

India is Reviving an Old Narrative in Its Anti-Khalistan Infowar

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The influential Indian online opinion outlet Daily O is reviving the old narrative that the Khalistani cause is supposedly backed by Pakistan and therefore represents a betrayal of Sikh interests as part of the latest stage of the state's increasingly desperate infowar that it's waging against this popular separatist movement.

India already lost the battle for hearts and minds when it comes to the Khalistani cause after worldwide awareness of this movement skyrocketed following the Sikhs For Justice's (SFJ) global flag-raising protests last week during India's "Independence Day" (which [isn't recognized as such](#) by the Sikh community) and famous Punjabi-born but UK-based rapper Hard Kaur's [fierce resistance](#) to her home country's intimidation campaign against her for her widely publicized support of this movement. It's therefore unsurprising that the state is reviving its old narrative that the separatists are supposedly backed by Pakistan and therefore are traitors to their fellow Sikhs, as Harbir Singh wrote in the influential Indian online opinion outlet Daily O in his article titled "[Serving the global jihad: This is what Khalistanis supporting Pakistan are doing. And it is a betrayal of Sikhs](#)".

He began by expressing the outrage that he felt when he saw a Pakistani flag flying among Khalistani ones during a protest outside the Indian consulate in Toronto, after which he went on to describe his family's experience during the time of the subcontinent's partition. He ended by asking some rhetorical questions to his fellow Sikhs that invoked famous figures from that religion's history in order to make the point that the community shouldn't ally with Pakistan in its quest to create Khalistan, which he concluded makes anyone who's in support of this cause "ignorant, hate-filled servants of the global Jihad." It's very sad to read about what his family went through decades ago, but the understandably emotional reaction that he has to those events apparently clouded his judgement since he should have known that no such Pakistan-Khalistan alliance exists had he spent a few minutes researching the context behind the image that provoked him so much.

The SFJ's legal advisor [Gurpatwant Singh Pannun](#) announced in the run-up to the global flag-raising protests that his organization has [allied with the Kashmiris](#) out of the solidarity that their movements feel for one another as oppressed people that are denied their UN-enshrined right to self-determination, revealing that they'll be jointly participating in those demonstrations all across the world on Indian "Independence Day". By the very nature of their conflict with the Indian state, many Kashmiris are sympathetic to Pakistan and are in favor of unifying with it, which explains why some of the protests' participants waved the Pakistani flag. It wasn't because the Khalistan movement is allied to Pakistan like the Daily O's writer wrongly said that it is, but because some of its Kashmiri allies have a favorable

opinion towards India's neighbor. In fact, if Harbir had done his research ahead of time, he would have known that Pakistan curtailed the SFJ's activities in the country earlier this year and even received a [harsh rebuke](#) because of it from Pannun himself.

It might actually be the case that he was aware of this but deliberately omitted it from his article because he intended for the piece to function as "agitprop" (agitational propaganda) in provoking the Sikh community to turn against the Khalistani cause. That could also explain why he focused so much on his family's experience in Pakistan during the subcontinent's partition in order to strike a nerve with the other Sikhs that fled, which he might have hoped would then inspire them to condemn the supporters of Khalistan who they're being misled into thinking are just Pakistan's pawns instead of the members of a purely indigenous movement like they really are. About that last-mentioned point, the Khalistani cause was started by Indian-based Sikhs who finally had enough of the state's suppression of their community, which reached genocidal proportions after "[Operation Blue Star](#)", "[Operation Woodrose](#)", and the [anti-Sikh pogroms](#) (all three of which took place in 1984).

It was then joined by even more Sikhs whose family members "[disappeared](#)" during the central government's intense anti-Khalistan crackdown of the 1990s and who are nowadays afraid that history might horrifyingly repeat itself in the coming future as a result of eight states recently obtaining the [right to utilize](#) the so-called "Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act" (UAPA, which had recent amendments proposed to it that would grant the government the right to [declare anyone a "terrorist"](#) without due process) against their community. This latest development complements the government's revived narrative that Khalistan supporters are "[Pakistani-backed terrorists](#)" and raises fears that the notorious "Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act" (AFSPA) might be imposed [in part or all of Punjab](#) ahead of the region's plebiscite on independence that the SFJ are organizing through their [Referendum 2020](#) campaign.

In other words, the tragic experience that some Sikhs went through in partition-era Pakistan is in the past, yet their nightmare in India has never ended, and that's what gave rise to the Khalistan movement in the first place. The non-Sikh reader outside of the subcontinent wouldn't know that though based on how Harbir framed his article in order to smear the supporters of Khalistan as Pakistani puppets and traitors to the Sikh community. His insistence on repeating the claims that Pakistan is obsessed with waging jihad on India (apparently just because it's a Muslim country) is Islamophobic and intended to appeal to the hyper-nationalist Hindutva volkgeist of his country, but the only reason why it's even mentioned in the first place is because he ignored the fact the Pakistan curtailed the SFJ's activities earlier this year and instead pretended that it's sponsoring the movement. Only Harbir himself can account for why he wrote an entire article based on such a factually false premise, but it certainly looks like it was meant to contribute to India's anti-Khalistan infowar and divide Sikhs.

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