



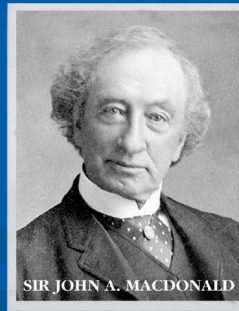
# KHALISTAN

A Project  
of Pakistan

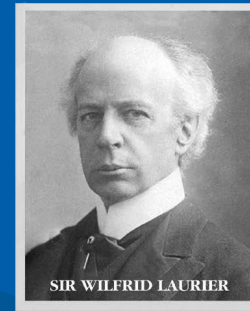
**Terry Milewski**

September 2020





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# Contents

Foreword.....	4
October surprise.....	6
Welcome to Pakistan .....	8
The bloodbath that started it all .....	12
Ask the voters .....	15
Maps tell stories .....	17
Be careful what you wish for .....	19
About the author.....	20
References.....	21
Endnotes .....	23

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# Foreword

by Ujjal Dosanjh and Shuvaloy Majumdar

“Extremists who support violent means to establish an independent state within India,” is the language that replaced, “Sikh (Khalistani) extremist ideologies and movements,” in the 2018 *Public Report on the Terrorism Threat to Canada*. The original language selected by Canada’s professional national security community came under significant pressure from an international lobby campaign that, in the name of free speech, advocates for an independent Khalistan.

This is not the first time that politicians buckled to the pressure of well-funded fringe activists, but it was the first time a Canadian (and Five Eyes) national security document succumbed to the politicization of an issue that should always be above politics: national security. In the political row last year over the language to define the problem, was hidden another first: It is the first time that the issue of an independent Khalistan had been elevated to among the top five national security issues for Canadians.

In “*Khalistan: A Project of Pakistan*” veteran journalist Terry Milewski reveals the concept of Khalistan as a project of Pakistan, designed to subvert the national security of both Canada and India.

Thirty-five years after the horrific Air India bombing, and 73 years after the independence and partition of India and Pakistan, Milewski researches the geopolitical dimensions of the Khalistan cause and its affiliations with Pakistan’s ongoing policy of practicing state terror as statecraft.

The proposition of an independent Khalistan, in truth, is a backward idea from a backward time. It is a proposal without economic or democratic logic, unloved by the very Punjabis whose lives it would most directly affect. It is a fantasy rooted in religious bigotry and chauvinism, kept alive in Canada by thugs and political hustlers unbothered by the innocent lives that have been lost in its name. It is a proposal hostile to Canada’s interest in seeing a united and prosperous India, and in that sense, threatens not just one country, but two. In

the service of this cause, extremists animated by Pakistan seek to distort history and betray the vast majority of Sikhs who live in peace and freedom.

Canadians concerned with national security issues can benefit from a deeper understanding of those enabling the concept of Khalistan. They provide a steady and predictable drumbeat of victimization, persecution and genocide commemoration, presented as steps to assist a community in need of healing. It is through this guise that the building blocks for an independent Khalistan are assembled, it is part of a stunningly orchestrated campaign that seduces the best intentions of earnest politicians, and it ensures the primacy of pain prevails over reconciliation in the wider South Asian diaspora. In November 2020 proponents of Khalistan have sought to convene a “referendum” toward independence, providing oxygen for extremist ideologies.

The Milewski report should be essential reading for any who wish to understand Pakistan’s influence in guiding the Khalistan proposition, its perversion of the Sikh faith, and its ongoing campaign of extremism and terrorism in two of the world’s important democracies.

**Ujjal Dosanjh** is a former federal Liberal Cabinet Minister and former British Columbia Premier. **Shuvaloy Majumdar** is Program Director and Munk Senior Fellow for Foreign Policy at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, and former Director of Policy to Canadian Foreign Ministers.

*Sikh separatists in the West are trying to drum up interest in a referendum on their demand for an independent state called Khalistan – meaning, Land of the Pure.*

*But India has banned the referendum and interest is low among Sikhs in India, where millions of Sikhs in their homeland of Punjab voted for a fiercely anti-separatist state government.*

*A closer look suggests that it's Pakistanis, not Khalistanis, who are driving the campaign – and their motives are not necessarily pure.*

## October surprise

Amid fields of lentils near the village of Kang Araian, six men in two Maruti cars, both with fake licence plates, approached a canal bridge in the early gloom. It was mid-October, 1992, at 5:30 in the morning. The Punjab police had been tipped off and were waiting in ambush. The six men were caught unawares, but not unprepared – far from it. With them, they had a rocket launcher, a machine gun, three AK-47s, grenades, handguns, ammunition and – always an essential additive in the Sikh struggle for independence – some well-connected Pakistanis.

The police, hiding behind farm buildings, had the advantage of cover as the six men scrambled from the cars and into the fields, firing wildly. Only the rocket launcher was left behind in the rush.

According to the official inquiry, all six gunmen were dead when the shooting stopped, and one of them was an important catch. He'd been a wanted man for ten years – a mass-murderer who is still revered as a martyr by his admirers in Canada, where he was a citizen. Talwinder Singh Parmar, the inquiry report says, kept tossing grenades to the end.

His Canadian followers insist the shootout was faked. They say Parmar was taken alive, tortured and then killed – an innocent man who fell in the cause of an independent Sikh state called Khalistan, the “Land of the Pure.”



*"Martyr" poster honouring Talwinder Singh Parmar, fixed to the Dasmesh Darbar gurdwara in Surrey, BC. Both a criminal trial and a judicial inquiry found that Parmar led the Air India bomb plot of June 1985, which took 331 lives. The picture of Parmar was taken in 1989 at a gun bazaar near the Afghan frontier in Pakistan.*

*Source: Shaheed Khalsa.*

The notion that Parmar was innocent need not detain us long. Although Canadian authorities failed to stop him, Parmar was a known threat, already wanted for murder in India when he set up shop in Canada. His home in Burnaby, BC, was watched and wiretapped as he schemed to place bombs on two Indian planes in late June of 1985. One bomb erased 329 lives aboard Air India's flight 182 from Montreal to Heathrow. The other blew up early, on the ground at Narita airport in Japan, killing two baggage handlers as they moved it to another Air India flight. Parmar's bomb-maker, a mechanic named Inderjit Singh Reyat, was convicted and confessed that he built the bombs for Parmar. Intelligence officers knew that to be true because they'd tailed the two men to a test blast, three weeks before the real thing. Even so, they didn't figure out what the suspects were planning until it was too late.

It was, by far, Canada's worst mass murder and the deadliest attack on aviation in world history until 9/11. And yet, as horrifying as that is, the number of victims amounts to only one-and-a-half percent of all the deaths piled up in more than a decade of armed struggle for Khalistan.



*The Air India memorial at Ahakista, on the southwestern coast of Ireland. Flight 182, with 329 passengers and crew, vanished from radar over the nearby Atlantic on June 23rd, 1985, en route from Montreal to London. The cause was one of two suitcase bombs, built for Talwinder Singh Parmar by Inderjit Singh Reyat. Both were Canadian citizens living in British Columbia. Their second bomb, on its way to another Air India flight, killed two baggage handlers in Tokyo.*

*Source: Terry Milewski.*

## Welcome to Pakistan

Back in the lentil fields of Kang Arian, it didn't take long to figure out that Pakistan had given refuge to the leader of the Air India plot. Parmar was easy to identify. He was a well-known fugitive whose mother lived nearby. She identified the body. The police also quickly identified two non-Sikhs who died alongside him. Both were Muslims, both carried Pakistani passports, and both traced back to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence service, the ISI.

One of the two, Intekhab Ahmed Zia, was known to both Sikh separatists and Indian police as a key contact for Khalistani militants in Pakistan – helping them with shelter, medical care and weapons as part of a clandestine but semi-official Pakistani program to “bleed” India by supporting Khalistani proxies as well as Islamist ones.

Of course, Osama bin Laden was far from the only international terrorist to find safe haven in the heartland of world terrorism – Pakistan. Talwinder Parmar was just one of many others. Less well-known, although hardly a secret, is that Pakistan backed the Khalistan movement from the very start. The Punjabi writer and broadcaster Tarek Fatah, a Muslim who lives in Canada, recalls how he heard as much in 1973, as a young journalist, from no less than Pakistan's then prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (New Delhi Times 2020).



Fatah says Bhutto told a group of reporters that Pakistan would tear off a piece of India – Khalistan – to avenge the loss of the 1971 war with India, in which East Pakistan was torn off and turned into independent Bangladesh.

“Pakistan will also have a Bangladesh carved out of India,” Bhutto promised, “except it will be on Pakistan’s border.”

But the Pakistani interest in Khalistan was not confined to revenge and it only grew more intense under his successor, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. Husain Haqqani, a former Pakistani Ambassador to Washington, says that “bleeding” India was certainly the main motive, but a second was to create a strategic “buffer” between India and Pakistan. Thirdly, he says, a state of Khalistan would “end India’s land access to Kashmir,” to the north – another key interest for the Pakistani leadership. Haqqani adds, though, that the creation of a Sikh state remains implausible, leaving only the original motivation for pursuing it: causing India pain (Haqqani 2020).

“ *The Pakistani interest in Khalistan was not confined to revenge.* ”

So far, though, that hope has been enough to keep Pakistan’s army and its political leadership interested. No matter how low the support for Khalistan sinks in India – and it has sunk very low indeed – the cause still survives in Pakistan, where jihadist groups have made common cause with Sikh separatists against their shared enemy, India.

An example is the leading Khalistani figure in Pakistan, Gopal Singh Chawla, who makes no bones about his friendly alliance with the Pakistani jihadist Hafiz Saeed, leader of the feared Lashkar-e-Taiba. Saeed directed the terrorist attacks of November 2008 that killed 166 people in Mumbai. He is now in prison. Chawla told an Indian reporter that “Hafiz Saeed is my ideal person” (Kaul 2020).

For Canadian Sikh separatists, the Pakistan connection has been problematic, but still essential. As we’ve seen, Talwinder Parmar certainly knew where to go when he fled Canada. A picture from a Pakistani gun bazaar at Darra, near the Afghan frontier, shows him in July of 1989, hefting an antique machine gun. The post-9/11 crackdown on terrorist financing ensnared another Canadian who pitched in for the cause of Khalistan. In 2006, Khalid Awan, a Muslim of Pakistani descent, was convicted by a federal jury in New York (US Attorney’s Office 2006) of giving aid to the Khalistan Commando Force, a Sikh terrorist group with thousands of killings on its record. Awan was sentenced and, after many appeals, re-sentenced to 14 years in prison (FBI 2020).

Another Canadian citizen, Satinderpal Singh Gill from Surrey, BC, actually lived for years in Pakistan as a senior official of the International Sikh Youth Federation – banned as a terrorist organization in India, Canada, the UK and the US, but not in Pakistan. More recently, two other Canadians, Bhagat Singh Brar and Parvkar Singh Dulai, are fighting their inclusion on a government no-fly list, after the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) accused them of aiding Khalistani terrorist activities in India. Brar, it said, “was among a group of individuals linked to and co-operating with the Pak ISI” (Bell 2020).

For his part, Dulai has long been a prominent figure at the Dasmesh Darbar gurdwara in Surrey, BC, where “martyr” posters of Talwinder Parmar have a place of honour. Dulai insists he has nothing to do with Sikh extremists but, until it was banned as a terrorist organization in 2003, he posted on the Internet a photo of himself wearing the colours of the Babbar Khalsa, founded by Parmar. Neither he nor Brar has been charged with any crime in Canada.

It was established that a hard core terrorist like Talwinder Singh Parmar had been staying in Pakistan for long periods and sending supplies of weapons to India. Ghulam Nabi Baba, a Kashmiri terrorist, after being imparted training in sabotage and subversive activities by the Government of Pakistan, was given a cover identity, Pakistani identity card, Pakistani passport etc. and infiltrated into India. A Pakistani national Intekhab Ahmed Zia with strong linkages with Pak intelligence was sent to India who personally engaged himself in acts of terrorism by joining hands with one of the most dreaded Sikh terrorist gangs led by Talwinder Singh Parmar. While the Committee based its findings on the open evidence brought on record, it also had an opportunity to go through lot of classified material which irrevocably established that Pakistan has been active in providing weapons to the terrorists, training them in use of explosives and fire arms, providing safe sanctuaries to

*A page from an Indian inquiry committee report on the death of Air India bomber Talwinder Singh Parmar, and of the two Muslim companions who died with him in Punjab on October 15th, 1992. This report was tabled at Justice John Major's Air India Inquiry.*



*In a frame from a 2015 video, a Khalistani leader in Pakistan, Gopal Singh Chawla, meets Hafiz Saeed, leader of the Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist group. Chawla called Saeed "my ideal person."*

*Source: The Tribune 2018.*

*In another photo from his 1989 visit to the weapons market in Darra, near the Afghan border, Talwinder Parmar poses with a machine gun. He was equipped with something similar when he died in 1992.*

*Source: Shaheed Khalsa.*





*Parvkar Singh Dulai of the Dasmesh Darbar gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia, in a photo he posted before the Babbar Khalsa, founded by Talwinder Parmar, was banned as a terrorist organization.*

*Source: CBC News 2007.*

## The bloodbath that started it all

All of these sub-plots may seem remarkable in themselves, but Pakistan's role in nurturing the cause of Khalistan, given the grim historical backdrop, is more remarkable still. Like so much else in the region, that history inevitably goes back to the trauma of India's partition in 1947.

Although precise numbers are hard to come by, there is little doubt that a million people died – Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs – in a hellish cycle of massacres and retaliatory massacres when the British quit India and carved it into two countries – a mainly-Hindu India and a mainly-Muslim Pakistan. The Sikhs got no country of their own and their Punjab homeland was sliced in two.

It was hardly their homeland exclusively, though. Before partition, according to a 1941 census (Punjab Partition Forum 2018), Sikhs had no special claim to the undivided Punjab, where Muslims were in the majority, at 53 percent, followed by Hindus with 29 percent and Sikhs with 15 percent of the population. But partition forced each group to fight for turf and to consolidate where it could best survive, resulting in a gigantic migration propelled by ethnic cleansing on an apocalyptic scale. Millions of Muslims were driven west out of India and millions of Hindus and Sikhs were forced east out of the new Pakistan.



*Indian Sikh demonstrators at the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi, protesting forced conversions of Sikhs and other minorities in Pakistan, September 2, 2019.*

*Source: ANI 2019.*

Sikh gangs did their share of the killing, but a quarter of a million Sikhs, perhaps more, lay among the dead. Today, their elimination from Pakistan is not quite complete but, under the threat of forced conversions, attacks on gurdwaras and worsening discrimination against all religious minorities in Pakistan, fewer than ten thousand Sikhs remain where once there were two million. This, in a country which supposedly stands for their liberation from oppression.

It does not fit the Khalistani narrative, to say the least, that Pakistan's treatment of its shrinking Sikh minority has brought angry demonstrations to the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi. Rather, it makes it all the more bizarre that undying solidarity with Pakistan has become a kind of theme song for the American lawyer, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who leads Sikhs For Justice, the driving force in the campaign for a referendum on Sikh independence.

Although he claims to lead a movement for "human rights," Pannun has unblushingly sided with China in its border dispute with India and recently wrote to Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, swearing that, "if India ever attacked Pakistan, the Pro-Khalistan Sikhs will extend full support to Pakistan."<sup>1</sup>

The prime minister was surely touched. But, in truth, the Khalistan movement would be of very little use in a conflict, given the lack of support it commands

even in Punjab – the only Indian state with a Sikh majority. There are good reasons for this.

According to an official count by the Punjab Police (K.P.S. Gill Undated), the 12 years of Sikh insurgency ending in 1993 were scarred by hijackings, stabbings, shootings and bombings which took a staggering 21,469 lives – and most of the victims, whether civilian, police or separatist fighters, were Sikh. Fourteen hundred Punjab policemen were murdered, along with many of their family members. Farmers, judges, teachers, journalists, bankers who lent to the wrong people, and delivery men who brought the wrong newspapers were all butchered.

“ *The blood-soaked effort to create  
Khalistan was an economic  
disaster for Punjab.* ”

Much of the violence was driven by groups of puritanical Sikh fundamentalists who demanded strict religious observance and killed, with equal zeal, both Hindus and Sikhs deemed insufficiently devout. When a schoolteacher failed to ensure that her students wore proper religious dress, she was shot dead. When the Babbar Khalsa decreed that family planning was forbidden for Sikhs, seven doctors who defied the order were all murdered.

The scale of the bloodletting, among many other things, renders darkly absurd the “Truther” theory, often advanced by separatists in Canada, that it was not Talwinder Parmar but the Indian government that blew up Air India flight 182. It was a false-flag operation, they say, to make the separatist cause look bad. Never explained is why the deaths of a few hundred Canadians would make the separatists look bad, if the deaths of many thousands of Indians did not.

But even this brief summary of the slaughter, and the one before that, and the one before that, leaves little cause to wonder that the great majority of Sikhs have no appetite for another independence struggle. Every household knows that the blood-soaked effort to create Khalistan was an economic disaster for Punjab, once known as the prosperous “breadbasket” of India. Add to this dismal past the fear that in the future, an independent Khalistan seems most unlikely to be truly independent – of Pakistan.

## Ask the voters

Already in decline at the end of the 20th century, the separatists' critique of Indian perfidy suffered further erosion during the early years of the 21st century, thanks to the long career of Manmohan Singh, a Sikh economist who was born in what is now the Pakistani part of Punjab and, as a teenager, was forced by partition to migrate to India. As finance minister and then during 10 years as prime minister until 2014, Manmohan Singh revolutionized the Indian economy by lowering taxes, selling off sleepy state enterprises and courting foreign investment.

Singh also, on a visit to Toronto in 2010, made a point of condemning Sikh extremism on Canadian soil. "Sikh extremism, separatism and militancy were a problem in India more than two decades ago," he said. "Today, Punjab is at peace and there is growth and prosperity."

Nothing undiplomatic about that – but he wasn't done. Canadians who were hoping Singh would not point his finger at Canada specifically were out of luck. He went on, "there are, however, some elements outside India, including in Canada, who try to keep this issue alive for their own purposes. In many cases, such elements have links to or are themselves wedded to terrorism."<sup>2</sup>



*The Khalistan movement  
has been going nowhere  
in the Sikhs' home state.*

Coming from a turbaned, bearded and popular Sikh leader of India, Singh's remarks resoundingly gave the lie to claims by Sikh separatists to speak for the global Sikh community. Instead, although politicians in Canada often credit such claims, the Khalistan movement has been going nowhere in the Sikhs' home state, where 90 percent of all the world's Sikhs still live.

The most recent Punjab elections (Election Commission of India 2018), in 2017, saw a 77 percent turnout in a state where 58 percent of voters are Sikh. And the result? Millions of them voted to install a fervently anti-separatist Sikh, Capt. Amarinder Singh, as Chief Minister. Not only did he win handily, but more than half of his seats were won in majority-Sikh districts and the region with the highest proportion of Sikhs, Taran Taran, gave his Congress Party all of its seats.

Once in power, Capt. Amarinder soon won glowing reviews in the Punjabi media for accusing prime minister Justin Trudeau of harbouring Sikh separatists in the Canadian cabinet. He relented when Trudeau visited in 2018 and pledged respect for the unity of India, but returned to his original theme in 2019, when he urged UN sanctions against Canada for failing to crack down on the Khalistan movement. As he noted in his statement, “India had, for too long, been soft towards Canada and needed to crack its whip aggressively, even seek UN sanctions if needed, to end the growing threat once and for all” (quoted in Blackwell 2019).

Even more striking, though, is a part of the Punjab election results which is forgotten, way down near the end of the also-rans. That’s where we find the only party to offer a separatist platform in that election: a splinter group of the venerable Shiromani Akali Dal.

It barely surpassed zero in its share of the vote: 0.32 percent.

It’s worth pausing to think about this microscopic harvest of votes. Of course, there were many other issues in the campaign. But imagine: only a third of one percent voted for an independent state – this, after decades of separatists denouncing India as not just oppressive but genocidal.

On that score, let it be said plainly that no Sikh could or should forget the vicious pogroms which took thousands of Sikh lives in 1984, after the assassination of prime minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. But it’s possible, if you’re a Punjabi Sikh whose grandparents were among hundreds of thousands hacked to death by Muslim mobs, that you have your own perspective on where the danger lies.

Besides that, it might seem that half a century is long enough to show that the Khalistan movement may be achieving Pakistan’s goal – bleeding India – but is nowhere close to the Khalistanis’ goal – an independent state. It’s all the stranger, then, that in the UK and especially in Canada, relations with India are often seen through a Khalistani prism, as if separatism is what Sikh immigrants are all about.

By contrast, those who really are focused on separatism seem to know quite well that it’s not popular. The World Sikh Organization (WSO), for example, was founded to strive for a Sikh state. That’s Article II of its constitution and was posted on the WSO website – that is, until a CBC documentary mentioned it in 2007. Then, the constitution and the entire website suddenly disappeared from the Internet. It later reappeared, scrubbed of any mention of the constitution or its mission to create Khalistan, although the mission has not changed. Since then, the WSO avoids the topic unless pressed.



Challenged about Article II, a WSO board member and former Executive Director, Jaskaran Sandhu (2020), responded as follows on Twitter: “As for the ‘separatist’ – the Akal Takht Jathedar just said the other week ‘All Sikhs want Khalistan & will accept it’. That’s the highest temporal seat of Sikh authority. The fact you think talking about Khalistan is some fringe thing is such a teller of how out of touch you are.”

Of course, it’s not Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, or his millions of supporters, who are “some fringe thing.” It’s the tiny fraction of Sikhs who voted for separatism. Even so, from Surrey, British Columbia to Brampton, Ontario, Canadian politicians of both left and right often assume that separatist groups such as the WSO and Sikhs for Justice speak for the Sikh community.

The evidence, instead, suggests that they speak for Pakistan.

## Maps tell stories

If more evidence of that were needed, consider also the curious maps of Khalistan offered by the referendum campaigners.

At first glance, these maps show an expansive new nation reaching far beyond Punjab into several other Indian states, even including New Delhi. But look again – and notice how this ambitious agenda suddenly evaporates when it comes to the other half of historic Punjab, now in Pakistan. In fact, the proposed Khalistan does not reach one inch into traditional Sikh lands in Pakistan – not to Lahore, where Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled over a Sikh empire two hundred years ago, or even to Nankana Sahib, sacred birthplace of Guru Nanak, the first Sikh guru. Needless to say, these lie at the heart of Sikh culture and history.

It appears, then, that Pakistan wants the Sikhs to be free, but not in Pakistan. The separatists, in turn, clearly know where their patron sets the limits. Even drawing a map which presumes upon Pakistan’s generosity is a step too far – one that could sever the lifeline which has sustained the dream of Khalistan for so long. Judging by the silence, even the fiercest Khalistanis feel they must accept this abbreviated, Pakistani version of their new country without a murmur of dissent.

Husain Haqqani, the former Pakistani Ambassador to the US, is blunt about this. The maps show, he says, that “groups like Sikhs for Justice are not willing to forgo Pakistani support.”

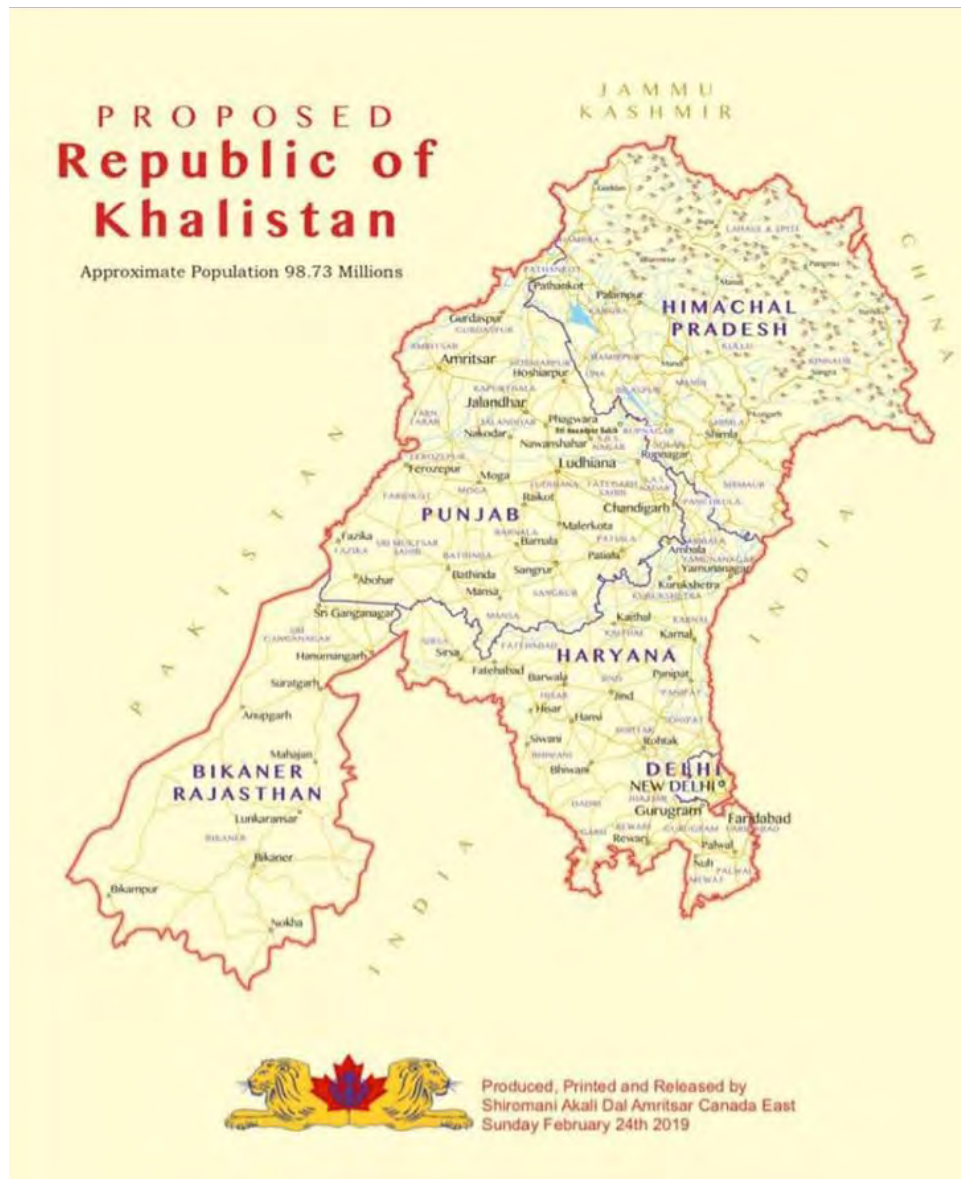
Now at a Washington think-tank, the Hudson Institute, Haqqani is freer to talk than he was as a diplomat and he does not see the fixation with “bleeding”

India as productive for his country. Nor does he see the Khalistan project as remotely feasible, given the power of the Indian state.

As for Canadian Khalistanis, he says, “these people are just being used...there’s no practical way they’re going to get anywhere.” He adds that “Khalistanis in Canada have very little stake in Punjab or India. It’s easy for them to live in a fantasy world – while those who live in Punjab and India live in the real world” (Haqqani 2020).

*Map of the proposed Khalistan posted on Facebook by Sikhs For Justice in 2019. It includes several Indian states besides Punjab – and even Delhi – but omits any traditional Sikh lands in Pakistan.*

*Source: Sikhs for Justice 2019.*



## Be careful what you wish for

Fantasy or not, though, it's clear who's really driving the Khalistan bus: Pakistan – the same Pakistan where countless Sikhs were murdered and expelled in the name of Islam. What's more, while separatist Sikhs complain loudly and properly about the massacre of several thousand Sikhs by Hindus in 1984, there are no rallies to demand justice for at least a quarter-million Sikhs massacred by Muslims in 1947.

It's therefore not a shock to notice that western democracies with large Sikh communities like Canada, Britain and the US are skeptical of the looming referendum, planned for November of 2020. Canada's government says it won't recognize it. Nor will Pakistani realists like Husain Haqqani, who says, "the referendum is just a gimmick. And gimmicks make headlines – they don't change maps."

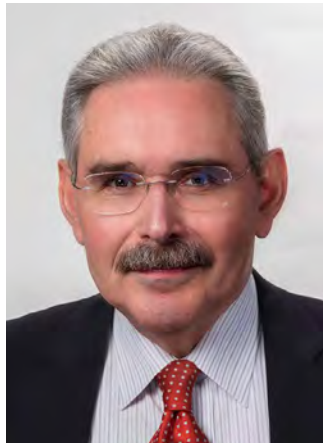
India has certainly not helped its cause, and may even have helped its critics, by banning the referendum from Indian territory and by criminalizing those who advocate it. But the referendum is plainly designed to attract those who support an independent state, not those who oppose it. The posters don't just urge Sikhs to vote; they urge them to end India's "occupation" of Punjab (but not Pakistan's).

In short, the exercise seems destined to show that, among those who support a Sikh state, a high proportion support a Sikh state. That's not going to be big news. The real question is whether a majority of all Sikhs do – and they'll need to do better than 0.32 percent.

Canada, for example, has the largest share of the world's Sikh diaspora at about half a million. What if 100,000 show up to vote for Khalistan? That would be an achievement – but it would still leave 80 percent of them who just weren't interested, not to mention the 92 percent of all Sikhs who live in Punjab and cheer for Capt. Amarinder.

"Be careful what you wish for," the old adage teaches. Are Sikhs around the world clamouring for an independent state? Do they want Pakistan to get what it wants? The separatists have laboured long to ensure that we'll soon find out. But they may not like the answer.

## About the author



**Terry Milewski** first visited India as a student in 1967, when he interviewed Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in New Delhi. He returned to India often while reporting from 52 countries during four decades as a correspondent for CBC TV News. His early years there took him from the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon to Central America, Washington, Moscow and London, but he was mostly based in Ottawa, covering the end of Pierre Trudeau's government and the beginning of Brian Mulroney's.

In 1985, he was sent to Ireland to cover the Air India bombing and has followed that story for 35 years. In 1986 he became the CBC's first Middle East Bureau Chief and returned there frequently during eight years in Washington spanning the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations. In 1995 he moved to Vancouver, where he won a Gemini Award for his reporting on the 1997 APEC Summit. He returned to Washington for the 2004 election and to India for the 2005 Asian tsunami. He also followed the entire Air India trial, then moved back to Ottawa to cover the Air India inquiry and the government of Stephen Harper.

After too many trips around the world with Harper, he never wanted to see another plane and he retired as the CBC's Senior Correspondent in 2016, returning occasionally as a guest host on CBC's *Power and Politics*.

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## Endnotes

- 1 This letter appeared in the Delhi High Court 2020.
- 2 Singh's comments are from an event in Toronto that was attended by the author.

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