anecdotal evidence suggests that internal division within the LTTE SDM has caused considerable friction.

[333] Applying the model to the Jewish case would be particularly useful because it is both temporally and spatially differentiated from the Sikh case. For a summary of the ideological conflicts that preceded the creation of Israel, see John Kenny's (1998) "Mobilizing Diasporas in Nationalist Conflicts: Zionism among Western Jewry."

(as stated in chapter two), while employing two or more cases would have been theoretically prudent, such an analysis was not feasible because of several logistical constraints. Moreover, given my focus on intra-diasporan relations, a number of important issues relating to ethnonatiolism were accorded a cursory treatment. For example, the impact that the insurrection in the Punjab had on the internal stability of the Khalistan SDM is alluded to but remains largely unexplored. Additionally, while there is an emphasis on events in both the hostland and homeland that account for variations in solidarity, there is no discussion of international political developments (such as the end of the Cold War) that might have influenced the movement's trajectory. Finally, while this study claims that diasporas are important actors in separatist conflicts in the homeland, I have been unable to establish the degree of their importance in relation to the domestic separatist movement in determining the final outcome. In the next part of the chapter, nevertheless, I do explore the ways in which SDMs affect the dynamics of ethnoseparatist conflicts.

The Political Potential of Separatist Diasporan Movements (SDMs)

This study was motivated by the idea that diasporas constitute important actors whose role in ethnoseparatist conflicts must be more thoroughly appreciated and understood. In situating diasporan political power within the context of ethnic conflict, some key assumptions were made. First, diasporas, or as articulated in this thesis, "Separatist Diasporan Movements" (SDMs), possess "real" political power vis-à-vis their homelands. This means that they can affect the material outcome of political events in their erstwhile countries. The second assumption is that such power is acquired at the expense of the home state. The corollary is that SDMs (an epiphenomenon of globalization) pose a noteworthy challenge to state sovereignty.

However, the empirical findings that emerge from the Khalistan case appear to strongly counter these initial premises. As demonstrated throughout this

study, the Khalistan SDM is not a strong, cohesive political entity that enjoys unanimous support but rather a fragmented movement composed of a number of weak, shifting coalitions. It possesses neither the legitimacy nor the authority to represent Sikhs to the wider international community. Moreover, even within the Sikh community, its influence and appeal have been waning in the last few years. If the Sikh case is modal, the instability and volatility intrinsic to SDMs may strip them of the capacity to challenge a state's sovereignty or security. Two questions thus remain: Do SDMs have the power to pose challenges to state power, if not sovereignty? If so, how?

Despite their weakness and instability, there are several ways in which SDMs have the potential to challenge state power. First, they have greater fund-raising capabilities than their counterpart homeland movements. Given that contemporary ethnoseparatist struggles (with notable exception[334]) are mostly waged by disadvantaged communal groups in developing countries, this point becomes particularly salient.[335] Particularly when an SDM's constituent groups are located in economically wealthy regions, such as North America and Western Europe, and the homeland movement is located in a less affluent country, the real value of foreign currencies raised and remitted is considerably amplified upon reaching the homeland. These diasporan remittances constitute an important source of funding for the arms and organization that are crucial to the maintenance of the domestic separatist struggle. These monies thus contribute towards sustaining guerilla movements and prolonging ethnic conflicts, which consequently weakens the financial, military, and bargaining strength of the opposing state. For example, one report estimates that the cost of the counterinsurgency in the Punjab during the 1984-1999 period (excluding army

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[334] For example, the nationalist movements in Quebec and Ireland.
[335] As of December 1998, there were 412 known armed political movements across the globe. Of these, the majority comprised ethnopolitical organizations that were based in developing countries.

operations) was approximately 80,000 million Rupees[336] (Singh, Gurharpal 2000, 167). According to Sengupta (2000), this phenomenon is also manifest in other ethnoseparatist conflicts such as the one in Sri Lanka between the Sinhalese majority government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) separatists.

Moreover, the internal differentiation and lack of an overarching authority, which is characteristic of a SDM, are at once its strength and weakness. As the Khalistan case illustrates, SDMs comprise a number of groups that range across a wide ideological spectrum. For example, in the Khalistan SDM the Council of Khalistan eschews violence, while other more militant groups such as the Babbar Khalsa and ISYF harbor no such reservations. I have demonstrated that the numerous internecine disputes that have emerged may be attributed to an overarching lack of authority within the Khalistan movement, and this has important, albeit contradictory, implications. On the one hand, the lack of authority coupled with incessant factionalism, results in an erosion of an SDM's overall political power in relation to homeland state actors. On the other hand, this same lack of authority strengthens some factions within the movement. Because no single group within an SDM enjoys uncontested authority or legitimacy, moderate groups find it difficult to harness more militant factions and restrain radicals and hotheads. The latter thus enjoy considerable latitude in furthering the separatist agenda by resorting to violence and terrorism. This, in turn, may accord moderate factions increased political leverage, because in order to curb terrorism governments and international agencies may be driven to negotiate with the moderates. Thus, ironically, SDMs have the potential to be powerful political actors not because they are strong, stable entities, but, on the contrary, *precisely* because they are internally fragmented and unstable.

For a list of these groups, see the Leiden University web site at ;<http://www.fsw.leidenuniv.nl/www/w3_liswo/WORLD1.HTM>.

The political power of SDMs also derives from what K. N. Malik (1997) refers to as their "nuisance value." Given the relatively unfettered political environments in which SDM participant groups operate, they are able to criticize and embarrass home governments without fear of reprisal. As recounted in chapter five, several Khalistani groups based in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States have waged a sustained public relations campaign to embarrass the Indian government by highlighting human rights abuse and state repression in the Punjab. Additionally, many continue to demonstrate at Indian state-sponsored events such as independence celebrations and other nationalist commemorations.

Finally, although SDMs in themselves are relatively weak, the scope and range of their activities have been expanded by recent technological innovations.[337] As the discussion in chapter six illustrates, technologies that transcend earlier time and space constraints have the potential to generate a new kind of transnational civil society with a shared consciousness. It is gradually becoming clear that these technologies will increasingly be deployed by SDMs and other exile groups to achieve their respective political objectives. This has significant theoretical implications for the interplay between state sovereignty and international migration.

Globalization and Separatist Diasporan Movements (SDMs)

As stated at the outset of this dissertation, there has been a recent resurgence of interest within the scholarly community regarding the present and future political role of diasporas. This rekindling of academic interest has been sparked by the emergence of new sociopolitical phenomena generated by the "new" global economy and revolutionary advances in the fields of transportation, communication, and information technology. A result of these technological

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[336] Approximately $2,004 million.

[337] For pioneering research on cyber-oppositional groups, see Dr. Michael Dartnell's "Insurgency Online" project at <http://www.yorku.ca/research/ionline/elop.html>.

advances is that human migrations will not merely continue in their previous incarnation but will dramatically change in both size and form.[338] As discussed in chapter six, cyber technologies in particular will increasingly transform diasporan communities in hitherto unanticipated ways. Such changes, in turn, will significantly alter the complex triadic relationships that exist between diasporas, their host countries, and their homelands.

Two incipient developments within the context of globalization deserve mention here, as they both possess the potential to impinge on both homeland and hostland politics. The first concerns the nexus between recent migrants and terrorism. While there is no conclusive evidence, it may be surmised that most of the more militant of the Khalistanis tend to be more recent arrivals (mostly refugees), who belong predominantly to the Jat caste and who exhibit a high degree of adherence to Khalsa traditions. The logic driving such an assessment is that those who fled the Punjab more recently are likely to have experienced Indian state repression at its worst and are thus more likely to take a more militant stance regarding separatism. While this is true in many cases, in others, the logic of cause and effect becomes somewhat more nebulous.

According to a *Frontline* report by Praveen Swami (1997), case studies prepared by the Punjab Police Intelligence reveal that growing numbers of illegal immigrants with no prior involvement in the Khalistan movement are being recruited by Khalistan militant groups only *after* they settle in Europe.[339] The dynamics of this innovative brand of recruitment follows a particular sequence, outlined as follows. The first phase occurs when "travel agents" arrange for the migrants' passage to various destinations in Europe. After they are dispatched at their respective destinations, they are summarily abandoned with no assistance or

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[338] The impact of migration on state sovereignty is examined in Kurt Mills' "Permeable Borders: Human Migration and Sovereignty" (1996).

317

support. Many work illegally in menial, low-paid jobs and are under constant threat of arrest by immigration authorities. It is at this point that the second phase of the process is set in motion. At this stage, many of these illegal immigrants are befriended by Khalistani militants, who offer them various types of practical assistance[340] in exchange for support for the movement. One such recruit, Kuldeep Singh (who had no record of involvement in the Khalistan movement while resident in the Punjab), arrived in Belgium where he was befriended by the ISYF president, Parsan Singh. Following that meeting, Kuldeep Singh became a leading activist in the militant Khalistan Commando Force (KCF) and is alleged to have returned to India armed with various bomb-making materials and detonation devices. He is now one of the most wanted terrorists in the Punjab. As several recent reports[341] indicate, the nexus between human smuggling and terrorist groups is not confined to the Sikh community. Numerous other groups such as the pro-Eelam Tamils have also been accused of engaging in such practices.

The second development that has been shaped by globalization relates to the recent upsurge in demand for skilled professionals in the high-tech industry in both Europe and North America. Many states, including Britain, the United States, and Germany, have become acutely aware that they currently face, and will continue to face, critical labor shortages in this sector and are in the process

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[339] As Swami (1997) highlights, many youth in Doaba, actively distanced themselves from the Khalistan movement to avoid police records that could jeopardize their future prospects of emigrating legally, though marriage or through the sponsorship of relatives.

[340] Often times, such assistance encompasses providing forged passports, work papers, and other documents that vouch for their legal status.

[341] See for example, the following online articles: "CID Bust Another Multi Billion Rupee Human Smuggling LTTE Operation" in the *Daily News*, 17 May 2000 <http://www.lanka.net./lakehouse/ 2000/05/17/new00.html>; Ajit Jain's "LTTE Link With Human Smuggling Racket Alleged," in *India Abroad*, April 7 2000 <http://www.indiaabroadonline.com/ PublicAccess/ia-04072000/ TheWorld/LTTElink.html>; "LTTE Link with Human Smuggling Racket Exposed," in *The Times of India*, 26 March 2000 <http:www.sinhale.org/280301.htm>.

of formulating various new legislation to address the issue.[342] Much of this legislation focuses on the reformulation of immigration policies that would facilitate the entry of highly skilled workers such as computer scientists, programmers, and software engineers from other countries. Indians[343] in particular would be prime beneficiaries of such legislation, given their traditional emphasis on the sciences and their access to institutions such as the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT). The migration of Indian high-tech workers (including Sikhs) to both Germany and the United States is already underway and it will be merely a matter of time before this phenomenon factors into the politics of diaspora.[344]

Conclusion

With the gradual dissolution of traditional state boundaries, it will no longer be possible to contain ethnonationalist conflict and its devastation within the confines of any one territorial state. As the Khalistan SDM demonstrates, ethnic conflict will not be merely something that happens "out there" in Asia, Africa, or Latin America, but will increasingly be imported "over here" to Europe and North America. Moreover, the recent xenophobic ethos that has

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[342] At the beginning of 2000, German Chancellor Gerard Schroeder declared that Germany required at least 20,000 Information Technology (IT) personnel from India, if Germany were to catch up with the global IT revolution. To this end, in August 2000, Germany implemented a "Green Card" (temporary work permits, that are different from US "Green Cards") scheme that allows IT professionals from India to work in Germany for a five year-period. However, out of 20,000 work permits that have been allotted, only 5,000 have been issued. Many foreign IT workers have been deterred from applying for them because of the five-year term limit stipulation. Instead, they are increasingly choosing the United States over Germany, which has recently introduced a proposal in Congress to expand the quota of H1-B visas (professional category visas that serve as an eventual springboard for permanent resident status). For more see, Allen Mendonca's (2000) article.

[343] Other beneficiaries include the Chinese, who have also placed a great emphasis on the natural sciences in their curricula.

[344] The arrival of a large number of high-tech workers from India has coincided with a sharp rise in racist attacks against members of the Indian community. If Germany's proposal to increase Indian recruitment continues, the issue of racism will play a pivotal role in Indian-German diplomatic relations. For more on the subject, see Manik Mehta (2000).

reared itself in many policies of the Right in Europe, the United States, and Canada will further serve to propel non-white immigrants towards their homeland for approbation. Despite the importance of this phenomenon within the context of ethnonationalist conflict and resolution, it has yet to receive commensurate attention from either the academic community or governmental officials. Discussing the Khalistan issue, Madhu Kishwar (1998) concludes that the Indian government needs to effectively engage Sikh diasporan groups if it wishes to provide a genuine and enduring solution in the Punjab. This is a charge that might well be extended to other governments entrenched within the chaos rendered by ethnonationalist conflict.

Appendix

Appendix A

PANJABI NATIONAL CHARTER[345]
Issued by the Session of the Panthic Committee
And the Council of Khalistan, held in London on 29th April, 1998

ARTICLE 1: Des *Panjab*[346] is the land of the entire *Panjabi* people. There they developed into their present political, socio-economic, cultural, and spiritual entity that they are now. They are united to it through their history, traditions, customs, and their labour. It is their National Homeland.

ARTICLE 2: Resolute throughout that history, the *Panjabi* people forged their Khalsa nationhood and established their sovereign Statehood but, due to foreign invasion on 29th March 1849, the country of *Panjab* was annexed into the British Indian Empire and the people were deprived of their political independence.

ARTICLE 3: *Panjabi* nationality has been transmitted from one generation to the next in the cause of history. The present illegal occupation of the *Panjabi* National Homeland by the power of the Indian State neither deprives them of that nationality nor does it negate it.

ARTICLE 4: The national gathering of the *Panjabi* people (Sarbat Khalsa) at Akal Takht Sahib (political headquarters) at Amritsar on 26th January 1986, passed a resolution expressing their national will to establish a sovereign *Panjabi* Nation State of Khalistan. The Sarbat Khalsa also elected a Panthic Committee (national committee) to co-ordinate the movement for national independence.

ARTICLE 5: The Panthic Committee, on 29th April 1986, no longer recognizing the power and authority of the Indian State, formally proclaimed from the Akal Takht Sahib, the **Declaration of Independence** and the establishment of the *Panjabi* Republic of Khalistan. The continuing display of the emblems of the Indian State power in the countryside and towns of the *Panjabi* Homeland is illegal.

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[345] Provided by the Council of Khalistan, London, England.
[346] Italics mine.

ARTICLE 6: The present historical phase, through which the *Panjabi* people are now living, is one of national struggle for the liberation of their country.

ARTICLE 7: The *Panjabi* Republic of Khalistan is the national home where the *Panjabi* people can enjoy their collective national and cultural rights. It aims to safeguard their political and spiritual convictions and their human dignity by means of a parlimentary democratic system. The rights of all *Panjabis* will be duly protected and governance will be based on the principles of social justice, equality, and non-discrimination in civil and political rights. No discrimination on grounds of race, religion, political opinion, sex or other status will be accepted.

ARTICLE 8: The *Panjabi* Republic of Khalistan commits itself to the promotion and protection of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It also commits itself to the protection of the environment and global nuclear disarmament.

ARTICLE 9: The Panthic Committee rejects all solutions which are substitutes for the total liberation of the *Panjabi* Homeland.

ARTICLE 10: The *Panjabi* Republic of Khalistan extends support and solidarity to all peoples movements waging their struggle for national independence and is desirous of creating a South Asian Union of sovereign Nation States.

ARTICLE 11: The *Panjabi* Republic of Khalistan herewith declares that it believes in the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means, but will not forfeit its right to defend its independence.

ARTICLE 12: The *Panjabi* Republic of Khalistan calls upon the United Nations Organization and upon all peace and freedom loving peoples and States to assist in the attainment of its objectives, to help to terminate the illegal Indian occupation and to recognize the *Panjabi* Republic.

Glossary

Ādi Granth	Sacred scripture of the Sikhs compiled by Guru Arjan in 1603-4. Known in its final form as the Guru Granth Sahib.
Akāl Purakh	The "Timeless One;" God.
Akāl Takhat	Literally "the throne of the Timeless One." The principal center of Sikh temporal authority, located immediately adjacent to the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple).
Akāli	In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a zealot Sikh soldier; in the twentieth century, a member of the Sikh political party the Akali Dal.
Akālī Dal	Major Sikh political party in the Punjab.
Akhand Kirtani Jātha	An orthodox Sikh organization headed by Amarjit Kaur, whose husband was killed in the Amritsar clash with the Sant Nirankaris in April 1978. They are known for their devotion and all-night hymn singing sessions.
amrit	"Nectar of immortality." Baptismal water used in the Khalsa initiation ceremony.
Amrit-dhārī	Sikh who has "taken amrit." An initiated member of the Khalsa.
Aryā Samāj	Hindu reform movement in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
Asali Nirankaris	Literally "True Nirankaris" or those who worship the "formless one." Members of the Nirankari Sikh sect, follower of Baba Dayal (1783-1855) and his successors. They actively distinguish themselves from the controversial Sant Nirankaris.
Baba	"Father;" term of respect accorded to holy men.

Babbar Khalsa	"Tigers of the true faith." A Sikh militant separatist group.
Baisākhi	Harvest festival celebrated by both Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab. Sometimes spelled as "Vaisakhi."
Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP)	Hindu nationalist political party that is committed to the concept of "Hindutva," i.e., Hindu cultural nationalism.
Bhatra	Small caste of peddlers and magicians, who originate mainly from the Sialkot and Hoshiarpur Districts.
Brahmin	Member of the highest Hindu caste that was originally composed of priests.
Dal Khalsa	"Party of the Eternal One." Militant Sikh separatist group.
Damdami Taksal	Literally translates into "Mint of Damdama;" a school of orthodox Sikh theology that now exists as a formal organization.
Darbar Sahib	The Golden Temple. Also known as the Harmandir Sahib.
Dīvalī	Festival of lights, celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs in the lunar month of Katak.
Diwān	Royal court; term used to refer to a Sikh worship service or Sikh congregation.
Ghadār Movement	Revolutionary movement that sought to expel the British from India. It originated among immigrant laborers in the west coast of the United States and Canada shortly before World War I.
giānī	Eminent Sikh scholar or learned man; Sikh theologian.
granthī	Reader of the Guru Granth Sahib. Also, a custodian of a gurdwārā.

Grihastha Dharma	Life/way of the householder.
gurdwārā	Literally, "the door to the guru." A Sikh temple.
Gurmuhkī	Literally, "from the mouth of the guru." The script in which the Punjabi language is written.
gurū	Religious teacher, preceptor.
Gurū Gobind Singh	The tenth and last temporal Guru of the Sikhs (1666-1708). Founder of the Khalsa order.
Gurū Granth Sahib	Adi Granth in its final form. The Sikh scripture specifically in its role as guru.
Gurū Nanak	The first Guru (1469-1539); considered to be the founder of Sikhism.
Gurū Panth	The Panth (Sikh community) in its role as guru.
Ham Hindu Nahin!	Literally "We are not Hindu!" A popular aphorism that appears in certain Sikh publications to emphasize Sikhism's distinctiveness from Hinduism.
Harmandir Sahib	"Temple of God." The central Sikh shrine in Amritsar, commonly known as the "Golden Temple."
hukamnāmā	Religious decree or edict.
Ik-Oankar	Common Sikh symbol, which combines the Gurmukhi numeral 1 and the letter O taken from the Adi Granth. It represents the unity of God. "One Oanker" or "One Being."
izzāt	Punjabi notion of honor, prestige, status.
janam-sākhi	Hagiographic narrative, especially with regard to Guru Nanak's life.
Jāt	Punjabi rural caste, numerically dominant in the Sikh community.

jathedār	Commander of a military detachment; chief officiant of a Sikh institution.
kachh	Undergarments that consist of a short pair of breeches that ends below the knees. One of the " Five Ks."
kanghā	Wooden comb, worn as one of the "Five Ks."
karā	Steel bangle, worn as one of the "Five Ks."
Kaur	Literally "princess;" last name given to all female Sikhs at their baptism.
kes	Uncut hair. One of the "Five Ks."
Kes-dhārī	Sikh who retains the kes (uncut hair).
Khālistān	Meaning "Land of the Pure." Moniker for the aspirant independent Sikh homeland.
Khālistān Zindabad!	"Long live Khalistan!" A popular Sikh separatist proclamation.
Khālsā	The order of the "pure ones." The fraternity of baptized Sikhs founded by Guru Gobind Singh on Baisakhi Day in 1699.
khanda	Two-edged sword; the modern insignia of the Khalsa.
Khatri	Mercantile upper caste that is found among both Hindus and Sikhs. All ten Gurus were Khatri by caste.
kirpān	Sword or dagger worn as one of the "Five Ks."
Kukā or Kooka Sikh	Member of the Namdhari sect of Sikhs. The name derives from their distinct form of worship that is similar to that of the Sufi dervishes. Their whirling and chanting culminates in a state of ecstasy (Hal) at which point they emit shrieks (Kooks) hence, their name.
langar	Kitchen/refectory attached to every gurdwara from

which food is served to all regardless of caste or creed; the communal meal served from such a kitchen.

mahant	Overseer of a religious establishment; they were the custodians of the gurdwaras until their disestablishment in 1925.
Maharajah	Title given to an Indian ruler.
miri-piri	Doctrine that the guru possesses both temporal (miri) and spiritual (piri) authority.
misl	Military cohort of the mid-eighteenth century Khalsa.
Monā	Sikh who cuts his hair.
nakāli	Spurious, false.
Nakāli Nirankāris	Literally "false Nirankaris." A Sikh sect considered heretical by orthodox Sikhs. Differentiated from the Asali Nirankaris.
Nāmdhāri	Reform sect within Sikhism founded by Balak Singh and Ram Singh. Adherents are also known as "Kuka Sikhs."
Nanak-panth	The community of Nanak's followers. The early Sikh community. Later also referred to members of the Sikh community who did not adhere to Khalsa symbols.
Nirankār	Literally "formless one." A name used by Guru Nanak to describe "Akal Purakh" (God).
Nirankāris	Members of the Nirankari Sikh sect, followers of Baba Dayal (1783-1855) and his successors.
Nishān Sahib	Khalsa flag that flies over every gurdwara. It is usually triangular in shape and saffron in color.
pāhul	Khalsa initiation/baptismal ceremony.
panj kakke, panj kakar	The "Five Ks." The five external symbols, each beginning with "k," which members of the Khalsa must

display at all times.

panj piare	The "five beloved ones." The first five Sikhs to be initiated as members of the Khalsa in 1699. Also applied to five Sikhs in good standing chosen to represent a sangat.
panthic	Relating to the Panth; affairs of the Panth.
patashas	Sugar crystals mixed in with water to make the amrit that is used in the Khalsa initiation ceremony.
patit	Apostate or one who has been excommunicated.
Purakh Gurū	Namdhari work that challenges the authenticity of certain passages in the Guru Granth Sahib. Considered heretical by orthodox Sikhs.
quām	"A people who stand together;" loosely "the Sikh nation."
Rāhit Maryada	Code of conduct of the Khalsa that all amrit-dhari Sikhs vow to observe at their baptism.
rāj Karegā Khalsa!	Literally "The Khalsa shall rule!" Popular rallying cry of the Khalsa army leader Banda Bahadur Singh, a follower of Guru Gobind, who managed to thwart Mughal power for several years in the eighteenth century. This proclamation reverberates in the rhetoric of many contemporary Khalistani groups.
Rāmgārhia	Sikh artisan caste, which includes carpenters, blacksmiths, and masons (Hindus classify it as the Tarkan caste).
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)	Hindu paramilitary organization that was founded in 1925. It preaches a militant brand of Hindu revivalism and has employed a variety of incendiary tactics in order to return Sikhs into the Hindu fold.
Ravidāsi	Sikh caste of former "untouchables" who once belonged to the Hindu Chamar (leather worker) caste.

sahaj-dhāri Sikh	Non-Khalsa Sikh; an "innate" Sikh, i.e., not marked by outward symbols.
sangat	Congregation; gathering of worshippers.
Sānt	One who knows the truth; one who is renowned as a teacher.
Sānt Nirankāris	Otherwise known as the Nakāli Nirankāris or "false Nirankaris;" Considered heretical by orthodox Sikhs.
sānt-Sipahis	Saint-soldiers. The "ideal Sikh" who would possess the qualities of a holy man as well as the martial attributes of a soldier.
sat	Meaning "Truth"; that which genuinely exists. An important spiritual concept in Sikhism.
shaheed/shahid	Martyr. The concept of martyrdom, which is probably rooted in the Punjab's Mughal heritage, plays a prominent role in Sikh history and tradition.
Shiromanī Gurdwārā Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)	"Central Gurdwara Management Committee." A politically powerful body that controls gurdwaras in the Punjab.
Singh	Literally "Lion." Last name given to all Sikh males at their initiation into the Khalsa.
Singh Sabha	Sikh reform movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
sishya	Disciple. Etymological origin of the label "Sikh."
takhat	Literally "throne;" one of the Panth's centers of temporal authority.
tankhaia	Apostate. A Sikh who is found guilty of violating the Sikh code of conduct.

Tat Khālsā	"Pure" Khalsa; also means "True" Khalsa. Sikh reform movement in the early twentieth century.
Udāsi	Meaning "those who renounce;" an order of ascetics founded by Guru Nanak's son Sri Chand.
Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Weheguru ji ki Fateh!	"Hail to the Guru's Khalsa, hail to the Guru's victory!" The greeting of the Khalsa and a popular Sikh proclamation.

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351

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363

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