The Call for Khalistan:

The Political Economy of Sikh Separatism

(Copy One)

by

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Abstract

Focusing on the Sikh separatist movement, this thesis stresses the importance of the internal dynamics of nationalist movements. In particular, attention is given to the sources of factionalism -- different visions of the nation in the community, class, and leadership rivalry. The Sikh nationalist movement has always displayed internal cleavages, and has always been in conflict with the central authorities. The current crisis in Punjab has resulted from a protracted internal conflict, between wealthy Jat Sikh farmers particularly of the Malwa region of Punjab (represented by the traditional party of Sikh nationalism, the Akali Dal), and poor Jat Sikh farmers especially of the Majha region (represented by the fundamentalist All-India Sikh Students' Federation and Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale). As these two groups vied for hegemony in the community, they both began agitations against the government of Indira Gandhi, which proved incapable of resolving the situation.

Résumé

Ce mémoire, par l'étude du mouvement séparatiste sikh, insiste sur l'importance de la dynamique interne des mouvements nationalistes. Il porte une attention particulière aux sources des factions: de différentes visions de la nation créèrent des rivalités communautaires, de classe et de leadership. Le mouvement nationaliste sikh a toujours été marqué de divisions internes et s'est toujours opposé aux autorités centrales. La crise actuelle au Pendjab découle d'un conflit interne prolongé entre riches fermiers sikhs jats, issus surtout de la région pendjabie du Malwa (et représentés par l'Akali Dal, traditionnel parti du nationalisme sikh), et pauvres fermiers sikhs jats, provenant en grande partie de la région du Majha (et représentés par la fondamentaliste All-India Sikh Students' Federation et Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale). Luttant pour la suprématie de la communauté, ces deux groupes se soulevèrent contre le gouvernement d'Indira Gandhi, incapable de contenir le tollé.

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Preface/Acknowledgements

A recent editorial in the Montréal Gazette (9 February 1992) stated that "Ulster has outlasted Beirut as the world's metaphor for a hopeless conflict." The same editorial lamented that since 1969 about 3,000 people have been killed in Northern Ireland, and in 1991 there were 94 deaths. As tragic as the events in Northern Ireland are, they pale in comparison to Punjab. In 1991, the Punjab crisis claimed over 6,000 lives. Moreover, the Punjab crisis generated some of the world's most dramatic acts of violence in the 1980s -- Operation Bluestar (1,000 dead), the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the Delhi riots (3,000 dead), the Air India bombing (329 dead), amongst countless others. Over the last decade approximately 25,000 people have been killed in the Punjab conflict. Put bluntly, the crisis in Punjab has become one of the most violent conflicts in the world today and there seems to be little prospect of a resolution any time in the near future.

Ever since the dismissal of Surjit Singh Barnala's Akali ministry in May 1987 by Rajiv Gandhi, 'politics' has ceased to exist in Punjab. The present structure of incentives in Punjab leads both the Sikh militants and the security forces to continue the carnage. The Sikh militant groups are extremely well financed -- through bank robberies, kidnapping, extortion, smuggling, and donations from Sikhs abroad. The substantial resources of the militant groups not only allows them to purchase sophisticated weapons, it makes recruitment a fairly easy business. In a state with chronically high unemployment for young people, the three to four thousand Rupee monthly salary (plus commission), comparable to a starting salary for an MBA graduate in New Delhi, is an attractive prospect to the poorer Jat Sikhs, who are sympathetic to the creation of Khalistan and have no other employment prospects. The risks, however, are great -- most militants do

not live longer than a year-and-a-half after joining the movement -- but, the large profits which can be made as one advances through a militant organization continues to entice young Sikhs.

On the other side, the former police chief of Punjab, J. F. Ribeiro, introduced 'a-bullet-for-bullet' policy and, to prevent defection of his troops, offered substantial financial incentives for the 'heads' of prominent militants. A regular police officer could double his salary by capturing, or killing, a single, low-ranking militant. The leading militant in Punjab today, Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, carries a two million Rupee reward. Moreover, during Ribeiro's term of office, the government of Rajiv Gandhi passed the 59th constitutional amendment which suspended the right to life in Punjab. The police were thus free to chase the lucrative rewards with impunity. Although the 59th amendment has been scrapped, the crisis in Punjab has deteriorated because there is no incentive to alter behaviour.

I firmly believe that the solution lies in the restoration of democracy in Punjab. The government cannot force people to stay in the union against their will, nor can the militants force the people to leave the union by gun-point. In a democratic system, political groups must provide the people incentives, material or spiritual, to support their position. But before democracy can restore peace in Punjab, the Indian political system must undergo a normative shift.

Presently, Sikhs who desire Khalistan are not permitted by the Indian government to air their views openly or contest elections on a separatist platform. In a liberal democracy, which India wishes to be, people must have the freedom of belief, speech, to contest elections, and if they so desire they must be free to vote themselves out of the union. India has no

choice but to drop its longstanding opposition to separatist ideologies. But, this only a first step. To draw the militants into the political process there will have to be a large-scale amnesty. Moreover, to overcome the widespread perception that an election would not be fair if held under the eyes of Indian security forces, an international observer team (preferably under United Nations auspices) should be assembled to scrutinize the election. Once the democratic process is made free and fair, the government and Sikh separatists alike, must accept the democratic will of the people. At this point, the duly elected government of Punjab could enter negotiations with the government of India to resolve the outstanding issues. Although the government of India would likely find these conditions unacceptable, the Punjab crisis is infinitely more severe than when it began, thus any solution will have to concede much more than it would have ten years ago.

Unfortunately, the February 1992 election was a farce. The Congress (I) government called the election in Punjab simply to strengthen their minority standing in the federal parliament. Since none of the above preconditions were met, the election cannot be regarded as having been free and fair. Virtually all Sikh political parties thus boycotted the elections. The Congress (I) captured 87 of 117 state assembly seats and 12 of 13 federal seats, but with a 21.6% voter turn-out the Congress regime in Punjab has little popular legitimacy. Unfortunately, Punjab is not moving in a truly democratic direction and is thus nowhere near a resolution. However, I hope that this work will at least begin to answer why the Sikh nationalist movement became separatist, why it became violent, and how it became locked in this quagmire.

As I draw to the close of my first major work, I am astounded by the number of people who have supported me in my endeavour. Unfortunately, I do not have space to mention everyone who may have helped. My apologies to anyone who feels omitted.

First, I wish to thank Professor Peter Beyer, Department of Religious Studies at the University of Toronto, for introducing me to the topic and his unfailing willingness to read and discuss my work.

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Finally, I wish to extend my deepest sympathies to all those who have lost family and friends in the Punjab crisis. May peace soon be found.

Chapter One: Introduction

When a magician performs, unexpected outcomes are seen, but most people miss how the tricks were done due to the flurry of motion which surrounds the illusions. Watching the Sikh separatist movement in Punjab has left most analysts similarly bewildered. Many observers have been preoccupied by the series of events which have dramatically escalated over the course of the crisis, but these events are, for the most part, simply illusory motions which conceal their source. More serious analyses have focused primarily on elite level interactions, particularly between the Akalis and the central government, in part because they are easier to observe but it is also a general tendency within the social sciences. The contemporary Punjab crisis, however, has not been precipitated by elite level interaction. Sikh elites were in a virtually continuous conflict with the central authority, first the British rulers and then the Congress Party, from the early 1920s to the late 1970s without any significant level of sustained violence. The situation, however, began to change in the late 1970s with the arrival of a young, charismatic, fundamentalist Sikh preacher, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Although no analyst of Punjab politics missed the arrival of Bhindranwale, most analyses focus on his charismatic and controversial personality and do not get to the social, political, and economic bases of the mass movement he initiated. There seems to be a general aversion in the literature 'explaining' the Punjab crisis to regard Bhindranwale, a semi-educated religious fundamentalist, as a self-interested political actor but, if we do, our analysis of the crisis becomes much more coherent.

There are three broad dimensions to every ethnic movement: 1) the processes of identity formation; 2) the political and economic environment; 3) and ethnic leadership, organizations, and their political strategies. By definition, an ethnopolitical movement cannot exist without a conception of

ethnicity and its importance to self-identification. Socio-psychological arguments most persuasively explain this basic foundation of all ethnic movements. However, ethnopolitical movements are not launched unless there are certain objective socio-economic conditions present and provided that there is leadership. Cultural expressivist arguments, many of which are cognizant of the psychological dimension of ethnicity, explain the structural conditions under which ethnicity can be politicized. Class based political economy analyses determine who specifically comes forth to lead and follow. Psychological, cultural expressivist, and class analyses only explain <u>why</u> an ethnopolitical movement begins, but they cannot explain <u>how</u> it begins. Rational choice theory cannot explain why an ethnic movement begins, but it can -- by focussing on political entrepreneurs, organizations and strategies, explain <u>how</u> an ethnic movement begins. Thus, I believe that only a synthesis of these three approaches can explain the necessary and sufficient conditions for an ethnopolitical movement, which are again, 1) ethnic identification; 2) structural socio-economic conditions; and 3) ethnic political leadership, organizations, and their strategies.

The history of Sikhism can be viewed as a continuous co-evolution of religious and political development. The first two hundred years of Sikhism was the era of the Gurus and consolidation of the religious texts, symbols, and rituals. The next hundred years witnessed the Sikh struggle for survival against Moghul oppression and the political consolidation culminating in the Sikh rule of Punjab in 1799. After the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849, Sikhism entered a noticeable period of decline. Soon, however, Sikhism began a revival. Sikh loyalty to the British during the 1857 'mutiny' began to reduce British suspicions towards

the Sikhs, initially aroused during the Anglo-Sikh wars prior to annexation. With increased security vis-à-vis the British, the Sikhs began to openly respond to the threats of Christian missionaries and Hindu revivalism which found organizational expression in the Arya Samaj later in the century. The formation of a Sikh revivalist organization, the Singh Sabhas, in 1873 may be said to mark the establishment of the modern Sikh identity and contemporary Sikh nationalism.

An analysis of contemporary Sikh nationalism is best divided into four periods. First the Singh Sabha period, 1873-1920. The Singh Sabhas were loosely connected local organizations, but all followed a general ten-point program to promote Sikhism, Punjabi, and religious harmony (Kapur 1986, p16-7). Later, in 1902, the Chief Khalsa Diwan was formed to coordinate the activities of the rapidly proliferating Singh Sabhas. Like the Singh Sabhas, "the Chief Khalsa Diwan was dominated by prominent members of the Sikh gentry and large landowners" (Kapur 1986, p18). The Singh Sabhas were aristocratic, conservative, and pursued a political strategy of cooperation with the British government. These organizations were instrumental in not only restoring Sikh pride but reformulating the Sikh identity -- through their interpretation of Sikh history, especially the role of the last Guru, Gobind Singh, and the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Punjab, 1799-1838 -- to mean exclusively kesdhari or Khalsa Sikhism (Kapur 1986, pxiii). By the end of the first phase, the issue of Sikh identity is basically settled, although in the twentieth century a couple of new concepts, which will be discussed in due course, have been added to the definition of Sikhism established at the turn of the century.

By the early 1920s, however, the pro-British Chief Diwan Khalsa and the

Singh Sabhas of the Sikh gentry had lost 'moral legitimacy' in the Sikh community. In the second period of contemporary Sikh nationalism (1920-1962), the Sikh gentry were replaced by a younger, more radically inclined group of Sikh leaders with not only a religious platform, but also a political agenda. In 1920, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)[1], and the Akali Dal, a political party of Sikh nationalism, were formed and served respectively the religious and political needs of the Sikh community -- and have continued to do so, at least until very recently.

The original raison d'être of the Akali Dal/SGPC was to establish 'orthodox' Khalsa control over Sikh gurdwaras (temples) (Gobinder Singh 1986). Beyond this, the Akali Dal also became involved in the Indian national liberation movement. Both objectives brought the Akali Dal/SGPC into open conflict with the British government, although at times the Akali Dal did find it instrumentally useful to cooperate with the British. With the rise of the SGPC/Akali Dal, a new class of Sikh leaders emerged replacing the old landed gentry. The new organizations were led by an urban intelligentsia of lower and middle stratas and supported by a large Jat-Sikh peasant following (Gobinder Singh 1986, p70-5). When engaged in political conflict, the strategy of the Akali Dal has been, from its inception, one of 'agitation.'

Through a number of political struggles — the Gurdwara reform (1920s), the independence movement (1930s and 1940s), partition (1940s and 1950s),

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1. The SGPC is a 'parliament' for Sikhs. Elections to the body are supposed to be held every five years. Any baptized Sikh over the age of twenty-five, who is not an apostate, may run as a candidate and the franchise is extended to all Sikhs in Punjab who are not apostate. It is responsible for the management of Sikh temples and shrines and other religious matters. (See Chapter Three).

and the Punjabi Suba (1950s and 1960s) -- the same alignment of forces, lower to middle class urban intelligentsia supported by the Jat peasantry, dominated the SGPC/Akali Dal under the leadership of Master Tara Singh. Coinciding, however, with the attainment of the Punjabi Suba in 1966 -- that is the creation of a linguistically Punjabi state through the excision of Hindi speaking regions -- was the eclipse of Master Tara Singh's leadership. The new Akali leadership was overtaken by leaders from the elite land-owning peasant caste -- Jat Sikhs, particularly large landowners from the prosperous Malwa region of southern Punjab. The linguistic division of the state in 1966, and the ascension of Indira Gandhi in the same year, provides the point of departure for the contemporary secessionist movement, although the crisis proper did not actually begin until 1978 and the demand for secession was not widespread until after 1984.

In hindsight, a major conflict between the Sikhs and the Congress government of Indira Gandhi should have been predictable. The constitution adopted after independence recognized the need for a federal political system, but the ideological disposition of the Congress leaders coupled with other imperatives -- insecurity vis-à-vis Pakistan, the west, and economic underdevelopment -- dictated the creation of a highly centralized federal structure. The constitution, furthermore, gave the federal government the responsibility for industrial development -- one of the top priorities of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister. The Akali Dal, on the other hand, has always sought a devolution of powers from the centre to the state level -- this perspective was most comprehensively detailed in the party's Anandpur Sahib Resolution (1973). The Akalis, a party primarily composed of Jat Sikh farmers, have been more predisposed to agricultural concerns--

again a perspective diametrically opposed to the central government. As India became increasingly centralized in the 1970s under the rule of Indira Gandhi, the Akali opposition to the centre grew more vociferous. A number of scholars, most notably Paul Brass (1988) and Atul Kohli (1990), have analyzed this dimension of the crisis, but to understand precisely how the crisis arose, we must undertake a detailed analysis of the internal political dynamics of Punjab and the Sikh community. This is the focus of the following chapters.

In the truncated Punjab after 1966, the Sikhs constituted, for the first time, a majority in the state and consequently the electoral possibilities for the Akali Dal, the party of Sikh nationalism, were greatly enhanced. Punjab, however, was still 40% Hindu and for the Akali Dal to capture power and maintain the coalition governments they formed with the Jana Sangh/Janata Party -- in 1967, 1969, and 1977 -- they were compelled to adopt a more 'secular' strategy and move away from solely representing the narrow interests of the Sikh community. The space was thus created for a figure like the enormously charismatic Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the leader of a small Sikh 'seminary' (the Damdami Taksal), to rise and capitalize on the opportunity to explicitly represent the Sikh panth (community). To succeed, however, he required a mass base of support.

The 'green revolution' of the mid-1960s created the opportunity for the first generation of rural, Jat Sikhs to leave the farm and pursue higher education and urban employment but the stagnating urban economy of Punjab stifled those aspirations. Bhindranwale was able to establish a mass following amongst this alienated underclass of rural Jat Sikhs, particularly those from the economically disadvantaged districts of Amritsar and

Gurdaspur (the Majha region of Punjab), loitering around the universities and colleges in urban Punjab without significant prospects of fulfilling employment. Bhindranwale's student supporters, also suffering from social and religious alienation in their new urban environment, found organizational expression in the All-India Sikh Students' Federation led by Amrik Singh -- the son of Bhindranwale's predecessor at the Taksal and his childhood friend and 'blood-brother.'

Bhindranwale provided the AISSF with religious legitimacy, and Amrik Singh and the Federation gave Bhindranwale an organized, mass base of support. And together, the Bhindranwale-AISSF nexus was able to seriously challenge the hegemony of the Akali Dal, led by 'well-to-do' rural Jat Sikhs of the prosperous Malwa region of Punjab. Unlike 1920 and 1962 when the leadership of the Sikh national movement switched hands from one social strata to another quickly and decisively, Bhindranwale's challenge to the Akali Dal became a protracted internal conflict. As Bhindranwale and the Akali Dal competed with each other for hegemony in the Sikh community, they together began a political agitation against the central government of Indira Gandhi.

When Indira Gandhi returned to power in January 1980 she immediately dismissed nine non-Congress state governments, including the Akali Dal ministry in Punjab. The Akalis, after losing the ensuing election, thus began a series of agitations against the centre. In September 1981 they presented the government with a list of forty-five demands and grievances, based on the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, and declared a dharm yudh morcha, a 'religious war.' Coincidentally, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who had assiduously been building support throughout Punjab, was arrested in

September 1981 on charges of murder. Bhindranwale was able to dictate the terms of his arrest -- a huge rally was held outside his 'seminary' where he not only proclaimed his innocence, but was supported by almost every senior Akali politician. The Akali leaders, who were trying to re-establish their hegemony in the Sikh community after their 'secular' approach in office, were afraid that Bhindranwale posed a serious threat to their position and thus felt compelled to support him.

The Akalis immediately revised their forty-five demands and made the unconditional release of Bhindranwale their first priority. Thus upon his release the following month, the Akalis had no choice but to welcome him to their fold. Operating from the inside, Bhindranwale was able to keep the Akalis on a strongly nationalistic course, and on the outside, Bhindranwale and his supporters chose to adopt a violent armed strategy against the central government, which placed further pressure on the Akali Dal and moved the conflict towards the edge of a full-scale crisis. The following July (1982), Amrik Singh, the president of the All-India Sikh Students' Federation, was arrested, also on charges of murder. Bhindranwale immediately proclaimed his own dharm yudh to secure the release of his 'blood-brother,' and the Akali Dal again felt compelled to follow.

The situation in Punjab was intensifying but Indira Gandhi remained intransigent in negotiations with the Akalis. Gandhi flatly rejected the concept of a Sikh quam (nation) -- thus she was unable to distinguish between the moderate, democratic nationalism of the Akali Dal and the more extreme nationalism of Bhindranwale and the AISSF. She never seemed able to understand the pressures Bhindranwale and the AISSF placed on the Akali Dal. Consequently, she accepted the maximalist demands of the Akali Dal at face

value. The Dal, however, was prepared to abandon Bhindranwale but they required tangible concessions on two issues -- the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and an appropriate division of river waters between Punjab and Haryana -- to maintain support in their community and to isolate the extremists. Gandhi, however, repeatedly foiled settlements with the Akali Dal. Apparently she was afraid of alienating the voters in Haryana, and, by extension, her support base in the Hindi-heartland -- Punjab, with only thirteen seats in the federal parliament, was expendable.

The Punjab situation was thus stalemated. When Amrik Singh was unexpectedly released from prison in July 1983, Bhindranwale felt confident of advancing his movement without the support of the Akali Dal. The Akalis and Bhindranwale finally parted company in December 1983, two months after the centre had dismissed the Congress ministry of Punjab and placed the state under President's rule. But the standoff continued and violence increased. Finally, the government grew impatient and ordered the army into the Golden Temple. After nearly a week of heavy fighting in the Temple, Bhindranwale and Amrik Singh were dead but Sikhs around the world were devastated. Operation Bluestar succeeded only in terminating the first phase of the Khalistan movement. Indira Gandhi was assassinated six months later in retaliation and thus she was never able to witness the subsequent development of a truly separatist Sikh movement.

The literature which attempts to explain the origins of the contemporary crisis has been divided, neither exclusively nor exhaustively, into five basic analytical groups: "Sikh nationalism, conspiracy theories, primacy of regional factors, primacy of national factors, and Marxist interpretations" (Gurharpal Singh 1987, p1268). In the conspiracy theories,

the Sikhs accuse the government of India of genocide; India then blames Pakistan, who says, "allegations of Pakistani involvement are wrong, baseless and false"[2]. Needless to say, "the conspiracy theories present the most unconvincing interpretations" (Gurharpal Singh 1987, p1276). And most of the Marxist explanations, which tend to focus on the 'evil' hand of western imperialism, are of the "vulgar" type (Gurharpal Singh 1987, p1277).

My thesis will begin from a premise of Sikh nationalism, and then proceed to analyze, in chapter three, the regional factors during the period 1966-1978 which created the space for Sikh extremism and militancy. The chapter continues by detailing the relationship between moderate and extremist nationalists, and the problems of factionalism in each camp. Chapter four, in turn, will focus on the development of the Punjab crisis in the 1980s, within the larger context of the Indian political system. Thus I believe all the relevant levels of analysis in this case will be covered in the thesis. Unfortunately, due to space constraints, the analysis of the Punjab crisis undertaken here will have to be terminated at the point of Operation Bluestar in June 1984 -- an analysis of the truly secessionary Sikh movement which developed subsequently will have to be undertaken at a later date.

A number of important points for the study of nationalism emerge from the Sikh crisis. First, starting with the Singh Sabhas in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the importance of ethnic identity is clearly apparent -- the modern conception of Sikhism was established by the turn of the century and has been reinforced throughout the twentieth century by Sikh

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[2]. Interview with Zia-ul-Haq, the late President of Pakistan, in India Today, 15 July 1984.

nationalists. Second, amongst students of nationalism, there is a general tendency to regard national groups as monolithic units free of internal cleavages. The Sikh case illustrates conclusively that national groups can be disaggregated by class and other cleavages -- such as caste, sect, region, and ideology. The four broad periods of Sikh nationalism in the last one hundred years are identifiable on the basis of the social, particularly class, composition of the leadership of nationalist organizations. Third, the Sikh case demonstrates the critical importance of political entrepreneurs and organizations in ethnic mobilization, and the problems of factionalism.

Finally, on the micro-level, there exists a supposition in the comparative nationalism literature that, in general, it is disadvantaged peripheral groups which pursue secession (Horowitz 1985, p249) -- the internal colonialism thesis (Hechter 1975) epitomizes this reasoning. The Sikhs, however, are seen as an exception to this general rule -- since Punjab has the highest per capita income in India, the Sikhs are regarded as a prosperous peripheral group which is pursuing secession. Per capita income, however, is an aggregate measure which does not reflect inequalities in income distribution. And, in Punjab, it was Bhindranwale's followers-- educated youth from the lower to middle Jat Sikh farms primarily of the less prosperous districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur -- who came, after his death, to demand an independent Khalistan, although Bhindranwale himself was always ambiguous and non-committal on the issue of secession. Thus, contrary to popular belief, Sikh secessionism is not driven by a prosperous peripheral group <u>per se</u> but rather by a relatively disadvantaged social strata within the larger national group.

Chapter Two

A Theoretical Framework for the Study of Ethnopolitical Movements

Introduction

The study of ethnicity has proliferated since the early 1970s. Although our understanding of the ethnic phenomenon has undoubtedly improved over the past two decades, we do not seem to have a comprehensive theory, perhaps because ethnicity is somewhat inimical to our dominant social science paradigms, liberalism and Marxism (Rothschild 1981, p16). The problem is exacerbated by the scope and interdisciplinary nature of the topic. In terms of scope, ethnicity and ethnic conflict are not new, and they are global phenomena that transcend all political systems and levels of development. To further complicate matters, the study of ethnicity involves social psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, political science (including international relations), and even the socio-biologists (see van den Berghe 1986). Often it is not even certain that scholars are studying the same phenomenon -- is it ethnicity, nationalism, sectarianism, tribalism, regionalism, communalism (see Connor 1978)? While each discipline presses forward with theory-building, and everybody does more case studies, it is perhaps time to begin synthesizing existing theories in order to develop a more general theoretical framework.

I think there are three broad components to every ethnic movement: 1) The processes of identity formation. Since we are dealing with both individuals and groups, these are most appropriately dealt with by social psychology,[1] but scholars from other disciplines, history, sociology and political science, have also focussed on this component and may generally be

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1. See the work of Peter Weinreich.

classified as the cultural expressivists[2]. 2) Economic and political preconditions. Although a number of structural models have been developed-- internal colonialism, cultural divisions of labour, competition models, pluralism, and modernization, to name a few -- I believe that one economic precondition, class, has been neglected, except by Marxist arguments which are often crude. In fact, I suspect that ethnopolitical movements represent a convergence of the 'ethnic' and eco-political interests of identifiable classes. 3) Leadership, organizations, and political strategies. Nationalist movements cannot exist without political entrepreneurs who establish ethnic organizations to mobilize the group. The only theory available to connect the micro-level, that is ethnic leadership and organizations, to the macro-level, that is the structural situation, is rational, or collective, choice theory.

In sum, I believe that only a synthesis of these three approaches can explain the necessary and sufficient conditions for an ethnopolitical movement. Psychological arguments explain the foundation upon which an ethnic movement can be based -- by definition, an ethnopolitical movement cannot exist without a conception of ethnicity, which is a significant component of self-identification. However, ethnopolitical movements are not launched unless there are certain objective socio-economic conditions present and provided that there is leadership. Cultural expressivist arguments, which are premised on the psychological dimension of ethnicity, explain the structural conditions under which ethnicity can be politicized. Class based political economy analyses determine who specifically comes

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2. Anthony Smith and Walker Connor are perhaps the best known cultural expressivists. See Hudson Meadwell (1989) for an analysis of the theoretical foundations of cultural expressivism.

forth to lead and follow. Psychological, cultural expressivist, and class analyses explain WHY an ethnopolitical movement begins, but they cannot explain how it begins. Rational choice theory cannot explain why an ethnic movement begins, but it can -- by focussing on political entrepreneurs, organizations and strategies -- explain HOW an ethnic movement begins.

Terminology

The study of ethnicity has been plagued by an inconsistent use of the critical terms (Connor 1972; 1978). Thus, before preceding any further it is necessary to define some key terms. First, the word ethnicity, "identity with one's ethnic group," is derived from the Greek term ethnos, meaning nation (Connor 1978, p386). To distinguish between an ethnic group and a nation, Connor defines nation as "a self-aware ethnic group" (Connor 1978, p388). Anthropologists may define an ethnic group but only that ethnic group can define itself as a nation. In other words, "the nation must be self-defined" (Connor 1978, p388; emphasis original). The word nation, from the Latin nasci, 'to be born,' implies common ancestry for both ethnicity and nation. Kinship is therefore often considered the most obvious objective indicator of membership in an ethnic group but since most people cannot trace their genealogy more than three generations, language, culture, religion, race, and territory become more useful signs of membership in an ethnic group (Kasfir 1979, p369; Rothschild 1981, p86-95). It must be remembered, however, that no single 'objective' ethnic marker "is either indispensable or necessarily sufficient for ethnic group solidarity and

politicization" (Rothschild 1981, p86)[3]. Furthermore, it should be noted that ethnic movements and conflict can fall along any one or more of the objective factors listed above.

The next issue concerns loyalty. Nationalism refers to loyalty to the nation which is a politicized ethnic group. A state is a legal concept describing a defined territory organized under common political institutions, with a recognized government. A nation-state, contrary to common usage, only exists in the specific instances where a nation and state are coterminous. Loyalty to a state is patriotism (Connor 1984, p.xiv). Given the historic connections between ethnic and nation terms such as 'ethnonationalism' and 'ethnic nationalism' appear redundant, that is they appear to say 'national nationalism' (Ma 1990, p530) but in as much as they clearly link ethnic and nation, and distinguish them from patriotism, they are useful[4]. Many other terms have been coined to discuss the same phenomenon -- subnationalism, parochialism, primordialism, communalism, tribalism, regionalism, pluralism, sectarianism, to name but a few -- but most of these have arisen because scholars misappropriated the term nationalism to mean loyalty to the state (Connor 1978).

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[3]. The amorphous character of ethnicity, however, means that people sharing objective markers are not necessarily members of the same ethnic group nor do members of the same ethnic group share all the objective markers. For example, the German nation (ie Germany), which is not all the German-speaking people, are both Catholics and Protestants. The Punjab represents the converse -- one linguistic group but two nations (Hindu and Sikh) base on religion.

[4]. We are still left with terms like 'ethnicity,' 'ethnic politicization,' 'ethnic movements' and 'ethnic conflict.' I think it is best to regard 'ethnicity' as a self-aware ethnic group or nation. 'Ethnic movements' are politicized ethnic groups attempting to strengthen their group and 'ethnic conflict' is political competition between politicized ethnic groups.

The Formation of Ethnic Identity[5]

Identity formation is the process whereby individuals come to an understanding of themselves. The processes of identity formation, of which ethnic identification is just a part, are extremely complex and thus only partially understood. A number of disciplines are actively researching the phenomenon -- anthropology, sociology, socio-linguistics, and various sub-fields of psychology (cognitive, social, and psychoanalytical) -- each of which provides different, and necessary although not sufficient, insights into the process. Peter Weinreich has succinctly defined ethnic identity within the larger conception of identity --

> One's ethnic identity is defined as that part of the totality of one's self-construal made up of these dimensions that express the continuity between one's construal of past ancestry and future aspirations in relation to ethnicity. Such continuity between one's ancestry and one's progeny gives for many people a substantial element of meaning to one's existence, which is dependent on early childhood identifications (Weinreich 1985, p508).

Even within the process of ethnic identity formation there are a number of components, but as Weinreich points out, in a later article, they are exceptionally difficult to operationalize (Weinreich 1988, p149)[6].

Cognitive psychologists, who have "the most empirically based theories

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[5]. In the case of the Sikhs, the processes of ethnic politicization occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, which is before the time-frame of this study. Thus the question of Sikh identity in the study to follow exists primarily as an underlying issue.

[6]. A number of components, however, have been recognized -- "Ethnic awareness (the understanding of one's own and other groups), ethnic self-identification (the label used for one's own group), ethnic attitudes (feelings about own and other groups), and ethnic behaviours (behaviour patterns specific to an ethnic group)" (Rotheram and Phinney 1987, p13).

of ethnic identity development in children," have determined that the development of ethnic identity formation occurs at a very young age. In a brief review of the literature, Rotheram and Phinney conclude that "ethnic awareness" (awareness of physical ethnic markers, primarily colour) occurs at age three or four; "ethnic orientation" (consolidation of group affiliation and concepts) is developed between the ages of four and eight; and "attitude crystallization," (the attachment of value, positive or negative, to ethnic markers) is completed by age ten (Rotheram and Phinney 1987, p14-20). Thus by age ten individuals have a reasonably well developed conception of ethnicity as a theoretical construct. The importance of this psychological research is that it demonstrates that ethnic identity <u>is not</u> usually determined instrumentally, contrary to what some rational choice theorist would have us believe.

One of the most confusing aspects of ethnicity, both for individuals and researchers, is its dynamic quality. Not only can the characteristics of an ethnic group shift over time, individuals may shift or take on multiple identities. The dynamic quality of ethnicity has given rise to the concept of <u>boundaries</u>. Boundaries define or delineate the ethnic group but "[b]oundaries can be hard, soft, permeable and shifting [and] [t]hey can be dissolved" (Weinreich 1985, p506). Boundaries are mainly psychological, not territorial, and the structural factors (including institutional or organizational factors) maintaining boundaries are more important than cultural content of particular groups (DeVos 1975). A tremendous amount of research has been undertaken but the amorphousness of boundaries makes it

exceedingly difficult to capture on paper[7]. The concept of boundaries is particularly important when studying societies where the boundaries separating ethnic groups are weak. For example, the 'boundaries' between Sikh and Hindu Punjabis are particularly soft and fragile.

By definition, an ethnopolitical movement cannot exist without an ethnic base, thus an understanding of ethnicity and how it develops is essential. Second, ethnicity is a fundamental component of individual identity -- "ethnicity in its deepest, psychological level is a sense of survival. If one's group survives, one is assured of survival, even if not in a personal sense" (DeVos 1975, p17). Despite the socio-biological tone of the statement by DeVos, two critical points are involved here: 1) Ethnicity is theoretically, as well as practically, a powerful basis for political mobilization -- the colloquial notion of 'defending the nation' is substantiated. 2) Since ethnicity is psychologically at the core of the individual, behaviour may not always be determined rationally --Japanese kamikaze pilots in World War Two and Shi'i car-bombers in Lebanon are both irrational manifestations emanating from the socio-psychological character of ethnicity. Ethnicity is probably the only political mode of mobilization which can elicit such intense, emotional behaviour. And, moreover, ethnicity tends to be relatively easy to mobilize politically given that there is usually pre-existing ethnic organizations and leadership (Rothschild 1981, p60-4). Although the psychological component of ethnicity can evoke intense reactions <u>under certain conditions</u>, it is alone incapable

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7. Personally, I think writers of fiction -- most particularly those who have experienced immigration, none more voluble than Salman Rushdie-- have had more success in capturing the essence and mutability of boundaries than social scientists.

of sustaining such behaviour -- for this behaviour to be anything but sporadic, ethnic leadership and organizations are required to channel and maintain ethnic emotions.

Class and Structural Factors

Cultural expressivist arguments attempt to determine the conditions under which ethnicity may become politicized. Although the cultural expressivist arguments have generally been put forth by sociologists and political scientists, those more concerned with the psychological realm of ethnicity also make the linkages to the structural conditions of society— "ethnic identity arises in interaction and is a function not only of the individual and his or her relation to the ethnic group but of that group's place in the wider social setting" (Rosenthal 1987, p160). A number of factors which might politicize ethnicity have been proposed — conquest, migration, increased state penetration, revolution, economic development or decline — in short, rapid social change (Weinreich 1988; Keyes 1981; Smith 1986).

Rothschild also argues that ethnicity is a recent phenomenon intimately linked to rapid social development —

> our modern, scientific world is so highly structured and overorganized that it actually presents itself to many individuals as chaotic. To avert the resultant threat of personal anomie and fragmentation, they draw a reintegrating identity from identification with their ethnic group, which is the only social entity left that defines and accepts them for what they are, rather than by what they do (Rothschild 1981, p5).

Although not regarding ethnicity as strictly a modern phenomenon, Anthony Smith also believes that ethnicity is related to social change. Smith argues that politicized ethnicity is a defensive reaction to external

threats to the group and internal decay (Smith 1986, p55). It is Smith's contention that societies seek to legitimate contemporary social realities through recourse to the history of the group (Smith 1986, p174). And he argues that intellectuals and artists are responsible for redefining and reviving ethnicity (Smith 1986, p160). Undoubtedly, intellectuals do play a role in shaping ethnic awareness but the real issue is political leadership. Horowitz, on the other hand, is less concerned with ethnic mythology than Smith and more attuned to the issue of leadership, but unfortunately neither adequately understands the importance of class.

The intellectual puzzle that Horowitz seeks to solve is, 'why do leaders lead and followers follow?' Horowitz is not exactly consistent on this matter. He wants to reject economic arguments in favour of psychological arguments -- "it remains difficult to tie significant aspects of ethnic conflict to economic interests. On the contrary, what emerges quite clearly is the willingness to sacrifice economic interest for the sake of other kinds of gain" (Horowitz 1985, p131). He argues instead that ethnic groups are motivated by a quest for group entitlement, "the contest for worth and place" (Horowitz 1985, p186), and this, he believes, explains why followers follow, and why ethnic conflict is unusually intense (Horowitz 1985, p226). He also wants to reject class analyses when studying ethnicity -- "[e]thnic conflict has generally been an embarrassment to proponents of class politics and of the class analysis of politics" (Horowitz 1985, p105).

He realizes, however, that ethnic politicization is not quite this simple. He thus delineates two broad 'classes,' elites (who are usually leaders) and masses (who are generally followers). And although he argues that ethnicity is not tied to economic interests and that ethnicity is not a

mask for class politics, he states clearly that "educated elites stand to gain from the creation of new opportunities in a smaller, albeit poorer, state" (Horowitz 1985, p238). Thus, he argues that while the 'masses' are motivated by the goal of group entitlement -- in instrumentalist language, the 'collective good' of sovereignty -- 'elites' are motivated by 'rational,' that is material, interests. Although he is concerned that the masses not be seen as victims of elite manipulation or as unable to determine their interests (Horowitz 1985, p104), his argument implies that the masses do not have rational interests and that they are in fact persuaded by their leaders to follow despite their divergent interests. I argue instead that followers follow because they have similar economic interests as their leaders. The problem with Horowitz is that he has not adequately modeled the relationship between class and ethnicity.

Rothschild has put forward three models to describe the relationship of class and ethnicity in multiethnic societies -- vertical, parallel, and reticulate (1981, p79-81). The vertical and parallel models are not particularly common, but the reticulate model closely resembles the reality of many multiethnic societies. In the multi-celled

> reticulate model, ethnic groups and social classes cross-populate each other -- but the distribution is not random or symmetrical or egalitarian. Each ethnic group pursues a wide range of economic functions and occupations, and each economic class and sector organically incorporates members of several ethnic categories. But a certain amount of overrepresentation and underrepresentation of ethnic groups within economic classes and political power clusters is possible -- indeed likely (Rothschild 1981, p81).

I suspect that most often movements will arise disproportionally from a single cell, although it may later transcend class lines (most especially when the case is a more classic anti-colonial or anti-imperial struggle).

Thus the first question to be addressed when analyzing ethnopolitical movements is to determine from which class cell the movement arises.

Horowitz's fundamental question is 'why do people follow ethnic movements' but if it was first asked which class follows an ethnic movement -- or as Yinger asks, "who benefits the most when ethnicity plays a prominent part in the ways in which interests are pursued?" (Yinger 1986, p28) -- we may be more able to answer why people follow. That is, leaders and followers in ethnopolitical movements have similar economic interests. And Horowitz, by rejecting class arguments, has forsaken the most persuasive answer to his question.

Marxists have long assumed that ethnicity is simply a vehicle or guise for class based politics. Sklar writes that "tribalism," as ethnopolitics in Africa is called, "becomes a mask for class privilege" (Sklar 1967, p6). However, such an analysis refuses to recognize the salience of ethnicity to self-identification. It must be stressed, therefore, that ethnopolitical movements are not simply class interests disguised as ethnicity, but rather there is a congruence, a belief, in both the class and ethnic goals. Although there is no consensus amongst social scientists as to how individuals develop a group loyalty, "an affiliation which appeared to offer both emotional security and interest satisfaction; and was based on a widely and easily available aspect of the social environment, would have a powerful and wide appeal" (Brown 1989, p6). Ethnicity and class are an exceptionally potent combination -- ethnicity is at the core of individual identification, and class interests are at the core of material satisfaction.

In sum, I believe that in ethnopolitical movements there is a fundamental psychological component which is aroused, as the cultural

expressivists contend, by particular conditions usually associated with rapid social change. However, there is, at least in the beginning, an identifiable class dimension, which neither Smith or Horowitz recognize. The question of which class initiates an ethnic movement is determined by the prevailing structural conditions. However, neither the psychological or cultural arguments explain how ethnic movements are founded and maintained. Only rational, or collective, choice theory can link the macro-structural conditions to the micro level, that is ethnic leadership and organizations.

Rational Choice Theory and Ethnopolitical Movements

The numerous structural explanations of ethnicity delineate the various pressures, constraints, and opportunities operating upon ethnic groups but they all lack a mechanism to explain how ethnic collective action is precipitated (Hechter 1987, p6). If psychological or structural arguments were alone sufficient to explain ethnic collective action "there would be far more of it than the historical record reveals" (Hechter et al, 1982, p414). Rational choice theory, which focuses on individuals, organizations, and collective outcomes, is the only theory which can provide a micro-level political mechanism to respond to macro-structural conditions (Hechter 1987, p30), although when studying ethnicity some of the basic assumptions of rational choice theory must be relaxed.

We know that individuals are not always rational -- in fact, there is a large body of philosophical and psychological literature on irrationality (see Elster 1979,1983; Garelick 1971; Pears 1984). Moreover, "[p]references of the kind associated with ethnicity are themselves not wholly rational." In fact, continues Weinreich, "the processes of identification in identity

formation are emotional, powerful and essentially irrational" (Weinreich 1985, p504). Rationality can also be subverted by a lack of understanding of issues and also by "emotions, including anger, rage, anxiety and fear, as well as joy, serenity, and ecstasy" (Weinreich 1985, p500), all of which can be elicited by ethnicity.

Rational choice theory, however, is not a theory of identity or preference formation. But if we can identify individual preferences, either individually or at an aggregate level, and the endogenous and exogenous constraints within which choice is made, we can use rational choice theory to understand and explain individual (or organizational) action. Ethnic identity can both enable and constrain group leaders. Sikh leaders, for example, cannot negotiate 'what is Sikhism' or 'who is a Sikh' with the Indian state. But they may negotiate on the constitutional division of powers, or territory, and the results of these negotiations may shape the boundaries of Sikh identity over time.

Rational choice theory may thus be employed to analyze ethnic movements, even though ethnicity may have non-rational origins. Weinreich, in fact, states that "there is a need for a meta-theoretical framework that will incorporate concepts from the rational choice theories of ethnic relations and those concerned with identity development, maintenance and change" (1985, p513). Rothschild writes that ethnicity,

> in addition to the psychological and cultural sustenance that it supplies and which it draws...can be instrumentally advantageous in the competition and struggle for power, prestige, authority, position, wealth and income (Rothschild 1981, p248).

Banton (1983) makes a similar argument. And Green argues that "[w]hile nationalism is held in nearly universal contempt and condemned as irrational

by modern liberal theorists, in certain circumstances it can be a perfectly rational strategy as judged by the best liberal criteria" (1980, p236). Thus, although ethnicity is not usually determined instrumentally, it may be used instrumentally. More specifically, rational choice approaches are especially useful in analyzing activists and their strategic choices within structures and institutions.

The basic assumption of rational choice theory is that "individuals will participate in collective action only when the private (rather than public) benefit of participating exceeds the private cost of doing so" (Hechter 1982, p418; see also Hechter 1987; Rogowski 1985). It is implicit in Hechter's argument (and in Rogowski's) that the 'private benefit' which is to accrue to individuals is material. In the case of nationalism, however, many of the 'benefits' may well be psychological. Ironically, Mancur Olson, the 'godfather' of contemporary rational choice theory, is acutely aware of non-material incentives. He writes that people may well be motivated by social, psychological, moral, erotic incentives or the desire to win prestige, respect or friendship (Olson 1965, p60-1). Moreover, he states categorically, that social incentives do not contradict or weaken the logic of collective action, "[i]f anything, it strengthens it, <u>for social status and social acceptance are individual, noncollective goods</u>...that is they are among the kinds of incentives that may be used to mobilize a latent group" (Olson 1965, p61; also see Hardin 1982).

The goal of ethnic collective action is to obtain public goods (be it sovereignty, greater autonomy, increased group power, economic benefits for the group, or greater cultural security), but they are expensive to supply and unavailable in the market, that is individuals cannot purchase the good

privately (Frolich et al 1971, p3). The dilemma of collective action is that if public goods are available to all equally once they are produced (because of jointness of supply and impossibility of exclusion), rational self-interested actors will not contribute to the cost of public good production but will freely consume the goods once they are produced. However, if too many people follow this strategy, the good will not be produced in sufficient quantities, if at all. This dilemma is known as the 'free-rider' problem and was the central concern of Mancur Olson. He argued that the free-rider dilemma could only be resolved by large collective groups if they possessed a coercive capability and an ability to supply selective incentives (Olson 1965, p2). Hechter follows this line of reasoning closely. He believes that large groups require "formal controls" to resolve the free-rider dilemma (Hechter 1987, p77).

Admittedly, "[t]he free-riding problem is a powerful argument," but its importance may well have been overestimated by Olson, and subsequently Hechter (Meadwell 1989, p314). Although Hechter has come to rational choice only in the 1980s, a more compelling solution to the 'free-riding problem' in large organizations was provided by Frolich et al in their 1971 book, Political Leadership and Collective Goods. They make two fundamental assumptions: 1) individuals are rational, self-interested actors; and 2) the provision of public goods requires organizations. They argue that,

> [i]f individuals are rational and self-interested and the provision of collective goods requires an organization, such goods will be supplied when someone finds it profitable to set up an organization (or make use of some existing organization), collect resources, and supply the goods in question. Any individual who acts to supply a collective good without providing all the resources himself we will call a political leader or political entrepreneur. Such an individual will only find this role valuable when the total resources he can

> collect as a leader exceed his costs, thereby producing a leader's surplus (Frolich et al 1971, p6).

Political entrepreneurs, according to the argument, face two types of costs, "the cost of supplying the collective good and the cost of providing a collection organization." Leaders, however, can solicit funds through donations, extortions, and taxes etcetera (Frolich et al 1971, p7). Although the provision of public goods is expensive, political entrepreneurs attempting to organize large groups tend to solicit small donations from a large number of people -- political parties and interest groups have memberships in the tens of thousands but their membership fees are usually only a few dollars, thus the contributions are still made from rational calculations (Hardin 1982, p107 and p119). The theory of ethnic collective action proposed by Rothschild implicitly follows the logic of political entrepreneurship, and, in fact, Horowitz also analyzes ethnic party formation in a similar fashion (Horowitz 1985, p294). In sum, Frolich et al (1971) provide a model for the formation of any large collective movement, which obviously includes ethnic political movements. The problem of free-riding can thus be overcome, without resort to control or dependence.

Before concluding, it is necessary to quickly examine one more aspect of rational choice theory. Olson has often been criticized for his static analysis of collective action (Hardin 1982). So far in this discussion, collective action has been presented as a problem of individual choice based on a rational analysis of the costs and benefits of participation, and the problems in forming organizations. Thus we have hitherto assumed that nationalist behaviour operated in a fixed environment. Political organizations, however, operate in an environment of interdependent choice and iterated interaction -- thus they must behave strategically. More

precisely, "strategic interaction refers to the behaviour of two or more individuals whenever the choices of each are contingent upon his estimation of the choices of the other(s)" (Frolich et al, 1971, p10). When nationalist leaders or organizations make decisions they must assume that the other actors (the state, other ethnic groups, or even intra-group factional leaders) will react. Banton's theory of ethnic collective action incorporates the notions of strategic rationality. His theory has two presuppositions: "1) that individuals act so as to obtain maximum net advantage; and 2) that actions at one moment of time influence and restrict the alternatives between which individuals will have to choose on subsequent occasions" (Banton 1983, p104).

In sum, instrumental rationality connects the macro-level structural conditions to the micro-level of leadership and development of organizations for ethnic collective action. The strict assumptions of rationality must be relaxed when using rational choice theory to explain the rise of nationalist movements but, as Olson has noted, that relaxation does not weaken the rational choice argument. As Frolich et al make abundantly clear, the free-rider problem has also been greatly exaggerated. The real power of rational choice theory in explaining collective action lies in Frolich et al's conception of political entrepreneurship. The notion of strategic rationality becomes extremely useful in the analysis of the behaviour of ethnic political organizations.

In nationalist movements, I would argue that political entrepreneurs are those who have a strongly rooted sense of ethnic self-identification and an economic, or class interest in altering the prevailing structural conditions imposed on the group. And their supporters are similarly

positioned, like-minded individuals. Rational choice arguments cannot explain the process of ethnic identification but psychological and cultural arguments cannot explain the founding and maintenance of ethnic movements. The two sets of approaches are necessary but neither is alone sufficient. If, however, they are united then the necessary and sufficient conditions of ethnic movements can be explained.

Factionalism in Nationalist Movements

The discussion to this point has focused on the formation of national groups and the initiation of nationalist movements. However, many national groups and movements suffer from factionalism, the Sikh movement is certainly deeply divided, but the literature on nationalism has little to say on this issue. The theoretical propositions already outlined provide three broad sources of possible division: 1) different visions of the nation; 2) class; and 3) leadership rivalry. These three sources of division may occur in the group at large or more specifically in nationalist organizations.

Nationality, as discussed above, is a self-defined political expression of a ethnic group sharing certain objective characteristics -- language, religion, race, territory _etcetera_. The ethnic group, however, may exhibit considerable variation on each objective marker. The Sikhs, for example, exhibit at least three broad religious divisions: _sahajdhari_ ('reform'), _kesdhari_ ('conservative'), and _amritdhari_ ('orthodox'). These variations can, and do, produce different visions of the nation. The Sikh nationalist movement for most of the twentieth century was centred on the Kesdhari identity but, in the 1980s, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his

supporters sought to shift the core identity of movement to an Amritdhari identity. The Sikh nationalist movement has also exhibited regional and caste divisions (see below).

Although class divisions ought to be self-evident, some scholars are still loath to admit them. For example, Horowitz argues that the first source of potential factionalism in nationalist movements is "the existence of pronounced social divisions within the ethnic group," but, he says, "[u]sually, these are ascriptive divisions, based on caste, clan, religion, or region of origin" (Horowitz 1985, p349). All ethnic groups, it is safe to say, have class divisions and these may well influence nationalist movements. The Sikh movement, for example, is commonly divided into four phases which are characterized by the class and caste[8] composition of the leaders and followers. The primary source of class conflict in the contemporary Punjab crisis is between big and small farmers.

Leadership rivalry can occur on two levels -- within the group at large and within organizations. Political entrepreneurs may step forth from the group at large to lead those who have different visions of the nation or different class interests. Alternatively, leaders within nationalist organizations, who may or may not represent different segments of the community, may compete for supremacy in the organization and in turn within the community. Within organizations, leadership rivalries may arise from a number of sources -- ideology, strategy, alternative bases of support, and profit motives. Ideological and strategic differences are self-evident, but the other two issues are more complex. For a political entrepreneur to successfully lead a faction he (or she) must have an alternative base of

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8. In the Indian context, class and caste often overlap.

support and access to resources. The base of support may lie in the community at large, or in the organization. Bhindranwale, for example, found his base of support in a sub-group of the community but, various Akali leaders have exploited the various wings (parliamentary, organizational, 'religious'[9]) of the party. Although factional leaders may well be motivated by more than simple profit, access to resources is essential. Parenthetically, if resources are provided from outside the group or organization, then external powers can cause factionalism. Finally, in societies which are characterized by clientelism, the departure of a single leader usually entails the departure of his entire network which can significantly disrupt an organization.

Although the sources of factionalism are always present, they are not always activated. A number of variables may be responsible for factional competition. First, the death of a charismatic leader may precipitate factional competition for leadership. Second, conditions of rapid social change may strengthen certain segments of the community and weaken others with significant outcomes for the nationalist movement. Third, both failures and successes of a nationalist movement may precipitate factionalism. In the first case, failure intensifies strategic and ideological differences in the party. In the case of success, on the other hand, the primary objective which was held in common by different factions will have been achieved but differences may exist in secondary and tertiary objectives. Fourth, if a nationalist party ceases to serve the interests of the group, or only a small segment of the group, alienated followers will

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9. For our purposes here, the SGPC (the Sikh 'parliament'), which has almost always been controlled by the Akali Dal, may be considered as the 'religious' wing of the party.

separate from the group if possible.

Repression is another factor which can precipitate factionalism. First, under conditions of increasing state repression, frustration and arguments amongst the oppressed are not only common but distrust becomes rampant -- arguments can easily end with elimination or double-crossing, therefore the rational choice is to split from the parent organization with as much armed support as can be maintained. Second, internal control and discipline are much more difficult to maintain under conditions of heavy repression. In the words of a leading Sikh militant, Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, "since we are underground, it is not possible to keep tabs on everyone" (quoted in India Today 15 September 1991, p44). Third, the decision to split an organization may be undertaken strategically to confuse the security forces. For example, it seems that in 1986 the Khalistan Liberation Army was just a unit of the Khalistan Commando Force operating in the Majha region of Punjab, and the KCF operated elsewhere in the state. And, of course, infiltration by the security forces may also contribute to factionalism. Finally, factionalism is likely to increase over time--almost all of the variables which cause factionalization increase over time, and as factionalism becomes more common the 'cost' of disrupting unity is lowered which increases the rate of factionalism.

The obverse of factionalism is the maintenance of organizational solidarity. Michael Hechter provides a basis for explaining organizational solidarity[10], although he does not distinguish between organizations and

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10. Hechter's primary concern, however, is not factionalism but the free-rider problem, which we have just established is over-emphasized in the study of nationalist movements.

groups[11]. Since individuals join organizations to obtain joint goods, Hechter argues persuasively that organizational solidarity can be maintained through the "combined effects of dependence and control" (Hechter 1987, p53). Dependence on the organization may be insured by 1) limiting the supply of alternatives; 2) controlling the information about alternatives; 3) making the cost of moving prohibitive; and 4) the development of strong personal ties (Hechter 1987, p46-7). Organizations must obviously continue to supply the good to maintain dependence but dependence may also be increased by supplying significant private benefit -- party tickets, campaign finances, and patronage. It is also necessary to insure that individuals contribute or invest in the organization. To insure that individuals contribute to the organization, obey the rules, and, most importantly to prevent factionalism, the organization must have the ability to "control" members. Control is achieved through the ability to "monitor and sanction" members -- "[a] group's monitoring capacity depends on the degree to which it possesses information about individual compliance with corporate rules or obligations, and its sanctioning capacity on its ability to generate and dispense resources that discourage noncompliance [ie the ability to reward and punish]" (Hechter 1987, p59). The ability to insure dependence and the ability to monitor and sanction are all a function of the organization's structure. In the absence or collapse of dependence and control mechanisms, the opportunities for factionalism are created.

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11. "Truly rational actors will not join a group [ie organization] to pursue common ends when, without participating, they can reap the benefit of others people's activity in obtaining them. If every member of the relevant group [ie workshop, class, community, ethnic group etc] can share in the benefits...the rational thing to do is to free ride..." (Hechter 1987, p27).

Although factionalism may be profitable for opportunist leaders, it usually hinders the obtainment of goods (sovereignty, devolution, etcetera) for the group. Further, in volatile situations factionalism may carry tremendous risks. In Punjab, for example, all political leaders must have heavy armed protection, and assassination is still commonplace. Furthermore, elite accommodation is hindered when there is serious factionalism and disjunctures between the goals of leaders and followers. Put simply, "[g]roup leaders have weaker reasons to engage in accommodation when there are rival leaders in their group, and leaders to not enjoy autonomy from their followers." And, moreover, if the factional groups are more extreme than the parent party then "[i]ntergroup agreements around moderate positions are difficult to make and enforce because of the incentives for leaders within groups to defect towards extremism" (Meadwell 1992, p41). In sum, factionalism tends to sacrifice the long-term interests of the group for the short-term interests of political entrepreneurs.

Conclusions

Various arguments have been developed in an attempt to explain ethnopolitical behaviour -- modernization theories, internal colonialism, cultural arguments, competition theory, rational choice, Marxist, and socio-psychological, amongst others. Although most of these approaches illuminate at least a facet of ethnopolitical behaviour, none alone appears to be sufficiently comprehensive. There is, therefore, a great need to develop a more general theoretical framework. I believe that a synthesis of the socio-psychological explanations of ethnicity, a class oriented political economy analysis, and rational choice theory is required to adequately

explain the origins and development of ethnopolitical movements. The synthesis of these three approaches can explain, respectively, the necessary and sufficient conditions for an ethnopolitical movement: 1) ethnic identification; 2) structural socio-economic factors; 3) the rise of political leadership, the founding of ethnic organizations and their political strategies.

First, a socio-psychological analysis is necessary to outline the foundations of an ethnopolitical movement -- by definition, an ethnopolitical movement cannot exist without a conception of ethnicity and its importance to self-identification. These arguments can also help explain why people might follow an ethnic movement. Moreover, socio-psychological arguments provide an explanation for the cultural demands of a movement -- that is, they are important to the identity of the community. However, ethnopolitical movements are not launched unless there are certain objective socio-economic conditions present, and provided that there is leadership. Political economy analyses determine the structural parameters of the environment and suggest what factors might inspire an ethnic movement, while more particular class analyses determine who specifically comes forth to lead and follow. Political economy analyses, furthermore, help us understand the nature of the economic and political demands of the movement. Finally, rational choice arguments help explain how political entrepreneurs found a movement and choose political strategies.

Chapter Three

The Political Economy of Punjab 1966-1979:

Creating Space for Sikh Militancy

Introduction

In hindsight, a major conflict between the Akali Dal and the Congress government of Indira Gandhi should have been predictable. The constitution adopted after independence recognized the need for a federal political system, but the ideological disposition of the Congress leaders coupled with other imperatives -- insecurity vis-à-vis Pakistan, the west, and economic underdevelopment -- dictated the creation of a highly centralized federal structure. The constitution, furthermore, gave the federal government the responsibility for industrial development -- one of the top priorities of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister. The Akali Dal, on the other hand, has always sought a devolution of powers from the centre to the state level -- this perspective was most comprehensively detailed in the party's Anandpur Sahib Resolution (1973). Although Punjab has historically been an industrially weak state, the Akalis, a party primarily composed of Jat Sikh farmers, have been more predisposed to agricultural concerns -- again a perspective diametrically opposed to the central government. As India became increasingly centralized in the 1970s under the rule of Indira Gandhi, the Akali opposition to the centre grew more vociferous. The changes in the Indian political system, however, were necessary but not sufficient conditions for the current crisis in Punjab. To understand how the crisis in Punjab arose and how it developed in the 1980s, we must undertake a detailed analysis of the internal dynamics of Punjab and the Sikh community. In particular, attention shall be paid to the distribution of benefits from economic development, to the competition for leadership in the community, and to the strategies of the primary political actors.

The Sikh nationalist movement, which began in the 1870s, has developed over a series of four phases each distinguished by the social status of the

leadership and their accompanying interests. The first phase, which began in 1873 with the founding of the Singh Sabha organizations and lasted to 1920, was led by the Sikh gentry, primarily urban, of Khatri and Arora castes. The Singh Sabhas were replaced by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and the Akali Dal, led by Master Tara Singh and other urban, middle-class, Khatri and Arora Sikhs, particularly of the Majha region (Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts) of Punjab. In 1962, the Akali Dal split -- Master Tara Singh's faction was marginalized, and the main faction of the party was led by Sant Fateh Singh and 'well-to-do' rural Jat Sikh farmers from the prosperous Malwa district of southeast Punjab.

In 1966, the Punjab was trifurcated, into a unilingual Punjab and Hindi speaking states of Himachel Pradesh and Haryana, after fourteen years of considerable Akali agitation. The Punjab was now 60% Sikh, up from 33% previously. In the new environment, the Akali Dal became a major political force in the state, and succeeded in forming coalition governments in 1967, 1969, and 1977, as well as joining the Janata ministry, which replaced Indira Gandhi, in 1977. As a governing party, the Akali Dal was now responsible for the entire Punjab, and thus could not explicitly pander only to their Sikh constituency. Accordingly, the Akali Dal pursued a pragmatic, 'secular' program which was designed to serve the interests of the 'well-to-do' farming sector, which, of course, included their primary base of support, the 'well-to-do' rural Jat Sikhs of the Malwa region.

With the Akali Dal compelled, by the political demographics of Punjab, to move away from being a party of explicitly Sikh interests and to pursue a more secular strategy, the space was created for Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to rise and capitalize on the opportunity to explicitly

represent the Sikh community. And as a fundamentalist, he did so much more stridently than the Akali Dal ever did. However, to effectively challenge the hegemony of the Akali Dal, Bhindranwale, who was only the leader of a small Sikh 'seminary' (the Damdami Taksal), required a mass base of support and an organizational structure to accommodate it. His message of Sikh revival found a receptive audience amongst the rural Jat Sikhs, primarily of the Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts. These two districts have smaller average farm sizes than other districts in Punjab, which has meant that the rural Jat Sikh farmers of Amritsar and Gurdaspur have fared less well from the Green Revolution than the Jat Sikhs of the prosperous Malwa region. In particular, Bhindranwale cultivated a mass support base amongst the alienated first generation of less-prosperous, rural Jat Sikhs to attend colleges and universities in urban Punjab but unable to find interesting employment. They were organized into the All-India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) led by Amrik Singh — the son of Bhindranwale's predecessor at the Damdami Taksal and his childhood friend, and 'blood-brother.' The Bhindranwale-AISSF nexus, representing the less-prosperous educated rural Jat Sikhs, primarily of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts, seriously challenged the Akali Dal, representing the 'well-to-do' rural Jat Sikhs of the Malwa region, for hegemony within the Sikh community.

The Akali Dal, which perceives itself as the sole representative of the Sikh community and thus cannot allow another party to 'out-Sikh' them, felt compelled to become increasingly nationalistic. When the Dal was defeated in the March 1980 election, they immediately abandoned the 'secular' strategy they had pursued in office and attempted to re-capture their Sikh constituency by initiating an agitation against the Congress government of

Indira Gandhi. As the Dal proceed to move back into the ground usurped by Bhindranwale and the AISSF, the latter moved to an even more nationalistic position. The supporters of Bhindranwale soon felt compelled to pursue an armed strategy. The armed strategy had two objectives: 1) to increase the pressure on the central government, and, more importantly, 2) to stay a step ahead of the Akali Dal and to prevent being 'out-Sikhed' by the other smaller militant groups competing for the leadership of the community. Unfortunately, this self-perpetuating logic continued ad infinitum.

Unlike in 1920 and in 1962 when the leadership of the Sikh national movement switched from one social strata to another quickly and decisively, in the late 1970s and early 1980s a crisis emerged in Punjab when the AISSF/Bhindranwale and the Akali Dal, representing different social stratas of the Jat Sikh community, became locked in a protracted internal conflict while engaged in the most serious Sikh agitation against the central government. After Bhindranwale's death, it was his followers who came to demand secession, although he was always ambiguous on the issue.

Amongst students of nationalism there is a general tendency to regard national groups as a monolithic unit free of internal cleavages. The Sikh nationalist movement, however, clearly illustrates that national groups can be disaggregated by class and other cleavages — caste, sect, region and ideology. The current crisis in Punjab, in fact, reflects an intense competition between two distinct economic groups for hegemony in the community. This study also demonstrates that Sikh secessionism is not driven by a prosperous peripheral group per se but rather by a relatively disadvantaged social strata within the larger national group. Thus, this study refutes the notion that the Sikhs are a prosperous peripheral group

pursuing secession (Horowitz 1985, p251), and supports instead the generally held assumption that it is poorer peripheral groups which seek secession (Hechter 1975; Horowitz 1985, p249). In sum, I believe that the study illustrates the critical importance of the internal dynamics of nationalist movements.

The Centralization of Indian Political and Economic Development

On 26 January 1950, two-and-a-half years after independence, India adopted its current constitution. India officially became a "union of states," or in other words, a federal democracy. However, the balance between the centre and the states was far from equal --

> India is a federation with a strong centre and with certain unitary features. It is so structured as to establish supremacy of the Union, while assuring the autonomy of the states in certain fields...the Constitution has been so effected as to make the Union Government more powerful than the States. In addition, the residuary powers are also conferred on the Union Government by the Constitution...Thus the Indian federal system establishes the paramountcy of the Union over that of the states (Raju 1988, p3).

The centralist tendencies in the constitution were derived from a number of imperatives -- 1) Indian states were never independent colonies like the states and provinces of Canada, Australia and the United States, therefore there was little compulsion to have state rights. 2) The Indian political system was largely shaped by the British (a unitary state) and during the national liberation movement the British sought to buy time by devolving some power to the states but were intent on being able to re-exert control at will. 3) At independence, India faced serious external threats from Pakistan, not to mention the instability generated from partition, and serious internal threats from communist insurgencies. 4) The nationalist

movement tried to develop a secular Indian 'nationalism'[1] and were intent on central planning, neither of which was conducive to federalism (Jeffery 1986, p191).

Although the Indian union was conceived of as 'cooperative federalism,' the centralist tendencies in the Indian political system became progressively more unitary, under the charismatic leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, and the sheer dominance of his Congress Party throughout most of India from independence to the late 1960s. Following the death of Nehru, 27 May 1964, the euphoria of independence and the lustre of the Congress began to wear thin. Beginning in 1966 much of India was shaken by violent political dissent, led by students, workers, professionals, civil servants, and communal groups, and caused by food shortages, inflation, economic stagnation, and growing inequality (Frankel 1978, p341). At the same time,

> the Congress party, confronted by new demands on an already strained patronage system, was losing its capacity to function as an umbrella organization. Bitter internal disputes over the allocation of party tickets at the states led to large-scale defections that splintered the organization around the factional and caste groupings at its core. Meanwhile, the ruling party's advantage in a divided opposition was reduced by efforts of the two communist parties on the one hand, and the conservative and communal parties on the other, to arrange electoral adjustments and alliances (Frankel 1978, p343).

In the 1967 elections Congress, politically weakened, was unable to move beyond its traditional principles of secular social-democracy, and, for legitimation, its ties to the liberation movement. Indira Gandhi, the new Congress leader, was unable, moreover, to command the respect of her father,

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[1]. Indian 'nationalism' is not a true nationalism since there is not a single Indian nation. India is a federation of nations and Indian 'nationalism' connotes a loyalty to India, which is technically patriotism.

Nehru. Consequently, the Congress popular vote fell from 45% in 1962 to 41% in 1967 but more dramatically, due to the vagaries of a 'first-past-the-post' electoral system, Congress lost 21% of its parliamentary (Lok Sabha) seats and suffered losses in all state elections (Frankel 1978, p353-4). By the summer of 1967, after further politicking and coalition building, eight of India's then seventeen states were governed by non-Congress ministries. Previously, only the constitutionally and historically unique state of Jammu and Kashmir was governed by a party other than Congress, apart from the brief Communist led coalition in Kerala 1957-9. The 1967 elections are thus appropriately viewed as the beginning of the end of the Congress Party dominance in India.

Gandhi's election landslide in 1971[2], and Congress victories in a number of states in 1971-2, appeared to be a re-assertion of Congress dominance, but the political landscape was qualitatively different from the era of Nehru's hegemony. In an excellent article, Brass argues persuasively that shortly after Gandhi's massive electoral victory the nature of centre-state relations in India were irreversibly changed (Brass 1988, p172). Under Nehru, the states operated essentially autonomously, with the centre only "intervening as an impartial arbiter" to resolve protracted conflicts. Gandhi, on the other hand, intervened in state politics with partisan concerns and "[c]entre-state politics became increasingly interlinked and interdependent and the autonomy of state politics disappeared" (Brass 1988, p174). Moreover, he adds, whole process of aggregating power was reversed. When Nehru dominated the centre during the 1950s and 1960s, "politicians who wanted substantial power and control of government resources had to

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2. Congress won 350 of 434 seats.

build their influence from the districts to the state level." After the death of Nehru and the rise of Indira Gandhi, however, "politicians in both the districts and the states had to please the party leadership at the centre to gain power and resources in the states" (Brass 1988, p174).

In the latter period, of course, the centre was not so much an institution but rather the person of Indira Gandhi. In the words of a noted scholar, "[l]ike an empress, Mrs. Gandhi became the source from which all legitimate authority flowed, the indispensable leader of the Congress party as the personal symbol of the nation." And, "[l]ike Durga, she wielded enormous power for destroying her enemies" (Frankel 1978, p462). Brass concludes, that "[i]n order to maintain power at the centre, Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress felt obliged to centralize power, nationalize issues, and intervene increasingly in state and even district politics" (Brass 1988, p174). But, Frankel and Brass both argue, Gandhi did not restructure the party, she rather simply chose to surround herself with sycophants.

At the state level, consequently, the new parties on the political scene, from the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in West Bengal to the religious oriented Akali Dal in Punjab, felt that "the growing centralization of power within the Indian federal system ha[d] gone so far as to make the states more as a set of subordinates than equals [sic]" (Raju 1988, p6). Apart from the purely political and personality clashes, "the nature of the Union-State conflicts that confronts the nation today can be stated in a few propositions:

> It has been a protest against the misuses of the provisions of the constitution and powers by the Union Government for political advantages...It has been a protest against the encroachment of the Union government on the autonomy of the states assured under the existing provisions of the constitution...it has been an

> attack also against the injustices done to the states in the developmental, legislative, administrative and financial spheres by the Union government, that is now controlled by the Congress Party...Lastly, it has been a plea for more federalization than centralization and a plea for more autonomy by devolution of powers and financial resources to the states (Raju 1988, p7).

Raju argues that a number of federal structures have made it difficult for states led by non-Congress parties to govern. In particular, the planning commission and the financial imbalance between the states and the union severely restricts the states' ability "to perform their regular and developmental functions" (Raju 1988, p9). He also believes that the modalities for local government, both urban and rural, are ineffective and weakens the democratic structure at it's base (1988, p11-12). Another problem is that the constitutional division of powers gives the central government a bias towards urban and industrial development, while "[s]tate governments are oriented toward agricultural concerns and constituencies" (Leaf 1985, p480).

In the case of the Congress central government and the Akali Dal in Punjab, the constitutional division of powers reinforces their differing social bases of support. The Congress Party has become an unlikely coalition of the urban industrial classes and the harijans, the urban and rural labouring 'outcastes' (Leaf 1985, p478-9), whereas the Akali Dal traditionally has been a party of Jat Sikh farmers, ranging from those with relatively small holdings to large landowners. Leaf goes on to discuss a number of the agricultural issues which created conflict between the Akalis and the Congress Party after Indira Gandhi was re-elected in January 1980--land reform, agricultural trade and prices, irrigation, amongst others.

Finally, and perhaps most dramatically, the single election commission

for both the states and union, and Article 356 of the Constitution which permits the Union government to dismiss any state government and declare President's rule or martial law at will, has left the state governments completely and utterly subordinate to the prerogatives of the centre. Between 1950 and 1964, Nehru invoked Article 356 on six occasions, but between 1966 and 1984 Article 356 was applied over fifty times -- nine times by the Janata government in 1977 and the rest by Indira Gandhi. Punjab has been under President's rule now for four-and-a-half years continuously and for six-and-a-half years of the last eight. In fact, the last three democratically elected governments of Punjab have been dismissed prematurely by the centre under Article 356. Furthermore, in 1991, the Congress central government twice cancelled scheduled elections in Punjab[3], and, instead, extended martial law. The working relationship between the centre and a number of states deteriorated to such an extent that in 1983 the government of India created a federal commission, chaired by Justice Sarkaria, to investigate centre-state relations. The commission, which tabled its report late in 1987, concluded that "[t]here is now need for greater decentralization, both formally and informally, and adequate machinery for regular consultation between the union, states, and local governments with a view to evolving a consensus and reducing conflicts" (Sen 1988, p1637). The commission made a number of recommendations -- including reform of Article 356, political appointments, finance, developmental and

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[3]. The first election was scheduled for 21 June 1991 by the caretaker government of Chandra Shekar but the just-elected Congress government cancelled the poll within thirty-six hours of the voting. The Congress later reneged on their own promise to have an election on 25 September 1991. Personally, I do not believe the Congress government ever had any intention of holding the September poll.

other economic infrastructure, and language -- but the changes envisioned were not drastic, rather they were intended "to re-construct Union-State relations in accordance with the letter and spirit of the constitution" (Raju 1988, p7).

In sum, the Indian political system became increasingly centralized under Indira Gandhi. Conflict between the centre and the Akali Dal, long a centrifugal force in Indian politics, thus became inevitable. However, to understand precisely how the conflict with the centre emerged, we must undertake a detailed analysis of the internal dynamics of Punjab and the Sikh community in the post-1966 period.

The Punjabi Suba and the Political Fortunes of the Akali Dal

The re-demarcation of Punjab in 1966, the Punjabi Suba, dramatically altered the course of politics in Punjab. The state of Punjab, which had been partitioned in 1947 into Muslim West Punjab (Pakistan) and Hindu and Sikh East Punjab (India), was now divided into a linguistically Punjabi state and the two Hindi speaking states of Haryana and Himachel Pradesh. In the new Indian state of Punjab the Sikhs suddenly became a majority, forming 60% of the population as opposed to 33% prior to the Punjabi Suba (and five times greater than the colonial era). For the Akali Dal, which had fought strenuously for the Punjabi Suba from the early 1950s, the moment was one to savour. With the Sikhs now constituting 60% of the population the electoral possibilities of the Akali Dal were considerably enhanced. Politics in the immediate post-Punjabi Suba era, however, did not evolve quite as the Akalis had envisioned and the Akali euphoria soon dissipated as the hard political realities of Punjab became apparent.

The 1967 state elections, in Punjab and elsewhere, were a watershed in the political history of India for it marked the beginning of the decline of the Congress Party. In Punjab, the Congress Party captured 48 seats, twice as many as the Akali Dal, its nearest rival, but four seats shy of a majority. After the 1967 election the Akali Dal adopted a political strategy of coalition building[4]. Under the leadership of Gurnam Singh the Akali Dal formed a United Front Ministry on the 8th of March 1967. The Front was constituted by all non-Congress members of the Assembly (See Table 1). Although the coalition was an unwieldy alliance of disparate groups, it was, ironically, intra-Akali factionalism which finally brought the government down on the 22nd of November 1967 (see Narang 1983, p179). The rival ministry -- led by Lachhman Singh Gill, a "trusted lieutenant of Sant Fateh Singh and vice-president of the SGPC" -- survived only to August 1968 (see Narang 1983, p182). Punjab went to the polls again in early 1969, and the Akali Dal, which was once more united, emerged victorious, although shy of a majority, despite having ten percent less of the popular vote than the Congress Party (See Table 1). The Akali Dal, again under the leadership of Gurnam Singh, pursued a coalition strategy and formed a ministry with the Jana Sangh on 17 February 1969. Once more, however, intra-Akali factionalism defeated Gurnam Singh. His ministry fell on the 25th of March 1970 when the Akali "high command" led by Sant Fateh Singh expelled Gurnam Singh, the Chief Minister of Punjab, and his allies from the party (see Narang 1983, p187). After Gurnam Singh's ignominious dismissal, Prakash

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4. Baldev Raj Nayar (1966) has characterized the Akali political strategies, between independence and 1966, as constitutional, infiltrational, and agitational. In keeping with Nayar's terminology, the post-1967 Akali strategy could be categorized as coalitional.

Singh Badal formed a new Akali ministry, again with Jana Sangh support, on 28 March 1970 (Narang 1983, p187). However, the Jana Sangh withdrew their support in July 1970. The Badal ministry was able to stumble along from one crisis to the next but in June 1971 Badal had to ask the Governor to dismiss the assembly and hold new elections. In the elections of March 1972 the Congress Party captured a convincing majority (See Table 1) under the leadership of Giani Zail Singh.

TABLE ONE: Punjab Assembly Elections (1967, 1969, 1972)

	1967		1969		1972	
	Seats	% Vote	Seats	% Vote	Seats	% Vote
Congress	48	37.6	38	39.2	66	42.8
Akali (Sant)	24	20.5	43	29.6	24	27.7
Akali (Master)	2	4.2	--	--	--	--
Jana Sangh	9	9.9	8	8.8	--	5.0
CPI	5	5.2	3	4.5	10	6.7
CPI(M)	3	3.3	2	3.3	1	3.2
others	13	19.3	10	14.6	3	14.6
total	104	100.0	104	100.0	104	100.0

(Source: Narang 1983)

The first three elections in the post-Punjabi Suba era brought the Akali Dal a painful message: not all Sikhs vote for the Akali Dal. In the three elections the Akali vote was consistent, between 25-30% (taking the two Akali parties together in 1967), but in a state that was now 60% Sikh the Akalis were getting, at best, only half of the Sikh vote. Electoral politics poses a dilemma for the Akalis: the Sikh community provides a reliable base of support, but "the more the party tries to broaden its base

(say by collaborating with other secular parties or by raising non-religious broad based demands), the more it gets alienated from its own community" (Kumar 1988, p108).

As early as 1962 when Sant Fateh Singh became the undisputed leader of the Akali Dal, shunting aside Master Tara Singh, the party began to shift away from the narrow confines of the Sikh community --

> Sant Fateh Singh condemned the separatist attitude of the earlier leadership, emphasized the age old common bonds of the Sikhs with the Hindus, his primary concern with the unity and integrity of India and called for a new Punjab state on the basis of language and culture, 'without any consideration of the percentage of Sikh population in it.' In the election manifesto of his Akali Dal for the general election of 1962 it was stressed that the Akali Dal was committed to strengthening India's national unity...It made absolutely no reference to any particular grievance or demand of the Sikhs...That was a sharp contrast to Master Tara Singh's demand for a 56% Sikh majority province (Puri 1988, p306).

Ordinarily, a party which moves away from its constituency could be expected to lose support among its constituents but the quick attainment of the Punjabi Suba, which resulted in a Sikh majority state regardless of Sant Fateh Singh's 'secular' strategy, accorded him and the Akali Dal legitimacy amongst the Sikh community, despite the shift in orientation, at least for a time. Under the leadership of Sant Fateh Singh the election manifestoes of the Akali Dal in the 1967, 1969, and the 1972 state elections, as well as the 1971 Lok Sabha election, were framed "in terms of secular economic and political programs" (Puri 1988, p309; see also Puri 1983). While the Akalis led coalition governments in 1967 and 1969, the 'secular' strategy continued to pay dividends. However, the resounding defeat at the hands of the Congress Party in the 1972 election put the 'moderates' and their 'secular' strategy in a vulnerable position as the more nationalistic Akalis urged a

return to a more 'Sikh-based' orientation (Puri 1988; Kumar 1988).

Other events of the early 1970s also reinforced the need to return to a more nationalist orientation, none more so than the Congress ministry of Giani Zail Singh in Punjab (1972-1977). Zail Singh, a veteran politician of poor artisan origins, simply tried to 'out-Sikh' the Akalis --

> he had mastered the precise art of pandering to the religious aspirations of the hardliners: it was difficult for the Akalis to pick holes in the functioning of a chief minister almost more devout than themselves. His regime was magnificent in its populist scheming: he started the Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar, linked all the states' best known gurdwaras with a 400 kilometre highway called Guru Gobind Singh Marg, re-christened over a dozen state-run hospitals after gurus, and even went along to alter the name of a small town outside Chandigarh after one of Guru Gobind Singh's sons (India Today, 31 October 1981, p32).

The Akali Dal, in its attempt to win power, had distanced itself from the Sikh community and its role as the pre-eminent Sikh political party was threatened as a result. When seen from this perspective, the drafting of the infamous Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which defined the Sikhs as a quam or nation and called for a dramatic devolution of power from the centre to the states, by a working committee of the Akali Dal is perfectly understandable (Kumar 1988, p114; Puri 1988, p309).

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution

The original version was drafted by an Akali Dal Working Committee headed by Surjit Singh Barnala, and included Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Balwant Singh amongst others (Kapur 1985, p192), in the town of Anandpur Sahib, October 1973. It was not until October 1978, however, that the party approved the Resolution, with some revisions. The October 1978, version signed by Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal is the version which has gained most credibility. The original draft of 1973 was intended to be a comprehensive

statement of the ideology and purpose of the Akali Dal in the post-Punjabi Suba era and a reassertion of the role of the party within the Sikh community after its limited success in pursuing a 'secular' strategy.

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution is a clear illustration of the socio-psychological importance of ethnic identification. It begins with a clear and emphatic statement of the Akali Dal's perceived relationship with the Sikh community: "The Shiromani Akali Dal is the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh nation and as such is fully entitled to its representation" (in Joshi 1984, p55). The resolution continues by stating the general purposes of the party:

> The Shiromani Akali Dal shall ever strive to achieve the following aims: i) Propagation of Sikhism and its code of conduct; [and] denunciation of atheism. ii) <u>To preserve and keep alive the concept of distinct and independent identity of the Panth</u> and to create an environment in which national sentiments and aspirations of the Sikh Panth will find full expression, satisfaction and growth (in Joshi 1984, p55; emphasis added).

To fulfil its aims, the Resolution detailed a number of religious, political and economic policies. Among the ten religious policies is a commitment to "Baptizing the Sikhs (Amrit Prachar) on a vast scale" and pursue not only an all-India Gurdwara Act but to endeavour to bring Sikh temples and shrines around the world under a single management system (in Joshi 1984, p56-7). The principal political objectives of the Resolution, which clearly illustrate the party's preference for decentralization, are as follows:

> i) The Shiromani Akali Dal is determined to strive by all possible means to: a) Have all those Punjabi-speaking areas deliberately kept out of Punjab [at the time of the Punjabi Suba]...merged with Punjab to constitute a single administrative unit where the interests of the Sikhs and Sikhism are specifically protected. b) In this new Punjab, and in other states, <u>the Centre's interference would be restricted to</u>

> defence, foreign relations, currency and general communication; all other departments would be in the jurisdiction of Punjab (and other states) which would be fully entitled to frame their own laws on these subjects for administration. For the above departments of the Centre, Punjab and other states [would] contribute in proportion to representation in the Parliament....ii) The Shiromani Akali Dal would also endeavour to have the Indian Constitution recast on real federal principles with equal representation at the Centre for all the states (in Joshi 1984, p 58; emphasis added).

The second part of this policy is not entirely clear but presumably it is a demand for the creation of an American style senate, or, in Canadian parlance, an elected, equal and effective second chamber of parliament.

The economic policies in the Resolution are perhaps the most perplexing. The political rhetoric of the Resolution is very clearly an appeal for a decentralization of power, but the economic policies are shrouded in a socialist rhetoric. In the preamble of the economic section of the Resolution it is stated that "the levers of economic powers continue to be in the hands of big traders, capitalists and monopolists" (in Joshi 1984, p60). The preamble continues by saying,

> [i]n the rural areas, the Akali Dal is determined to help the weaker classes, like the scheduled castes, backward classes, landless tenants, ordinary laborers, the poor and middle class farmers. For such a purpose it stands for meaningful land reform which envisages a ceiling of thirty standard acres and the distribution of excess land among the poor farmers (in Joshi 1984, p60).

Specific agricultural policies include,

> b) The Shiromani Akali Dal shall work for the modernization of farming and would also try to enable the middle class and poor farmers to seek loans and inputs made available by different agencies. c) The Shiromani Akali Dal shall try to fix the prices of the agricultural produce on the basis of the returns of the middle class farmers...d) The Shiromani Akali Dal stands for complete nationalization of the trade in foodgrains and as such, shall endeavour to nationalize the wholesale trade in foodgrains through the establishment

of state agencies (in Joshi 1984, p61).

In the industrial sector, "[t]he Shiromani Akali Dal strongly advocates that all key industries should be brought under the public sector" (in Joshi 1984, p62). Moreover, "the Shiromani Akali Dal would try its best i) to fix need-based wages for industrial workers...iii) to re-assess the minimum wages of agricultural labour and to effect necessary improvements, if and when necessary" (in Joshi 1984, p63; emphasis added). The last significant economic policy was as follows:

> The Shiromani Akali Dal stands for full employment in the country. For such a purpose it is of the firm opinion that the government must provide immediate employment to the educated and trained persons, otherwise reasonable unemployment allowance should be paid to them. This amount should be shared by the Centre and state government (in Joshi 1984, p63).

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution has generated considerable controversy. The long and convoluted process of drafting and making public the Resolution, not to mention the problem of translation at each stage and media editing, allowed various versions of the 'Resolution' to come into circulation and Akali leaders vying for supremacy complicated matters by supporting versions which best suited their own purposes (Jeffery 1986, p127). For others focusing on the 'Sikhs-are-a-nation' statement, "the Anandpur Sahib Resolution clearly provides the ideological basis for the demand for Khalistan" (Kapur 1985, p195). Joshi, on the other hand, states emphatically that "[t]he Akali Dal was not seeking separation from the Indian union but more autonomy for a Sikh dominated Punjab...A perusal of the three different versions...would show that not a single one talks of a 'sovereign state'" (Joshi 1984, p44). A more balanced view argues that the Anandpur Sahib Resolution "is not simply a struggle for restructuring of

union-state relations. Nor, conversely, does it necessarily signify an urge for a Sikh Homeland." It is, rather, "a comprehensive statement which includes the Akali Dal's basic assumptions and beliefs and religious and political goals. Like most political manifestoes, consistency or logic are not necessarily its strong points" (Puri 19??, p47 and p48). The Anandpur Sahib Resolution analyzed from a traditional left or right perspective is perhaps inconsistent, but when viewed from the interests of the Akali Dal and its constituency, the Resolution is completely consistent.

As argued in the previous section, when Sant Fateh Singh overtook the leadership of Master Tara Singh in 1962 he pulled the Akali Dal to a more 'secular' strategy when he argued for the Punjabi Suba purely from linguistic rather than religious criteria. The attainment of the Punjabi Suba in 1966 gave the strategy legitimacy and it continued to be legitimate while the Akali Dal was able to play the leading role in coalition governments. The 'secular' strategy, however, distanced the Akali Dal from its primary constituency, the devout, 'well-to-do' Jat Sikh peasantry. Thus, when the Akali Dal was soundly defeated in the 1972 election by the Congress Party, it was compelled to adopt a platform which served the interests of its power base. Hence, the opening line of the resolution, "[t]he Shiromani Akali Dal is the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh Nation and as such is fully entitled to its representation" (in Joshi 1984, p55). Ajmer Singh, secretary of the Akali Dal, confirms in the forward of the draft presented to the General House of the party that "the Shiromani Akali Dal has decided to redraw the aims and objectives of the Sikh Panth...so that by so doing it may serve the larger interests of the Panth, the Punjab, as also the country, and thus live up to

the expectations of the Sikhs" (in Joshi 1984, p46). It is, therefore, very clear that the Akali Dal was making a concerted effort in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution to re-ingratiate itself with their Sikh supporters -- 'well-to-do' Jat Sikh farmers. Another goal of the Resolution was the transfer of political and economic power from the centre to the states. The religious, political, and economic policies in the Resolution were thus constructed specifically with that objective in mind.

Although the agricultural policies appear to be shrouded in a socialist rhetoric, most analysts regard the policies as being 'pro-capitalist farmer.' The Resolution was committed to the "modernization" of agriculture, which primarily benefits well-to-do farmers. Although the Resolution speaks of land reforms, the suggested ceiling of thirty acres actually represented an increase from the existent ceiling of 17.5 acres (Joshi 1984, p65). The nationalization of foodgrains, traditionally "controlled by the Hindu baniyas," would also benefit middle level farmers (Joshi 1984, p65), who were, of course, primarily Sikhs. For industrial workers, where Sikhs tend to be disadvantaged, the Resolution called for fixed minimum wages, but for agricultural labours, who are usually hired by 'well-to-do' Sikh farmers, the Resolution agreed only to "re-assess the minimum wages...if and when necessary." Finally, the call for generous unemployment benefits for the educated unemployed prophetically anticipated the needs of a burgeoning Sikh economic group. In sum,

> [t]he demands for state autonomy, though it may have a variety of other justifications in the framework of the ideologies of different political parties, can also be seen meaningfully in the Punjab context only as a demand for growth of these [vested agricultural] economic interests under the aegis of their own political representatives (Bhashan 1983, p62).

Although the economic resolutions appear contradictory when analyzed from a traditional left-right perspective, they do, however, represent the interests of the Akali Dal's primary constituency. Some of the socialist rhetoric, moreover, can be seen as an attempt to attract some of the political support given to the Congress and the Communists and Naxalites--there was a significant Naxalite movement in Punjab between 1968 and 1972--who all advocated land reform and derived considerable support from poor and scheduled caste Sikhs.

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution not only served imperatives within the dynamics of the Sikh community, it was also a response by the Akali Dal to the constitutional centralization and economic control by the centre. Punjab has never been industrially strong, and in the first ten years following the Punjabi Suba in 1966, Punjab fell from eighth position within India (with 4.1% of industrial value added) to tenth position (with 2.8% share of the all-India value added in 1977-8 [Johar et al 1983, p153]). The problem in Punjab, was that the centre controlled the growth of industries through licensing (Leaf 1985, p488). Furthermore, central government investment in Punjabi industry has been inadequate -- Punjab received only 1% of central investment up to 1975 (Johar et al 1983, p166). Consequently, "Punjabis widely believed, and still believe, that under the governments of Indira Gandhi they had been economically exploited by a kind of internal mercantile system" (Leaf 1980, p489). The Anandpur Sahib Resolution was thus framed in response to internal and external compulsions.

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution, therefore, ought to be seen as a document designed by the Akali Dal to ensure the loyalty of its constituency. Moreover, the Resolution was completely consistent with the

traditional platform of the party. The anomaly in Akali behaviour, was not the Resolution, but the 'secular' strategy pursued by Sant Fateh Singh for the Punjabi Suba and subsequently in the elections of 1967, 1969, and 1972. The declaration of the Sikhs as a "nation" only reiterated Master Tara Singh's statement made at a party conference in Amritsar, August 1944. The call for a devolution of power was just a less-dramatic demand than the Sikh Homeland policy made by the party in 1946. Furthermore, at the all-Akali conference at Batala, 30 September 1968, when Master Tara Singh's Akali faction united with the Sant faction, the party recognized the need for devolution and after losing the Lok Sabha elections of 1971 the Akali Chief Minister of Punjab, Prakash Singh Badal, called for a devolution of powers (Narang 1983, p213-5).

Finally, it ought to be noted that the demand for a significant devolution of power was not unique to the Akali Dal -- Jyoti Basu (the Communist leader of West Bengal), Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir, and the DMK of Tamil Nadu were all advocating devolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Moreover, the Dal's devolution proposals were intended for all states of India, not just for Punjab. Not coincidentally, the demand for devolution "is almost wholly a phenomenon of the non-Hindi speaking periphery" (Hargrave Jr. 1983, p1172). Prior to 1967, conflict between the centre and the state was accommodated within the framework of the Congress Party. After the collapse of Congress Party dominance in 1967, however, state grievances have given rise to regional political parties to oppose Congress rule in the Centre (Hargrave Jr. 1983, p1171-2).

Although the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was written in 1973 and affirmed in 1978, it did not become a significant issue until the early

1980s. With the arrival of Sikh militants, "to be against the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was almost to be opposed to the Sikh religion itself" (Jeffery 1986, p129). The Akali leaders who had written the document in large measure to maintain support in the community after their ill-fated coalition governments, were then compelled, by the community, to vigorously pursue the radical decentralization of the federal system envisioned in the Resolution. The Akalis were therefore forced to confront the central government which, in turn "totally mis-interpreted the spirit, background, sociological factors and political imbalances which led to [the] framing of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution" (Joshi 1984, p41). Although the ASR became a major issue, it was temporarily displaced by more pressing political events.

Return to a 'Secular' Strategy

Very soon after the drafting of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution the deteriorating political situation in India compelled the Akali Dal to again pursue a secular strategy. With the increasing despotism of Indira Gandhi, the Akali Dal openly aligned itself with Jayaprakash Narayan, the pre-eminent opposition leader in the country (Puri 1983, p115). And in June 1975 when Indira Gandhi suppressed the democratic process with her declaration of a state of Emergency, the Akali Dal immediately began a 'Save Democracy Morcha.' During the course of the Emergency, which lasted until January 1977, when fresh elections were called, over 40,000 Akalis were arrested during their agitation. As a result, the Akali Dal started "to become a part of the anti-Congress national mainstream against the emergency regime. Living together in jails during the emergency period with the political leaders of other non-Congress parties helped further a certain

secularization of their political perceptions and priorities" (Puri 1988, p310). Although the failed coalition attempts in the early 1970s had compelled the Akali Dal to draft the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the severity of the subsequent political situation in India allowed the party to maintain its primary support as it again pursued a secular strategy.

In the 1977 elections the primary issues were obviously the Emergency and the restoration of the democratic process. Thus, although the Akali Dal had drafted the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, it is not surprising that the Akali Dal, in the election and subsequently as the government, "continued to stress secular regional issues and programs of economic development" (Puri 1988, p310). In the Punjab state election, held June 1977, the Akali Dal, although receiving less popular support than the Congress Party, scored a dramatic victory by capturing 58 seats, one shy of a majority (see table 2).

TABLE TWO: Punjab Assembly Elections (1977 and 1980)

	1977		1980	
	Seats	% Vote	Seats	% Vote
Congress	17	34.1	63	48.0
Akali Dal	58	31.4	37	26.9
Janata	25	15.0	--	4.7
CPI	7	6.1	9	6.5
CPI(M)	8	3.5	5	4.1
others	2	9.9	3	9.8
total	117	100.0	117	100.0

(Source: Narang 1983)

Again, Prakash Singh Badal formed a ministry in coalition with the Janata Party (the reconstituted Jana Sangh, which had obtained 25 seats for a second place finish, see table 2). In the Lok Sabha (federal parliament)

election of March 1977 the Akalis captured nine of thirteen seats, while the Congress received none. Moreover, two Akali Members of Parliament were incorporated into the cabinet of the Janata-led coalition ministry of Morar Desai, which further "signified that the Akali Dal was coming out of its narrow grooves into the anti-Congress mainstream of Indian national politics, relegating religion to the background" (Puri 1983, p115). The Akali-Janata coalitions in Punjab have struck many people as peculiar since they represent distinct ethnic groups. However, in a state that is at most 60% Sikh and at least 40% Hindu, somehow the two communities will have to be reflected in the government. Far from being peculiar, the Akali-Janata coalition, was based on traditional economic alliances rather than ethnic ties. In this case,

> [t]he Akali-Janata government...brought the two economically dominant sectors of the state, namely the Jats from the rural areas and the Hindu commercial and industrial class of the urban areas, into power. These two groups are the main beneficiaries of the ongoing process of industrialization and the Green Revolution (Malik 1986, p350).

The imperatives of governing in such a coalition thus compelled the Akalis to pursue a 'secular' political and economic development strategy. To have pushed only the interests of their Sikh constituency, certainly as outlined in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, would have forced the Janata out of the coalition.

Although the Anandpur Sahib Resolution did not significantly contribute to the platform of the Akali-led government, it still had currency in the party. First, the Resolution was endorsed in Amritsar by the General House of the Akali Dal in August 1977 (India Today, 15 November 1982, p75). At the 18th All-India Akali Conference, 28-9 October 1978 in

Ludhiana, the Resolution as drafted was not ratified per se, but rather twelve resolutions were "adopted in the light of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution" (preamble to the twelve resolutions, in Joshi 1984, p47). Many of the twelve resolutions were very similar in content and direction to those in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution and in time the two sets of resolutions became entangled with one another, further confusing the situation. Two somewhat antagonistic forces were operative at the Ludhiana conference. First, the Emergency explicitly reinforced the demand for a decentralization of power. The first resolution, moved by SGPC President Gurcharan Singh Tohra and seconded Prakash Singh Badal, adopted at Ludhiana, criticized the centralization of powers and the suspension of "fundamental rights" during the Emergency and called for "the progressive decentralization of powers" (in Joshi 1984, p48). The next paragraph of the resolution reaffirms the Akalis commitment to devolution, or the principle of state autonomy, and mentions that the party had adopted previous resolutions to this effect in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution itself and also at the All-India Akali Conference in Batala, 1968. However, instead of continuing by re-asserting its demand that the powers of the Centre be restricted solely to "defence, foreign relations, currency and general communication," the Akali Dal much more moderately resolved, that

> the Shiromani Akali Dal emphatically urges upon the Janata government to take cognizance of the different linguistic and cultural sections, religious minorities as also the voice of millions of people and recast the constitutional structure of the country on real and meaningful federal principles to obviate the possibility of any danger to national unity and the integrity of the country and further, to enable the states to play a useful role for the progress and prosperity of the Indian people in their respective areas by the meaningful exercise of their powers (in Joshi 1984, p48).

At this time the Akalis had to be more moderate for two reasons. First, any major resolution which was nationalistic would bring down their government in Punjab. Second, since they were in coalition with the Janata Party at the state level, the Akali Dal could not aggressively attack a central government ruled predominantly by the Janata Party. In the twelve resolutions adopted in Ludhiana in October 1978 the Akali Dal eliminated the nationalistic rhetoric of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. And the political and economic resolutions were generally framed in a secular fashion to refer to Punjab, the Punjabis or particular economic groups, instead of ethnic groups, with a few minor exceptions. In sum, the imperatives of Punjabi politics again compelled the Akali Dal to pursue a more 'secular' strategy. Once again, however, the danger of such a strategy was that, once it ceased to pay dividends, the party risked alienating its primary supporters, Sikhs.

The Secularization and Politicization of the SGPC

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) was formed on 12 December 1920, and two days later the Shiromani Akali Dal was established to "aid and assist" the SGPC (Gobinder Singh 1986, p69). Now is not the appropriate time to undertake a detailed history of the SGPC -- Gobinder Singh (1986) and Rajiv Kapur (1986) provide excellent histories of the SGPC -- but a brief overview is in order. The SGPC was formed by orthodox Khalsa Sikhs to obtain control of the gurdwaras (Sikh temples) and shrines. Gurdwaras have been "[c]entral to the development of the Sikh political culture at all stages...The gurdwaras in their rudimentary form had begun to be set up during the life of Guru Nanak. Under exhortations of the Guru these places had emerged as the nuclei of social and religious life of the

Sikhs" (Gobinder Singh 1986, p54). When the British rulers of India passed the Gurdwaras Act of 1925 all the gurdwaras and shrines of Punjab came under the legal jurisdiction of the SGPC. Subsequently, the SGPC has become, in essence, a parliament for the Sikhs. Elections to the body are held every five years. Any baptized Sikh over the age of twenty-five, who is not an apostate, may run as a candidate and the franchise is extended to all Sikhs in Punjab who are not apostate (Gobinder Singh 1986, p79-81).

The SGPC, until very recently at least, has been very important in Sikh and Punjabi politics, and, "[i]n fact, the majority, since its inception in 1925, except for short intervals, always has been controlled by the Akali Dal, despite continuous competition from other parties and groups" (Wallace 1988, p18). Control of the SGPC has provided the Akali Dal with not only tremendous financial resources, the body had a budget in 1981 of Rs 65 million, but also the human, institutional and moral resources of the gurdwaras (Gobinder Singh 1986, p85 and p91). In short, the Akali Dal has derived considerable political legitimacy from its control of the SGPC (Kapur 1986, p196).

The significant point to be made here is that the shift in orientation and strategy of the Akali Dal in the mid-1960s into the 1970s was also reflected in the SGPC --

> During the fifties and the early sixties when Master Tara Singh was the president of both these organizations [SGPC and SAD], the SGPC's political demands were projected as the demands of the 'Sikh people'...But when Sant Fateh Singh, who championed the cause of a unilingual state of Punjab, assumed the leadership of both these bodies and the state of his design was achieved, the political demands of the SGPC began to be articulated as those of the entire population living in Punjab (Punjabis). The probable reason for this shift was that the Shiromani Akali Dal led by Sant Fateh Singh had installed its government in the state in 1967 in

> coalition with parties like the Jana Sangh and the CPI which predominantly had a Hindu base. To make the coalition a success, he had initiated the mode of Hindu-Sikh Ekta (amity) (Gobinder Singh 1986, p261).

Gobinder Singh's comprehensive survey of SGPC members in the post-Punjabi Suba era confirms that the body has become overwhelmingly political, and shifted away from its religious origins. Only 2% of its members were recruited from religious institutions, while 80% were recruited from the Akali Dal, and the rest from either one of the three levels of government (Gobinder Singh 1986, p171). Thus it is not surprising that the connection between SGPC representatives and the Sikh community is generally political, rather than religious (Gobinder Singh 1986, p203-4). Nor is it surprising that the business of the body has not been particularly religious -- of those members surveyed 46% declared political issues to be of primary importance and 25% stated religious issues (Gobinder Singh 1986, p219-220) and of the 151 resolutions passed by the SGPC between 1966 and 1980 only 34 (22.52%) could be considered explicitly religious while the others where either structural, economic, cultural, or political (Gobinder Singh 1986, p242-262). In sum, since the Akali Dal has continuously dominated the SGPC the latter has come to reflect the political, economic and social orientation of the former.

In 1979 elections were held for the SGPC for the first time since 1965. The Akali Dal easily gained control of the SGPC again (they won 95% of the elected seats). It is interesting to note, however, that the Akali Dal contested the elections on a secular platform -- the political or constitutional issue of more powers to the state. And those groups which sought to stress religion or a 'Sikh homeland,' were routed (Puri 1988, p312). Thus, although the Akali Dal was not pursuing the demand for state

autonomy in the political sphere, it was keeping the idea alive in the party and amongst the Sikh community. It must, however, be stressed that since religion did not play a significant role, "the elections did not focus on the work that the SGPC is supposed to do" (Suri and Dogra 1988, p126). Therefore, as in the political sphere, the Akali Dal was leaving itself vulnerable on its 'Sikh flank.'

Factionalism in the Akali Dal

Another factor which allowed for the rise of Sikh militancy, although less important than the pursuit of a 'secular' political strategy by the Akali Dal, was serious factionalism in the party. As has been evident, in the immediate post-Punjabi Suba era, the Akali Dal found itself in a radically altered position and, unfortunately, at that time suffered the deaths of veteran leaders like Master Tara Singh, Sant Fateh Singh, and Gurnam Singh which created a leadership vacuum (V. D. Chopra 1984, p68). Another significant change, as a result of forming the government, was that "from 1967 onwards, the grip of leaders who were strictly religious, including Sant Fateh Singh himself, over the Akali organization had begun to loosen. The ministerial wing had started emerging as a decisive factor in Akali politics" (A. S. Narang 1983, p204). All political parties, particularly if they form the government, must establish procedures to balance their parliamentary wing and their organizational wing but the Akali Dal has the additional difficulty of accommodating the SGPC --

> One major reason for frequent splits in the Akali Dal is that each of these three tries to become more powerful than the other two in the system. The three wings rarely work in harmony. The SGPC tries to control the political wing -- the Akali Party -- by using its religious authority, while the Akali Party tries to

capture the SGPC (T. R. Sharma 1986, p649).

In the pre-Punjabi Suba era, Master Tara Singh, for the most part, controlled the SGPC and the organizational wing of the Akali Dal, as did Sant Fateh Singh. Control of the SGPC provided these leaders with sufficient legitimacy and resources to control the party. The establishment of Akali led coalition governments, however, enhanced the status of the Akali parliamentary wing which resulted in clashes between it and the SGPC, and the organizational wing[5].

As was discussed above, the seemingly unlikely Akali Dal coalition governments with the Jana Sangh in 1967 and 1970 fell because of intra-Akali squabbling. The 1977-80 Akali-Janata coalition also succumbed to intra-Akali factionalism. In the latter case, the struggle became a bitter battle for supremacy "between the organizational wing, led by Jagdev Singh Talwandi, and the legislative wing, led by Prakash Singh Badal (the Chief Minister of the state)" (Malik 1986, p351). Talwandi, who previously epitomized moderation and Sikh-Hindu harmony, changed dramatically in late 1970s when he felt his grip on the Akali Dal weaken as the spotlight logically fell increasingly on Badal (Wallace 1988, p27). In a bid to re-assert his influence, Talwandi adopted a more 'pro-Sikh' posture, trying to assume the ground vacated by the ministerial wing which, as the government, necessarily pursued the 'secular' strategy. In this attempt, Talwandi enlisted the support of Gurcharan Singh Tohra, who as SGPC president could provide legitimacy, power, and resources. The Akali-Janata ministry soon fell due to "the culmination of attempts by Akali Dal Chief Jagdev Singh

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[5]. One scholar has noted that conflict between the organization wing and the parliamentary wing of Indian political parties is "a problem which is endemic throughout the Indian body politic" (A. C. Kapur 1985, p188).

Talwandi, and SGPC president Gurcharan Singh Tohra to establish their supremacy over Akali politics by undermining the position of Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal. The Talwandi-Tohra group first succeeded in withdrawing [Akali] support to the Desai government and ultimately forced Badal to break the Akali-Janata alliance in Punjab by accepting the resignation of Janata ministers" (India Today 1 October 1979, p42). The Desai government fell in July 1979, and Talwandi favoured supporting the Lok Dal, led by caretaker prime minister, Charan Singh while Badal favoured the continuation of the Akali-Janata alignment (India Today 16 October 1979, p51). Badal, in his own defence, "asserted repeatedly that he derived his mandate from the rational-legal democratically provided system of elections and from the Akali Legislative Party which had elected him its leader in the assembly and consequently the Chief Minister of the state. He maintained this stand again and again in the face of pressure from the organizational wing of the Akali Dal led by Talwandi or from the SGPC led by Tohra" (G. S. Gandhi 1988, p260).

The intra-Akali squabbling continued unabated after the party's defeat at the hands of Congress (I) in the spring 1980 elections. The in-fighting prevented the party from holding its executive elections, scheduled for March 1980 (Wallace 1988, p27). Talwandi's position as party president had expired officially on 28 August 1979, but he carried on as acting president for another year until he was expelled by the party by a seven-man committee, established by the five head priests in October 1979 in a vain attempt to maintain party unity (Wallace 1988, p28). Talwandi, who refused to accept the reconciliation offer of the ad hoc committee, proceeded to establish his own rival Akali Dal faction which, in a bid for legitimacy,

revived the demand for the implementation of the original Anandpur Sahib Resolution (Wallace 1988, p28). Tohra retained his position as SGPC president in that body's November 1980 presidential election and threw his support back to Badal, who was now the leader of the opposition in the Punjab assembly. In the main Akali Dal, Badal recruited Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, "a widely respected religious leader and one time foe of the Chief Minister [Badal himself]" (India Today 1 October 1979, p42) to become the party's new president. While Talwandi staked-out a more nationalist position, Longowal played the moderate ground. In the 1980s both Akali groups initiated agitations against the central government and "[t]he two groups at times joined forces in the campaign, but it was marked by rivalry between them which led to a spate of escalating and contradictory demands and statements, as each politician sought to demonstrate his leadership" (R. Kapur 1986, p218-9).

To some extent the intra-Akali factionalism expressed also internal class conflicts. All the major Akali leaders of the late 1970s and early 1980s -- Badal, Tohra, Talwandi, and Longowal -- were from the Malwa region of Punjab, the rich agricultural region in the southwest of the state but they represented somewhat different constituencies. Badal, who was a wealthy farmer, and Longowal, who was a religious leader of modest means, "had their primary power base in the well-to-do Jat community, the main beneficiaries of the green revolution. The well-to-do Jat farmers along with the Sikh business-industrial class of the urban areas, had become interlinked with the rising all-India middle class" (Malik 1986, p353). Tohra and Talwandi, on the other hand, "represent[ed] small-scale farmers...[who] display a sense of insecurity caused by the on-going process

of modernization. They seek concessions and safeguards that would help preserve the Sikh subnational identity. Tohra has been supported by the communists, who look upon him as the promoter of the interests of the small peasants. His rival in this group was Jagdev Singh Talwandi, who shares the same social background, class origin and ideology with Tohra" (Malik 1986, p354). Tohra's left-wing leanings, however, tended to be earlier in his career and subsequently he became more of an establishment leader. Thus the Akali Dal, which primarily represented one sub-group of Sikhs (the Jats), had noticeable class cleavages. In sum, the rampant factionalism in the party made it easier for the militant groups to rise to the surface.

The 'Secular' Strategy of the Akali Dal 'Created Space' for the Rise of 'Sikh Militancy'

For more than a century the Sikhs have been in a continual process of defining and preserving their identity. The process began with the founding of the Singh Sabhas in 1873 and since 1920 the Akali Dal has taken the primary responsibility for the maintenance of the Sikh identity. Initially, the Akali Dal sought to obtain control of the gurdwaras. After 1925 Master Tara Singh continually sought to obtain the best possible arrangement for the Sikhs under British rule and then to ensure the interests of the Sikhs during partition. Next "Sikh revivalism during the period [1947-1966] took the political form of a Punjabi Suba movement" (Wallace 1988b, p65). "The tactics," however, of Sant Fateh Singh "emphasized a broader Punjabi language identity and thus enlarged the possibilities of Sikh-Hindu cooperation" (Wallace 1988b, p65). Although this strategy brought the Sikhs the Punjabi Suba, and thus a Sikh majority state, and allowed the Akali Dal to form the government in coalition with the Jana Sangh/Janata Party, in the

end, when the strategy ceased to pay dividends, it served to alienate the Akali Dal's primary support base, the rural Jat Sikhs. Or as Harish Puri writes, the 'secular' "change in the political orientation of the ruling sections of the Akali leadership, however, aroused the passions of extremist groups, a small minority of the fundamentalists in the community, and those factions which could not get their believed due share in power and patronage" (Puri 1983, p115). In sum, from 1920 to the mid-1960s, the Akali Dal/SGPC was responsible for maintaining or reinforcing the Sikh identity, but when they departed from that role in the 1970s, and suffered serious internal factionalism, they created the opportunity for another political force to become the guardian of the Sikh identity. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the enfant terrible of Punjabi politics in the early 1980s, was the man who capitalized on the situation, briefly becoming the undisputed leader of the Sikh Panth, and the primary force responsible for the radicalization of Sikh politics, before being killed by the Indian army in Operation Bluestar (the storming of the Golden Temple June 3-7, 1984).

The Rise of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale

Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was not the only Sikh to vie for hegemony in the Sikh community while the Akalis were pursuing their 'secular' strategy, but he was the most prominent. Bhindranwale was born in 1947[6] in the village of Rhode, near Moga, about 135 kilometers south of Amritsar, in Ferozepur district. He was the seventh child of Jathedar Joginder Singh, a poor Jat-Sikh peasant farmer. His formal education was

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6. This brief biography of Bhindranwale draws on Joshi (1984), Khushwant Singh (1984), Jeffery (1986), Kapur (1986).

concluded after about the fifth class, at age ten. Shortly thereafter he joined the Damdami Taksal -- a small, religious order founded in the eighteenth century -- to which his family had a long association. In 1966 he was married to Pritam Kaur and had two sons but he was to forsake family life in the pursuit of religion. In August 1977, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale became the leader of the Damdami Taksal and, in the eyes of many Sikhs, he died, like the Taksal's founder, 'defending' the Golden Temple from 'imperial invasion.'

Bhindranwale has inspired much passionate discourse, but remarkably little dispassionate analysis. He is either regarded as a saviour, or a simple-minded terrorist created and manipulated by greater political forces. The common interpretation of Bhindranwale is that his

> emergence on the political scene can be traced back to 1977 when the Akali-Janata government came to power in Punjab in the wake of the Congress (I) defeat in the assembly poll. Zail Singh, the ousted chief minister, who became the President of India five years later, was most unhappy...It was Sanjay Gandhi, Mrs. Gandhi's late son, knowing how extra-constitutional methods worked, who suggested that some 'Sant' Sikh leader be put up to challenge, or at least embarrass, the Akali government (Kuldip Nayar 1984, p30-1).

It is widely believed that Bhindranwale did receive some support from Zail Singh in the 1979 SGPC elections, and that he also campaigned for the Congress in the 1980 elections. This, however, does not make Bhindranwale a Congress (I) "creation," -- he was simply the leader of a small Sikh seminary aspiring to challenge the hegemonic rule of the Akali Dal and required financial and political support to achieve his goals. He did not have a great love for the Congress (I) or the government of India in the late 1970s but before he could challenge them directly he needed to dislodge the Akali Dal and establish himself as a significant leader of the Sikh

community. When he succeeded in becoming a Sikh leader of import, the Akali Dal, attempting to recapture their Sikh constituency, could not afford to ignore him and they thus rallied around him. Bhindranwale did not have a great love for the Akali Dal either. In fact he wanted to supplant them. But he required the support the Akali Dal could offer as he began to challenge the centre. Despite popular opinion, Bhindranwale was thus not a creation of the Congress (I), or anyone else. When asked, Bhindranwale would only say, "I'm nobody's creature" (quoted in Kuldip Nayar 1984, p37). Thus it is time to regard Bhindranwale as a self-interested, rational actor with his own religious and political ambitions. His first concern was to rejuvenate Sikhism and establish himself as a leader of the Sikh Panth--and, in this endeavour, he exploited first the Congress (I) and subsequently the Akali Dal.

Bhindranwale did not redefine the Sikh identity per se. At the turn of the century, the Singh Sabhas redefined the Sikh identity to mean exclusively the khalsa or kesdhari identity. For Bhindranwale, maintaining the external symbols of the Khalsa was insufficient -- he believed that all Sikhs should demonstrate their inner conviction to Sikhism by taking amrit, the 'baptismal nectar.' He thus attempted to narrow the definition of Sikhism to mean only the amritdhari (baptized into the Khalsa) identity. He also drew heavily upon the history and major doctrines of Sikhism -- the miri-piri (temporal and spiritual authority) doctrine developed by Guru Hargobind (the sixth guru), the formation of the Khalsa and the militarism of Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth and last Guru), and the so-called Golden Years of Sikhism when Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled Punjab -- to espouse a simple message of Sikh orthodoxy and austere living. In a very short time,

Bhindranwale came to represent the "renaissance of Sikh fundamentalism" (Khushwant Singh 1984, p25). Moreover, he quickly gained a significant following with his tours through Punjab, in which his primary focus was to baptize Sikhs into the Khalsa and propagate a glorious history of Sikhism. Although his rise may have been meteoric,

> [i]t was not difficult for a people who defined themselves by reference to religious and historical tradition to identify themselves with Bhindranwale's message...The fact that the message came from the head of an important preaching centre and from Darbar Sahib [the Golden Temple] only gave it more power, though neither his institutional affiliation with the Taksal nor his presence in Darbar Sahib were the main elements in Bhindranwale's effectiveness as a preacher. That came from his style of preaching, with the highly nasal sounds and word repetitions characteristic of rural Punjabi, and the themes of his preaching, which had relevance to what was occurring in the rural areas of the state (Pettigrew 1987, p17).

However, organizations are essential in the launching of movements. Thus, although Bhindranwale was an extremely charismatic figure who appealed to many rural Jat Sikhs, he could not have succeeded without his affiliation to the Taksal.

As Bhindranwale's message evolved it came to have two distinct strands. In speeches, which closely resemble the model posited by Anthony Smith (1986), Bhindranwale argued that the Sikhs were suffering from internal decline and external threat. He was at first concerned with the internal decline. In his own words,

> "[w]e shall only rule if we become Khalsa...keep unshorn hair and take <u>amrit</u> [become baptized]. Being the sons of Sikhs you are trimming your beards. We ourselves are ruining Sikhism and no people in the world can dare to ruin Sikhism (in Pettigrew 1987, p15).

And, in his opinion, the leaders of the Akali Dal, who had pursued a pragmatic and 'secular' strategy while in office, were much to blame --

> We are religiously separate. But why do we have to emphasize this? It is only because we are losing our identity and the interest of our Sikh leaders who have their farms and their industries at heart have started making them say that there is no difference between Sikh and Hindu and, hence assimilation dangers have increased (in Pettigrew 1987, p14).

As his movement progressed he increasingly turned to the external threats that he perceived to the religion. In his statements he invoked a notion of 'internal colonialism.' Again in his words,

> [t]he Hindus are trying to enslave us; atrocities against the Sikhs are increasing day by day under the Hindu imperialist rulers of New Delhi; the Sikhs have never felt so humiliated, not even during the reign of the Moghul emperors and British colonialists. How long can the Sikhs tolerate injustice? (in Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh 1984, p73).

The rapid social change experienced in Punjab in the 1970s undoubtedly created a sense of alienation for many Sikhs and they were thus receptive to Bhindranwale's message. The issue, however, which really brought him to the fore was his ferocious attacks against the Nirankaris, a sect of Sikhism.

The contemporary Nirankari movement was founded in 1919 by Baba Buta Singh, the first Nirankari Guru, although the movement has its origins in a "nineteenth century Sikh reform movement" (Cole and Sambhi 1990, p120). The name Nirankari refers to God as "'the unchanging Formless One,' Nirankar" and the Nirankaris "place the emphasis upon spirituality rather than what they regard as the militant ideals of the Khalsa" (Cole and Sambhi 1990, p120-1). The Nirankari organization is estimated to have a worldwide following of six million, concentrated mainly in Maharashtra and Punjab, of which only a minority are reportedly Sikhs (India Today, 1-15 May 1980, p19). The third Nirankari Guru, Gurbachan Singh who was assassinated on 24 April 1980 in New Delhi, has stated that "[o]ur mission has nothing in

common with the Sikh community. As for my person, I am not a Sikh in the traditional sense, though born in a Sikh family" (India Today 1-15 May 1980, p19). Many orthodox Sikhs, however, take exception to the Nirankaris. First, the Nirankaris follow a living guru, which orthodox Sikhs consider heretical. Second, many orthodox Sikhs find the Nirankaris' sacred book--the Avtar Bani, written by their second Guru Avtar Singh -- offensive (India Today 1-15 May 1980, p19).

Bhindranwale did not initiate the vendetta against the Nirankaris, they had in fact been declared 'enemies' of the Panth in 1973 by the priests of the Golden Temple (Kapur 1986, p22), but his crusade against the Nirankaris skillfully fused the internal and external threats which he had been pronouncing and thus had tremendous appeal to many Sikhs. On the one hand many orthodox Sikhs find some of the doctrines of the Nirankaris heretical and thus an internal threat to Sikhism. Many Sikhs also feel threatened because the Nirankaris attract the support of many low caste Sikhs, which could deplete the ranks of Sikhism. On the external side, the Nirankaris were perceived as a threat because of their known affiliation to the ruling Congress Party (India Today 1-15 May 1980, p16). Although there can be little doubt that Bhindranwale genuinely despised the Nirankaris, his actions may also be seen as a political strategy to elevate his position in the Sikh community.

A mere eight months after becoming the leader of the Damdami Taksal, Bhindranwale precipitated a violent clash with the Nirankaris which made him known across India, reportedly also attracting the attention of Sanjay Gandhi and Zail Singh. On Baisakhi, the holiest Sikh holiday of the year, (13 April) 1978 Bhindranwale gave a stirring sermon at the Golden Temple

after which a large contingent of orthodox Sikhs marched out of the Temple to intercept a Nirankari procession in the city of Amritsar. In the clash that ensued sixteen Sikhs were killed. Bhindranwale, however, was conspicuously absent from the site of the clash. This incident still enrages orthodox Sikhs, more so because all the Nirankaris charged with murder were later acquitted by the Supreme Court on the grounds of self-defence. The incident, moreover, marked the beginning of the radicalization of Sikh politics which swept through the Punjab in the 1980s and into the 1990s.

The Nirankaris were a convenient target for Bhindranwale to launch a movement, gain legitimacy and mobilize followers for a wider political goal -- hegemony in the Sikh community. Although Bhindranwale, still vehemently denouncing the Nirankaris, was largely ignored at the All-Akali Conference in Ludhiana, October 1978, when the twelve resolutions were passed "in light" of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, within three years he was to become the pre-eminent Sikh leader. To be successful, however, he required a mass base, which he found in an emerging underclass of educated Sikh youth produced by the Green Revolution.

The Green Revolution

A noted scholar, Paul Brass, has argued that "the evidence for an economic explanation of the Punjab crisis of the 1980s is lacking. The Punjab crisis was precipitated by a religious conflict between militant orthodox and fundamentalist Sikh groups and a heterodox Sikh-Hindu sect" (Brass 1989, p13-4). Brass' explanation is too simplistic. He argues that "[a]mong the problems in finding a satisfactory economic explanation for the

Punjab crisis is the fact that, on the great majority of aggregate economic indicators, Punjab is at the top or very close to the top in comparison with all other Indian states" (Brass 1989, p10). Others make similar arguments: "[p]ro-Akali intellectuals make out a case that the Sikh alienation emerges out of economic discrimination. But all this is imaginary. Punjab is the most prosperous state of the Indian union" (Kapur 1985, 229). The problem with these analyses is that aggregate data does not differentiate the various social strata -- be it class, caste, religion, or gender.

Other analyses attempt to locate the nexus of the crisis between the fault lines of the many social cleavages in Punjab -- Hindus versus Sikhs, Jat Sikh peasants versus urban Hindu traders, Jat Sikhs versus (urban) Bhapa Sikhs, Jat Sikhs versus low caste Sikhs, amongst others. What must be recognized in the current Punjab conflict is that there are two principal conflicts: 1) Sikhs, particularly Jats associated with the Akali Dal, are in conflict with the government of India, which for the most part has been formed by the Congress Party. 2) The second conflict is among the Jat Sikhs themselves for hegemony in the community -- the 'traditional' Akalis ('well-to-do' Jat peasants, especially of the Malwa) versus the poorer Jat Sikh peasants, primarily of the Majha region of Punjab. All too often analyses of the Punjab crisis treat the Jat Sikhs as a single social strata but that is simply insufficient. To locate the fault lines amongst the Jat Sikhs we must undertake a brief analysis of the green revolution.

The green revolution[7] began in the mid-1960s, in many third world

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[7]. The following are some of the sources dealing with the green revolution specifically in Punjab: Francine Frankel (1971) India's Green Revolution, Princeton, Princeton University Press; Murray J. Leaf Song of Hope: The Green Revolution in a Punjab Village, New Brunswick (New Jersey, USA), Rutgers University Press; Robin Jeffery (1986) What's Happening to

countries including India and Punjab, with the introduction of 'high-yielding varieties' (HYVs) of wheat and rice, developed in Mexico and the Philippines respectively. HYVs were capable of dramatically increasing crop yields but to obtain their maximum production potential a number of infrastructural developments must accompany their introduction. The other important components of the green revolution are modern irrigation, pumps and wells, to provide a regular flow of water, and chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Furthermore, for a farmer to undertake the switch to modern agriculture, guaranteed finance and education are essential.

The green revolution, if measured by production yields, has certainly been successful in Punjab -- foodgrain production trebled from 3.4 million tons in 1964 to 11.96 million tons in 1980 (Gill 1983). Punjab is now India's leading producer of foodgrains. A number of analysts believe that the success in Punjab was dependent upon the availability of investment finance, Gill (1983) argues that this was provided adequately by the government of Punjab and Sharma (1981) adds that foreign remittances from Punjabis abroad was a significant source of finance. Government policy, as Gill (1983) and Jeffery (1986) argue, is undoubtedly critical for the successful implementation of the green revolution but, as Wallace argues, Punjab was already well poised to capitalize on the new technology —

> Punjab had already returned to its role as India's most successful agricultural state <u>before</u> the adoption in 1965-6 of the new high-yielding varieties associated with the green revolution. Notable infrastructural developments that provided the basis for this next

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<u>India</u>, London, MacMillan Press; Monohar Singh Gill (1983) "The Development of Punjab Agriculture, 1977-80" <u>Asian Survey</u>, v23, #7 (July); T. R. Sharma "Political Implications of the Green Revolution" <u>Punjab Journal of Politics</u>, v5, #2; Harish K. Puri (1983) "Green Revolution and its Impact of Punjab Politics" <u>The Indian Political Science Review</u>, v17, #1 (January).

> generation of agricultural changes included effective land consolidation, canal and tubewell irrigation, power from the massive Bhakra-Nangal Dam, and a new agricultural university. Punjab, it can be argued, had already employed a green revolution strategy before 1965-6 and thus benefitted even more rapidly and fully from newer technological advances (Wallace 1986, p367).

Another factor in the success of the Punjabi green revolution, although difficult to quantify, is that the Jats, particularly Sikhs, are superb farmers. Although much of the irrigation canal system developed by the British went to Pakistan, the Sikhs who migrated to East Punjab quickly established themselves in their new setting, despite having much less land. The approximately six million Sikhs and Hindus vacated 6.7 million acres in Pakistan and were relocated on the approximately 4.7 million acres vacated by the six million Muslims who traveled to Pakistan at partition (Jeffery 1986, p30). Ironically, the tremendous upheaval associated with partition provided Punjabis with a quasi-land reform, a factor which many regard as essential for economic development. Although the relative class structure was maintained, social relations were much more egalitarian and land plots were consolidated making farming more efficient (Jeffery 1986, p30).

Everybody agrees that the green revolution produced a manifold increase in agricultural production. Disagreements arise on how the benefits of the green revolution were distributed. Some, like Harish Puri, argue simply that "[s]ince the distribution of land in the Punjab had been highly skewed the green revolution led to a highly skewed distribution of the gains of the new technology" (Puri 1983b, p102). A more nuanced argument, however, accepts that the benefits of the green revolution were distributed in proportion to size of land holdings but that overall "[t]he green revolution has benefitted all farmers -- big, medium and small" (Dhillon 1983, p423).

Although many small and marginal farmers did not significantly increase their farm income, they were able to increase their household income because "agricultural development in Punjab has not only increased the direct demand for labour on farm but has also resulted in indirect employment through backward and forward linkages [sic]" (Dhillon 1983, p423). Thus, "the distribution of total household income (of which income from non-farm activities is an important component for marginal and small farmers) was much less inequitous than the farm income distribution" (Dhillon 1983, p421). Although very difficult to measure, the benefits of the green revolution were obviously distributed, to some extent, disproportionately among the various social classes. Moreover, the benefits of the green revolution were also distributed unevenly across the various districts of Punjab (see Tables 3 and 4).

TABLE 3: Per Hectare Yield of Principal Crops in the Districts of Punjab, 1976-1977 (Kg) (with state ranking of district in brackets)

District	Rice	Maize	Wheat	Gram	Sugar Cane	Potato ('000Kg)	Cotton American	Cotton Desi
Gurdaspur	2282(9)	472(10)	2106(10)	1206(3)	5038(10)	18.0(9)	---	255(7)
Amritsar	2262(10)	270(12)	2493(2)	1215(2)	5052(9)	19.0(8)	295(7)	247(8)
Kapurthala	2894(5)	1229(5)	2129(9)	998(5)	5248(7)	22.0(5)	---	340(1)
Jullundur	2856(6)	1239(4)	2420(7)	812(9)	5877(3)	21.5(6)	---	272(6)
Hoshiarpur	2000(11)	1256(3)	1840(12)	728(11)	4149(12)	20.3(7)	---	172(11)
Ropar	1694(12)	827(8)	1940(11)	1286(1)	5253(6)	25.7(1)	---	170(12)
Ludhiana	3614(1)	1776(1)	3160(1)	880(6)	6285(1)	23.0(2)	297(6)	244(9)
Ferozepur	2422(8)	445(11)	2445(4)	830(8)	5232(5)	23.0(2)	332(5)	278(5)
Faridkot	3366(2)	806(9)	2472(3)	1011(4)	5362(5)	17.3(10)	400(2)	310(2)
Bhatinda	2605(7)	954(7)	2356(8)	865(7)	4358(11)	15.0(12)	406(1)	299(4)
Sangrur	3251(3)	1300(2)	2436(5)	810(10)	6046(2)	15.3(11)	361(4)	301(3)
Patiala	2961(4)	977(6)	2424(6)	637(12)	5571(4)	23.0(2)	374(5)	241(0)
average	2605	1144	2432	892	5362	21.3	379	283

(Source: Johar and Raikhy 1983, p43)

TABLE 4: Annual Growth Rates of Per Hectare Yields of Principal Crops, 1966-67 through 1976-77 (Per Cent)

District	Rice	Maize	Wheat	Gram	Sugar Cane	Potato	Cotton American	Cotton Desi
Gurdaspur	6.37(10)	-2.58(7)	3.98(4)	7.95(1)	6.88(4)	6.7(4)	--	1.6(4)
Amritsar	5.29(11)	-4.52(10)	2.93(6)	1.88(6)	5.20(9)	4.2(8)	4.5(1)	0.9(7)
Kapurthala	7.98(8)	1.07(1)	0.98(10)	--	6.60(5)	6.3(5)	--	1.5(5)
Jullundur	8.34(7)	-3.08(9)	3.54(5)	2.91(4)	7.74(3)	2.0(11)	--	1.3(6)
Hoshiarpur	6.94(9)	-0.39(3)	6.67(1)	6.91(2)	10.24(1)	3.1(10)	--	1.9(2)
Ropar	9.70(5)	0.01(2)	2.66(7)	3.97(3)	9.89(2)	7.8(1)	--	3.0(1)
Ludhiana	13.86(1)	-1.83(6)	0.88(11)	-.01(8)	5.94(6)	6.1(6)	-.3(6)	1.9(11)
Ferozepur	9.46(6)	-7.03(11)	4.22(3)	0.82(7)	3.03(11)	6.9(3)	0.1(5)	-1.0(9)
Bhatinda	12.30(2)	-1.74(5)	1.92(9)	2.12(5)	4.53(10)	7.3(2)	1.5(4)	-1.0(9)
Sangrur	11.15(3)	-0.48(4)	5.43(2)	-1.26(9)	5.46(8)	5.9(7)	3.6(2)	1.7(3)
Patiala	9.91(4)	-2.94(8)	2.50(8)	-3.64(10)	5.66(7)	3.9(9)	1.7(3)	0.5(8)
average	8.34	-0.87	3.29	1.34	6.38	3.42	1.47	-0.2

(Source: Johar and Raikhy 1983, p43; Faridkot formed in 1972, thus omitted.)

Notice on Tables 3 and 4 that Gurdaspur and Amritsar have consistently performed poorly with the exception of gram production and Amritsar's wheat yield, which is really only marginally better than average. Even more telling is Table 5. Grewal and Rangi first estimated the per hectare value of production, which is an aggregate measure of all crops produced in each district which allows for a comparison of districts regardless of the crop produced. From this data it is evident that the farmers of Gurdaspur and Amritsar have done moderately well. Grewal and Rangi argue, however, that value productivity "does not necessarily reflect the economic position of the farmers of these districts. The farm size is an important determinant of the income of the farmers" (1988, p53). Since the size distribution of holdings in different districts varies considerably, they thus worked out the per farm value of gross output for different districts by multiplying the average farm size by per hectare value output (Grewal and Rangi 1983, p53). On the latter measure of average farm income the farmers of Gurdaspur

and Amritsar drop far down the pack, ranking eight and ninth out of twelve respectively (See Table 5). The fact is that the districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur, which absorbed the majority of the Sikh refugees from Pakistan after partition (Nayar 1966, p97), have just about the smallest farm plots in Punjab on average.

TABLE 5: Estimated Gross Farm Income in the Districts of Punjab, 1978-79 (with state ranking of district in brackets)

District	Value Productivity (Rupees/Hectare)	Average Farm Size (Hectares)	Farm Income (Rupees)
Ludhiana	5135(1)	3.15	16175(2)
Patiala	4721(2)	4.20	19828(1)
Jullundur	4493(3)	2.36	10461(7)
Gurdaspur	4021(4)	2.13	8565(8)
Amritsar	3962(5)	2.11	8359(9)
Sangrur	3905(6)	4.10	16012(3)
Ropar	3730(7)	2.12	7907(10)
Ferozepur	3698(8)	3.13	11575(5)
Kapurthala	3513(9)	2.16	7587(11)
Faridkot	3280(10)	3.51	11514(6)
Hoshiarpur	2972(11)	1.81	5379(12)
Bhatinda	2670(12)	4.53	12094(4)

(Source: Grewal and Rangi 1983, p64)

As can be seen from Table 5, Hoshiarpur has by far the lowest average farm income but Gurdaspur and Amritsar come fairly close to the bottom in the state. The significance of this point is that the vast majority of the militants in the current crisis are Jat Sikh youth from farming families of the Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts. In fact, observers in Punjab have reported "the formation of a parallel government in several areas of TarnTaran, Patti, and Harike Patan on the Amritsar-Ferozepur border, in parts of Gurdaspur and Kapurthala districts...Punjab officials view this area as a de facto Khalistan" (India Today 30 April 1988, p35). On the other hand, the leaders of the Akali Dal, since the mid-1960s, have hailed

from the richer districts of the Malwa region. Thus we can begin to see that the crisis of the Punjab has a regional and class dimension as these two groups vie for hegemony within the Sikh community in their struggle against the central rulers in New Delhi. Before moving to an analysis of the organizational framework in which the militant movement arose, let us first more closely examine the situation of the rural Jat youth, who constitute the majority of the movement's supporters.

The Status of Rural Jat Sikh Youth in Punjab

Accompanying the green revolution in Punjab was a revolution in education. The processes of agricultural modernization began to allow for the liberation of many children from farm life. By 1974, 78% of primary age children in Punjab were in school, second only to Kerala (96%) in India (Jeffery 1986, p80). Literacy rose from 27% in 1961 to 41% in 1981 and was projected to hit the 50% mark by the mid-1980s (Jeffery 1986, p80). And, the number of students enrolled in colleges in Punjab rose from 35,000 in 1964-5 to over 110,000 in the mid-1970s (Jeffery 1986, p80). Unfortunately, higher education did not translate into economic gains for many of the newly educated rural Sikh youth. Distortions in the Punjabi economy, particularly the widely recognized disparity between substantial agricultural growth and a retarded industrial sector with stagnant growth, led to significant levels of unemployment amongst educated youth.

Punjab historically has been an agricultural state, and, regardless of the distortions in income distribution, that sector is now so strong that Punjab has the highest per capita income in the country. Industrially, however, Punjab has never been strong. Pakistan inherited the core

industrial sector of Punjab in 1947. After partition, the wars with Pakistan resulted in little industrial investment Punjab, a sensitive border state. Finally, "[w]ith the reorganization of the state in November 1966, [the] developing industrial complex around Delhi fell to the share of Haryana and whatever mineral and forest resources that were available went over to Himachel Pradesh" (Sandhu and Ajit Singh 1983, p133).

In the 1970s, Punjab did experience growth in the small industrial sector, but "the small scale industries sector is not very broad based and comprise mainly industrial units engaged in the production of woollen textiles and hosiery, steel re-rolling, cotton textiles including spinning, cycle and cycle parts, cotton ginning and pressing, agricultural implements and machine tools, sewing machines and parts, and sports goods" (Sandhu and Ajit Singh 1983, p135). Moreover, the growth of employment in these industries was negligible. The distribution of gains in the small industrial sector, furthermore, has not been balanced -- growth has been concentrated in the districts of Ludhiana, Patiala and Amritsar (Sandhu and Ajit Singh 1983, p137). Ludhiana and Patiala, it will be recalled from the last section, have also been the two most successful districts in the agricultural sector. It will also be recalled from the last section that Amritsar and Gurdaspur, which were the main support bases for Bhindranwale and now the Khalistani militants, performed relatively poorly in the agricultural sector. Although Amritsar district ranks second, just ahead of Patiala, in the small industry sector, its primary industry is cotton and wool processing which is based in the city of Amritsar which is dominated by Hindu-owned businesses rather than Sikh -- the rural sector of Amritsar district is 89.3% Sikh and 8.2% Hindu, but the city of Amritsar is 60.3%

Hindu and only 37.65% Sikh (Wallace 1986, p367). Gurdaspur has also performed poorly in the small industrial sector (Sandhu and Ajit Singh 1983, p149).

The situation for large scale industry in Punjab is worse. Even the agro-industrial sector is terribly underdeveloped relative to the strong agricultural sector. Punjab accounts for 17% of India's cotton production, yet has only 0.6% of the looms and 1.3% of the spindles; Punjab produces 3.63% of India's sugarcane, yet produces only 1.3% of India's sugar; although Punjab has only 1.6% of the land area of India and about 2% of the population, it provides 73% of the country's procurement of wheat and 48% of rice giving it the highest surplus in the country but the bulk of its processed food products are imported from other states (Sandhu and Ajit Singh 1983, p139); Punjab's fertilizer consumption is 13% of the all India total, yet its production is only 4.88%; Punjab owns 23.9% of India's tractors and 20.5% of India's farm trailers yet its capacity for tractor and trailer production is only 8% (Johar 1983, p216-8). Major industrial supplies like iron, steel, coal and coke have to be imported (Johar and Kumar 1983, p189). Even in the small scale industries which have started to develop, the majority of raw materials must be imported from other states (Sandhu and Ajit Singh 1983, p139). The retarded industrial development of Punjab, coupled with the expanding education system, is the prime reason for the high levels of unemployed college and university graduates.

In general, "[c]hronic unemployment of unskilled manpower is not much of a problem in Punjab" but "[t]he situation, however, is serious with regard to the educated unemployment [sic] particularly among the arts, commerce and science graduates and postgraduates and other trained

personnel" (Johar and Kumar 1983, p185-6). Some indicative unemployment rates in Punjab are (all-India rates in brackets): commerce post-graduates 26.4% (4.5%), commerce graduates 17.9% (11.9%), arts graduates 12.6% (15.7%), arts post-graduates 12.3% (3.0%), science graduates 8.1% (5.8%), science post-graduates 6.7% (3.9%), engineers (diploma) 13.1% (20.2%), engineers (degree) 3.4% (7.4%). Only medical and veterinary graduates have low rates of unemployment, 0.3% each (2.2% and 1.7% respectively) -- "The overall rate of unemployment among the graduates and engineering diploma holders is 11.85 (India 12.6%). It is much higher than the average rate of (usual status) unemployment (2.37%) among the labour force. The problem of joblessness among the educated is far more serious than among the labour force as a whole" (Gill 1983, p301). Using Gill's figures, there was an estimated 185,000 educated unemployed in Punjab in 1978, with rates projected to rise. Many students thus continued "acquiring M.A after M.A. finally coming to L.L.B. as a preliminary to enrolling in a commercial institute for typing and shorthand. With each added degree the student justly [felt] himself qualified for increasingly better jobs; paradoxically however, his hope of actually finding employment commensurate with his qualifications decrease[d]" (Suri 1981, p261). Moreover, Gill projects that the prospects for absorbing the educated unemployed is extremely bleak-- "no conceivable rate and pattern of growth could achieve this" (Gill 1983, p304).

By the late 1970s the picture for the first generation of educated rural Jat Sikh youth was bleak: their educations were not reaping financial reward due to unemployment; the urban environment where they were attending college was alienating; they were embarrassed to go home; and finally, the

Akali Dal, the political party established for the Sikhs and long patronized by rural Jat Sikhs, was engaged in abstract political activities which bore little direct relationship to the demands of poor Jat Sikhs. In a poignant piece by Donna Suri, "Portrait in Black: Notes from a University Hostel in Punjab," herself a former Punjabi university student, she concludes that the "picture of the world as seen through the eyes of university students in Punjab -- especially for the rural students...is a portrait in black. Unrest on these campuses is just like the rain: the atmosphere is for ever overcast with heavy clouds of resentment, frustration, and futility..." (Suri 1981, p258-262). Thus the message of Sant Bhindranwale appeared very attractive, most especially to the educated unemployed rural Jat Sikh youth. Although many analysts have recognized that it was students who provided substantial support to Bhindranwale, it is essential to place this fact into the larger picture of Akali (read Jat) politics with its contending class and regional implications.

The All-India Sikh Students' Federation and the Mobilization of Sikh Youth[8]

To succeed as a (religious) political leader, Bhindranwale needed a mass base which was structured into a coherent organization -- the All-India

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8. There is now a plethora of Sikh organizations in Punjab, but the labeling or categorizing of these groups generates considerable confusion. Andrew Major (1987) has made an admirable attempt to apply universal definitions to the various Sikh groups but I find his categorizations too rigid, and I also believe that the description of "terrorist" is too emotive. I thus adopt more flexible terminology, but it is particular to the Punjab case and not universal. Moderates are Sikh nationalists who, at most, support the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR) as a maximalist demand. Although moderates do not support the use of violence, they may not condemn it either. Extremists, on the other hand, support the ASR as a minimalist demand, and are ambivalent on the use of violence. The extremist camp may include secessionists. Militants are extremists committed to the armed struggle. Most Sikh militants, although not all, are secessionists.

Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) provided him the mass base of support he required. Bhindranwale, it will be recalled, became the leader of the Damdami Taksal in August 1977 after Sant Kartar Singh, the previous leader, died in a car accident. Sant Kartar Singh "cultivated the religio-political ideology of Bhindranwale, who "inherited his aggressive maverick crown" (Joshi 1984, p3-4). Almost a year later, in July 1978, Bhai Amrik Singh, "a brilliant young man with unfulfilled ambitions" (Joshi 1984, p7) and the son of Sant Kartar Singh, became the president of the AISSF. Although Amrik Singh was raised in the Taksal and may have been the natural heir, he was fully supportive of Bhindranwale -- "he was at the time of his father's death studying Punjabi literature at Khalsa College, Amritsar, and already deeply involved in the politics of the AISSF and he encouraged Bhindranwale to become the next head of the Taksal" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p32). In fact, "[i]n these early days, Bhindranwale was strongly influenced by Amrik Singh, who, it is believed, had hoped to manipulate him for political ends" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p32) -- a much more plausible theory of Bhindranwale's political development than the 'Congress creation' thesis. Bhindranwale's legitimacy as the head of a deeply respected religious institution and Amrik Singh's organizational skills made the AISSF a potent political force and this nexus was at the centre of the contemporary Punjab crisis.

The AISSF was formed in 1943 by the Akali Dal. At the time, there existed a tension between the educated Sikh elite and Akali leaders. The Dal "organized the AISSF therefore to bring the Sikh intelligentsia closer to the Akali Dal" (Nayar 1966, p189). The words of an early Federation activist capture a sentiment of internal decline, referred to above, which motivated the formation of the AISSF -- "[t]he Sikh Youth was going astray

from its moorings, neglecting its own rich heritage...The case of Sikh religion, culture and heritage was going by default and that was precisely where the AISSF stepped in to full in that vacuum and started in earnest to inculcate the knowledge of its heritage in the Sikh youth" (Gur Rattan Pal Singh 1979, p42). Operating through schools and universities, the AISSF vigorously organized conferences, study circles, training camps, and baptismal campaigns, for educated Sikh youth "to arouse [a] consciousness of their separate entity and nationality" (Gur Rattan Pal Singh 1979, p46). The Federation was also intimately involved in Akali politics, in fact, it has always been on the militant end of the Akali spectrum -- "whenever and wherever the Akali Dal fumbled, deviated, from its goal or groped in the dark, the Federation never hesitated in giving a red signal and acting as the lighthouse so that the Dal could steer clear its course" (Gur Rattan Pal Singh 1979, p49).

The AISSF historically has been an ardent supporter of the notion of the Sikhs as a nation and has fought from its inception to obtain more political power for the Sikhs and many Federation leaders have been arrested in the past for their participation in Akali agitations and the rank and file have provided the muscle for the Dal's agitations. From its inception, and enshrined in its constitution adopted in October 1944, "the Federation stood and still stands for the creation of an environment in which the national expression of the Sikhs would find its full satisfaction" (Gur Rattan Pal Singh 1979, p44). In 1945, the first president of the AISSF, Sarup Singh, "wrote a book [The Forgotten Panth], with a foreword by Master Tara Singh, in which he argued that the Sikhs were a nation and should therefore strive for a separate sovereign Sikh state" (Nayar 1966,

p140). The founding Federation leaders were thus a driving force for an independent Sikh state at the time of partition -- Sarup Singh, and an associate, "met Mr. Jinnah for exploring the feasibility of the demand for the Sikh State and at their instance [sic], two meetings between Master Tara Singh and Mr. Jinnah were arranged" (Gur Rattan Pal Singh 1979, p48; emphasis added). A Sikh state, however, was not forthcoming with partition but after the resettlement of the refugees, the AISSF was at the forefront of the Punjabi Suba campaign. But for many federationists, the Punjabi Suba was not an end itself -- Jaswant Singh, a former AISSF president, stated prophetically, "we shall try it and see whether it can protect us adequately. It is a means to an end. If we are persecuted even in the Punjabi Suba, we shall extend our struggle to get rid of such a kind of vicious cycle of religious persecution" (quoted in Nayar 1966, p191). And later, "in 1973 and 1977-8 when the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was adopted again and again, the actual thinking of the ASR, the political thinking, and the language of the Resolution was the same language and the same thinking which is the aims and objectives of the Federation -- to create such a territorial area where the Sikhs can flourish and their aim of raj karega khalsa can be fulfilled. This is the main crux of the ASR and the main aim of the Federation. So, you can say, that it is the Federation thinking which is adopted by the Akali Dal"[9].

Although the Federation and the ASR have the same intellectual origins, it is not clear if the AISSF had any significant role in the framing of the Resolution, because after the attainment of the Punjabi Suba the Federation entered an era of decline. In particular, the formation of Akali led

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9. Interview with Sarbjit Singh Jammu, 6 May 1991.

coalition governments "understandably refrained the Akali Dal from encouraging student activism during that period" (S. L. Sharma 1981, p252). It will be remembered that the attainment of the Punjabi Suba served to institutionalize the social alteration of the Akali Dal which took place in 1962. When the leadership of Master Tara Singh was eclipsed, Akali politics shifted from the urban leadership from the Majha region of Punjab (Amritsar and Gurdaspur) to the rural leadership of Malwa region. A similar pattern was evident in student politics.

Although the Akali Dal of Master Tara Singh was generally an urban based party, "there was a sprinkling of peasant leaders in the Akali Dal in the form of leaders like Udham Singh Nagoke, Ishwar Singh Majhail and Darshan Singh Pheruman -- all of whom came from the Majha area (Amritsar-Gurdaspur area)" (Bhushan 1983, p50). The Master was also personally based in Majha. Student politics, in Tara Singh's day, reflected a similar dynamic --

> the dynamics of student movements in the post-independence Punjab can be divided into two distinct phases: before [the] mid-sixties and afterwards. In its first phase student politics in the Punjab was marked by some distinctive features. First, it was largely under the influence of the AISSF...Second, Majha (Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts) was the main centre of student politics...Third, student leadership hailed largely from the cities and much of the student politics was urban based (S. L. Sharma 1981, p251).

When Master Tara Singh was replaced by Sant Fateh Singh, the Akali Dal "leadership passed firmly into the hands of the Jat-Sikh landed interests" (Bhushan 1983, p50). Here again, the green revolution plays an absolutely critical role. The green revolution consolidated the economic interests of the well-to-do Jat Sikh farmers and with their increased influence they were able to wrestle control of the Akali Dal from the urban intelligentsia

(Bhushan 1983, p50). Since the Malwa region of Punjab is the most advanced agricultural region of the state[10], and has the highest proportion of Jats, "it is not surprising, therefore, to note that almost all prominent Akali leaders come from the rich Malwa belt...and all of them are Jat Sikhs (Bhushan 1983, p50)[11].

While the AISSF slid into decline after the Punjabi Suba, student politics more generally exhibited a shift similar to the Akali Dal, although not precisely the same --

> The most remarkable feature of student politics in the second phase is the rise and ascendance of leftist groups among student organizations. In other words, student politics from the mid-sixties has increasingly come under the dominance of such left organizations as AISF, SFI, and PSU[12]. Secondly, the centre of student political activity shifted from Majha to Malwa. Third, the student leadership changed hands from urban to rural with the diffusion of student politics in the countryside (S. L. Sharma 1981, p252).

Andrew Major (1987) argues that the AISSF prior to 1978 "was an organization of extreme-left elements, committed to countering the sway of the established Communist parties over the landless Sikh peasantry and the

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10. "This area is...marked by higher levels of education among farmers, intensive cropping scientific farm management and average size of landholdings of 40-50 acres" (Bhushan 1983, p50).

11. The longtime president of the SGPC, G. S. Tohra, "a small peasant himself who started off as a left-wing leader and then became a pro-establishment leader" (India Today 28 February 1986, p46), is a Jat Sikh from Patiala; Longowal, also not a large landowner, is a Jat Sikh from Sangrur; Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi is a Jat Sikh from the prosperous district of Ludhiana, which is adjacent to the Malwa district; and Prakash Singh Badal, "himself a big landowner," is a Jat Sikh from Faridkot district (Bhushan 1983, p50-1).

12. The AISF is the All-India Students' Federation (of the Communist Party of India); the SFI is the Students' Federation of India (affiliated with the Communist Party of India -- Marxist); and the PSU is the Punjab Students' Union (associated with the Communist Party of India -- Marxist Leninist).

underemployed and disenchanted Sikh youth, particularly in the Malwa region of Punjab" (Major 1987, p49). However, the Federation in the mid-1970s was not leftist nor particularly active in the Malwa: it was, rather, a latent organization still committed to the 'defeated' legacy of Master Tara Singh. In fact, Federation activists at this time, like Bhindranwale, were fervently anti-communist. They equated communism with alcoholism and drug addiction --

> in 1977, the main aim of the Federation was to save the religion because the communist movement in Punjab was in high speed and the Sikh youth were being destroyed by alcohol and other addictions. So, the main aim of the Federation was to save the Sikh youth from these things and have them in the front line of the Sikh religion, after baptizing them and organizing them in study circles, in colleges, and organizing gurmat training camps...in camps we inculcate in the Sikh youth about Sikh tenets, Sikh scriptures, Sikh history, Sikh social life, even Sikh political life[13].

Although the AISSF was in disarray in the early 1970s, those who remained were striving to reduce the hegemony of the communist-backed student federations on the campuses on Punjab.

The organization did not become a real political force again until Amrik Singh captured the presidency of the Federation in July 1978 and "organized fully and whole heartedly with the help of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale"[14]. Amrik Singh was involved in the AISSF from at least the early 1970s -- from 1972-74 when the Federation had no president Amrik Singh was one of the five members of a leadership presidium which strived to maintain the organization by "holding meetings, demonstrations and

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13. Interview with Sarbjit Singh Jammu, AISSF secretary-general, and long-time activist -- he was on Amrik Singh's national executive -- 6 May 1991.

14. Interview with Sarbjit Singh Jammu, 6 May 1991.

circulating pamphlets and booklets" (Gur Rattan Pal Singh 1979, p64). However, in the late 1970s, "[t]he AISSF under the new rural priestly leadership, and advisors from the urban educated classes, witnessed a phenomenal rise in its membership; and it extended its influence to the rural areas through Amrit Prachar (Sikh Baptismal campaign) coupled with agitation on issues relating to discrimination against Sikhs in general and repression of Sikh youth in particular. In the political arena, [the] AISSF and [the] Taksal acted as powerful militant pressure groups to the Akali-led Dharm Yudh morcha (agitation) in [the] early 1980s" (Dhami 1987, p18-9). Amrik Singh, with Bhindranwale at his side, resurrected the Federation. And Bhindranwale's fulminations on 'internal colonialism' was an enormously popular message amongst the large alienated population of educated rural Jat Sikhs floating aimlessly about the campuses of Punjab, for "whom the notion of anti-Sikh discrimination was fast becoming an idée fixe" (Major 1987, p49).

After Amrik's succession, the Federation's first concern was the Sikh identity -- "you see, for a while Sikh youths had turned their face from Sikhism, mainly because the Akali leadership had become passive, they had adjusted to the so-called democratic system" (Harminder Singh Sandhu quoted in Tavleen Singh 1984, p40). And the resentment against the Akali Dal was deep -- "we have seen that the old Sikh leadership have not come up to our expectations...the traditional Sikh leaders such as Badal, Tohra, Longowal, Barnala, even now Mann...betrayed the Sikh nation every time"[15]. They were also sickened by the Indian patriotism pervasive in the media and schools. They regarded it, with some justification, as a Hindu nationalism which

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[15]. Interview with Sarbjit Singh Jammu, 6 May 1991.

denied their history: "They [Sikh youth] are told that [Mahatma] Gandhi is their Bapu [father] and Nehru is their chacha [uncle]. Their bapu is Guru Gobind Singh, not Gandhi" (Amrik Singh quoted in Tavleen Singh 1984, p40).

By 1980, they felt ready to "plunge into politics"[16] and to redefine the Sikhs' and Punjab's relationship with the centre. Up to Operation Bluestar, the AISSF "ideological position was roughly midway between that of the 'moderates' and that of the 'secessionists:' it endorsed the Anandpur Sahib Resolution on state autonomy, and yet it disliked the 'meek and mild' strategies of the Akali Dal; it disassociated itself from the demand for an independent Khalistan, and yet it refused to condemn that demand outright. It was concerned mainly about insults to the Panth" (Major 1987, p50). Amrik Singh stated simply that, "[i]f the government gives us Khalistan, we'll take it" (quoted in Delhi Recorder July 1984, p16). And Harminder Singh Sandhu, Amrik's lieutenant, stated more informatively that "[t]he Sikh Students Federation supports the Anandpur Sahib resolution and we believe that the demand which speaks of creating such a desh [land] where the separate Sikh identity, nationhood and thought would be developed, is sufficient" (quoted in Sunday 15-21 May 1983, p25). Not surprisingly, the Federation position on Khalistan was identical to Bhindranwale's. When asked about Khalistan, his standard reply was,

> I neither support Khalistan, nor am I against it. We want to stay with Hindustan, it is for the central government to decide whether they want us with them or not. This is the job of the centre, not mine. Yes, if they give us Khalistan, we will take [it]. We won't make the mistake of 1947. We are not asking for it but we'll take it if they give it to us (quoted in Sunday 15-21 May 1983, p28).

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16. Interview with Sarbjit Singh Jammu, 6 May 1991.

Following the example of Ayatollah Khomeini, Bhindranwale made cassette recordings of his speeches to spread his message throughout Punjab and even on one of these outlawed tapes he maintained the above line --

> I neither support Khalistan nor am I against it. The fact is I'm not prepared to see Hindus suppressing Sikhs. For that, if I am given Khalistan, I'll accept it. I surely want implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (quoted in Delhi Recorder July 1984, p11).

Many people believe that during Operation Bluestar, Bhindranwale appealed to Longowal or Tohra to announce the independence of Khalistan. Such a request would be in keeping with Bhindranwale's beliefs and practice -- his assertion was that if Khalistan was to be created it would be forced upon Sikhs because of oppression from the centre, and Bluestar could certainly be construed in that manner. Moreover, at least up to December 1983, Bhindranwale had always deferred to Longowal, the 'dictator' of the Akali morcha. However, in his last public interview, given to a Times of India correspondent on the evening of 3 June 1984 after the Indian army had enveloped the Golden Temple, Bhindranwale maintained his usual stance, although he was perhaps more pessimistic than ever:

> Q: Do you support the creation of Khalistan?
> A: I never opposed it; nor have I supported it.
> Q: But is it your contention that the Sikhs cannot live in India?
> A: Yes. They can neither live in nor with India. If treated as equals, it may be possible. But frankly speaking, I don't think that is possible.
> (interview with Subhash Kirpekar 1984, p78).

Finally, Longowal, in a handwritten note smuggled out of prison and obtained by India Today, confirms that,

> two emotional youths got after Sant Bhindranwale but he did not actively support Khalistan. He passed on the buck to me saying that if Sant Longowal supports Khalistan he would too. But neither did the Akali Dal support Khalistan, nor was there any transmitter for

> contact with Pakistan. Nor, I will state categorically, has the Akali Dal ever supported extremism or secessionism (India Today 15 March 1985, p50).

Presumably the "two emotional youths" were Amrik Singh and Harminder Singh Sandhu but their public comments, as quoted above, never supported the creation of Khalistan directly.

Since the AISSF was established by the Akali Dal to attract educated Sikh youth to the Akali movement, it is not surprising that the Federation leaders have always been well educated. The trend continued under Amrik Singh, except that many of the students now joining the Federation were the first generation of rural Jat Sikhs to go to college and university, instead of being the urban elite. Soon after Amrik Singh became president, the Federation had an explosion in membership, going from some 10,000 -- 15,000 to well over 100,000 and some estimates suggest up to 300,000 (Major 1987, p50). Regardless, it was obviously a large number of students and, importantly, "the AISSF [gave] the extremists their only semblance of a mass base" (India Today 31 December 1983, p73). As a students' federation based on college and university campuses, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of the new members were well educated, although the Federation almost certainly attracted non-student members as it began to resemble a mass organization.

The Federation leadership and the coterie which surrounded Bhindranwale was certainly well educated. Amrik Singh had a Masters' Degree in Punjabi literature. Harminder Singh Sandhu "was the son of a small, quite well-to-do farmer...and became secretary general of the AISSF at the same time that Amrik Singh became its president. He studied law at Khalsa College" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p40). He also had a Masters' Degree and was

"the only member of the [Bhindranwale's] inner circle who spoke fluent English, so his main job in the [Golden] Temple was to act as an interpreter for Bhindranwale" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p40). Sandhu fought the Indian Army during Bluestar but unlike the rest of the inner circle was captured, leading the ever active conspiracy theorists in Punjab to suggest that he was a double agent. Rachpal Singh, who was Bhindranwale's personal assistant and believed to have been killed during Bluestar, also had a Masters' Degree. Amrik, Sandhu, and Rachpal Singh were three of Bhindranwale's closest advisors, although the latter was apparently not a member of the Federation. The other senior Federation leaders in the pre-Bluestar era were also well educated, as Table 6 illustrates.

After Bluestar, with Bhindranwale and Amrik dead and Sandhu in detention, the AISSF suffered from factionalism, but the most powerful Federation leader to emerge was Harminder Singh Kahlon who had three BAs and two MAs and by 1986 was "the convener of the AISSF and widely regarded as the most powerful man inside the [Golden] Temple...His name was never significant in the Bhindranwale phase but today he calls the shots as if his position was pre-ordained" (India Today 28 February 1986, p91). Kahlon was arrested later in 1986 and replaced by Gurjit Singh, a university graduate and a nephew of Bhindranwale. The weaker faction was led by Bhai Manjit Singh, the younger brother of Amrik Singh, who assumed the leadership after Bluestar but prolonged imprisonment and rampant factionalism prevented him from consolidating his position until very recently. The AISSF under Manjit

TABLE 6: AISSF LEADERSHIP IN THE YEARS PRIOR TO BLUESTAR[17]

POSITION	LEADER	EDUCATION	AGE	FATHER'S OCCUPATION
President	Amrik Singh	MA		religious leader
Secretary General	Harminder Singh Sandhu	MA LLB		teacher
Secretary General	Sarbjit Singh Jammu	MA		
Vice-President	Harvinder Singh Khalsa	2 MAs doing PhD		doctor
Vice-President	Rejinder Singh Mehta	BA		army (?)
Vice-President	Atinderpal Singh	MA (?)		
Chief Organizing Secretary	Amarjit Singh Chawla	Bsc		
Office Secretary	Versa Singh Valtoha	12th class university drop-out		farmer

declared itself to be a full-fledged political party in the spring of 1991 when there was an expectation of a June election. Although the poll was never held, most pundits regarded the AISSF as the front-runner. Manjit's executive is also well educated and long-associated with the party (See Table 7).

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17. Although Amrik Singh and Harminder Singh Sandhu are now dead, many of these men are still active. Sarbjit Singh Jammu is currently an AISSF secretary-general; Mehta and Chawla have formed a splinter faction; and Attinderpal is believed to be based in Pakistan.

TABLE 7: AISSF (MANJIT) EXECUTIVE (May 1991)

Position	Leader	Education	Age	Father's Occupation	Joined AISSF
President	Manjit Singh	MA	28	Religious leader	1984
Vice-President	Jasbir Singh Ghuman	PhD (in progress)	30	Farmer	1979
Vice-President	Gursev Singh Harpalpur	MA	29	Farmer	1983
Secretary General	Sarbjit Singh Sohal	BE	28-9	Farmer	1983
General Secretary	Sarbjit Singh Jammu	M.Phil (gold medal)	32	Railway Officer (Ret)	1976
General Secretary	Harminder Singh Gill	MA (gold medal)	26-7	Musician Golden Temple	1982
Secretary	Paramjit Singh Goremangal	BA	28	Farmer	1982
Chief Organizing Secretary	Shubeg Singh	BA	32	Farmer	1985
Organizing Secretary	Ranjit Singh	MA	30-1	Farmer	1982
Organizing Secretary	Dilbag Singh Baga	10th class	15-6	Farmer	1986
Joint Secretary	Baldev Singh Singh	MA	28-9	?	1986
Press Secretary	Rajbir Singh	MA LLB (in progress)	25	Army (ret)	1981
Co-Ordination Secretary	Darshan Singh Manbi	BA	24-5	Farmer	1987
Office Secretary	Manjit Singh Bhoma	Bsc	27	Farmer	1983

Finally, the class dimension of the Federation's supporters and recent leadership must be stressed --

> The back-bone of the Taksal and the AISSF are the sons and daughters of Punjab's middle and low-level peasantry and agricultural workers. The challenge to the Akali and SGPC leadership, which is dominated by leaders from the Malwa region, comes from what was once its base-- the small and middle peasants. The socio-economic roots of the Taksal and the AISSF leaders are totally different from that of Barnala, Badal, Balwant [Singh], Ravi Inder [Singh], and Amrinder [Singh], all of whom come from the landed gentry classes of the state (India Today 28 February 1986, p46).

And, it must be stressed, that the support base of the AISSF is located in large measure in the Majha region of Punjab (Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts) where, as mentioned above, the Jat Sikh farmers, many of whom were well-to-do farmers in what is now Pakistan, are smaller proprietors falling behind the larger farmers of the Malwa region who are obtaining larger rewards from the fruits of the green revolution. It is commonly mentioned that Bhindranwale, like the senior Akali leaders, was from the Malwa region. However, his support base was in the Majha -- the Damdami Taksal itself was based in Chowk Mehta of Amritsar district. We can, therefore, extend S. L. Sharma's framework and speak of a third phase of student politics in Punjab -- in the 1980s student politics shifted back to the Sikh nationalism of the AISSF and the activists were now predominantly the children of the lower or middle Jat Sikh peasants of the Majha.

The AISSF/Bhindranwale, alliance is commonly described as the Federation joining and supporting Bhindranwale but as my analysis attempts to make clear, Amrik Singh and Bhindranwale were raised together in the Taksal and were in collusion long before the outbreak of the 'crisis.' Immediately after the clash with the Nirankaris, Bhindranwale's prominence

rose dramatically and he was courted by senior Congress (I) and Akali leaders alike, for their own political purposes. The Federation/Taksal, or Amrik/Bhindranwale, axis became a potent political force which applied considerable pressure on the Akali Dal.

The Akali Dal, as discussed above, had shifted away from serving exclusively its Sikh constituency as it governed Punjab, thus allowing for the rise of a Bhindranwale to champion the Sikh cause. Soon after having been evicted from office, the Dal was forced by the presence of Bhindranwale and the AISSF to return to its Sikh constituency but when it did so the former moved to an even more nationalistic position. The Akali Dal was again forced to adopt a more nationalistic stance because the Akali leaders could not countenance other parties 'out-Sikhing' them. The crisis emerged in Punjab when these two forces, representing different social stratas of the Jat Sikh community, became locked in a protracted conflict for internal hegemony as they confronted the inept central government. The AISSF, however, was not the only organization involved in the early stages of the 'Punjab crisis,' although it was by far the largest and most important. It is now time to quickly review the other groups involved in the early mobilization of Sikh youth in the contemporary crisis.

Bhindranwale's Praetorian Guard

The supporters of Bhindranwale soon felt compelled to pursue an armed strategy. The armed strategy had two objectives: 1) to increase the pressure on the central government, and, more importantly, 2) to stay a step

ahead of the Akali Dal[18] and to prevent being 'out-Sikhed' by the other smaller militant groups competing for the leadership of the community (see below). The AISSF, as discussed above, was Bhindranwale's mass base of support, and it provided a recruiting ground for armed fighters. Although it is well established that prior to Bluestar, senior Federation leaders like Mehta, Chawla, Jammu, and Versa Singh, were engaged in armed violence, under the direction of Amrik Singh, Harminder Singh Sandhu and Bhindranwale (India Today 15 June 1985; and 15 September 1985), it must be stressed that the AISSF was primarily a political body, not an armed fighting force -- the Federation had a membership of over 100,000 students and obviously most were not engaged in armed activity. Bhindranwale's real 'praetorian' guard and armed supporters were organized into two groups, the Akal Federation and the Dashmesh Regiment, both of which are still active in Punjab and are, at least, loosely affiliated to the Damdami Taksal. The Akal Federation, long led by Kanwar Singh Dhami, was directly attached to Bhindranwale and the Damdami Taksal[19]. There are seemingly conflicting reports as to the Akal Federation's role in Operation Bluestar -- "According to some Akalis, who were there till the morning of 6 June, the only people who stayed with Bhindranwale and fought till the very end were the youths who had belonged to the Damdami Taksal" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p51). This would explain the motivation and commitment of the fighters during the operation -- they more

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[18]. The Akali Dal established the Youth Akali Dal in March 1983 (India Today 15 February 1984, p19) to counter the AISSF, the Akali Dal's former youth group, or, more truthfully, "[t]he Youth Akali Dal was formed basically as a praetorian guard to protect Akali leaders against marauding criminals from groups which supported Bhindranwale" (Joshi 1984, p33).

[19]. Interview with student from Guru Nanak Dev University, 8 May 1991.

than anyone else would stay to defend and protect their leader. Another report, however, suggests that a number of members of the Akal Federation escaped the Temple during the Operation (Gupta 1984, p71). It is, of course, possible that the group split, either under strain or strategically. Regardless, Kanwar Singh Dhami is still an influential militant leader, apparently based in Pakistan.

The Dashmesh Regiment, still a shadowy underground group, was "[f]ounded in 1984, reportedly under the guidance of former army generals, in order to provide Bhindranwale with protection against the Babbar Khalsa group. Throughout 1984 and 1985, the Dashmesh Regiment claimed responsibility for attacks on railway stations and post-offices..." (Major 1987, p54fn). Not much is really known about the Dashmesh Regiment but Bhindranwale did cultivate close relationships with a coterie of retired military officers. A number of former officers were associated with the Akali Dal, and at least a handful became advisors to Bhindranwale after they had been harassed with tens of thousands of other Sikhs, many still serving in the forces, on the roads of Haryana in late 1982 during the Asiad games in New Delhi, to be discussed further in the next chapter.

The most important of Bhindranwale's military advisors was retired Major-General Shahbeg Singh[20], who had been dismissed from the army on the eve of his retirement on charges of corruption, although he later won at least two of the three cases against him. An expert in guerilla and covert urban warfare, Shahbeg Singh became a highly decorated soldier and a became national hero during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war when he led the "Mukti

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20. Brigadier Mohinder Singh, Major-General Jaswant Singh Bhullar, and Major-General Narinder Singh were also former Akali advisors who provided military and political advice to Bhindranwale.

Bahini" guerilla forces in Bangladesh. Disaffected after his dismissal from the forces, he joined Bhindranwale in the Golden Temple in 1982. Although he is frequently cited as being responsible for the formation of the Dashmesh Regiment, the connection is still unproven. However, he was undoubtedly responsible for the elaborate fortifications of the Golden Temple which proved to be highly effective during Operation Bluestar. Although the AISSF and Bhindranwale's praetorian guards essentially controlled the Golden Temple prior to Operation Bluestar, they were not the only militant groups operating in Punjab in the early 1980s.

Other Militant Sikh Groups Prior to Operation Bluestar

Prior to Operation Bluestar there was a handful of other militant groups, in addition to the AISSF and Bhindranwale's 'praetorian guards,' although none were as large as the AISSF and nor did any other group possess the religious legitimacy that Bhindranwale carried. The most important of these groups was the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) formed in 1978. The BKI is widely regarded as the most devoutly religious group, and along with the AISSF is the only militant group from the pre-Bluestar era still operating in Punjab. The Dal Khalsa was also formed in 1978 and was, until it disintegrated in 1982, the militant group most committed to the armed struggle. The National Council of Khalistan (NCK), founded in 1980, was the only group committed to outright secession, although they were not engaged in the armed struggle. The NCK was the smallest of all the militant groups in Punjab and today does not exist, although its founder Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan is still very active from his base in England, but the ideology of the NCK is at the core of all the Sikh militant groups operating

in Punjab today. Although none of these groups were particularly major players in the Punjab crisis, their presence was far more significant than their simple nuisance value. Each of these three groups were more militant than the AISSF/Bhindranwale alliance. The AISSF and Bhindranwale, who had initially taken a militant position to undermine the Akali Dal, therefore had to maintain their militant posture to ensure that they were not 'out-Sikhed,' and thus replaced, by these other groups vying for the leadership of the community. Only the BKI was virulently anti-Bhindranwale, but if he and the AISSF were perceived as becoming moderate, the NCK and the Dal Khalsa, both basically pro-Bhindranwale, could easily have defected to the BKI undermining the AISSF/Bhindranwale position. Today, in fact, the various Akali factions are all but irrelevant and the AISSF is now the 'moderate' player in the Punjab game and there are some twenty more militant groups attempting to undermine the legitimacy of the AISSF. Here, however, there is only space to quickly survey the BKI, the Dal Khalsa and the NCK.

The Babbar Khalsa International

The Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) is probably the most important underground militant group still operating in Punjab. The BKI was an armed offshoot of a devout religious organization, the Akhand Kirtani Jatha (AKJ). There has been considerable factionalism amongst Sikh political organizations, both moderate (ie Akali Dal) and militant, but the Damdami Taksal and the Akhand Kirtani Jatha are the two poles around which the multitude of militant groups still coalesce. The AKJ was a small group founded by Fauja Singh and his wife Amarjit Kaur "to sing the praise of the

Lord[21]" (Joshi 1984, p36). Fauja Singh was an inspector of the Punjab agricultural department, and Amarjit Kaur a headmistress of an Amritsar school. The group consisted mainly of educated Sikhs and military men, serving and retired. As devout Sikhs, they considered the Nirankaris to be blasphemous and it was Fauja Singh who fatally led the procession against the Nirankaris 13 April 1978. The following day the BKI was born under the direction of Amarjit Kaur.

Amarjit Kaur reportedly "believed with a fanatical conviction in the 'mission' for which her husband started the Akhand Kirtani Jatha" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p44). And in keeping with other revivalist groups, the AKJ perceived Sikhism to be under threat, internally and externally -- "The mission was to fight the threat to Sikhism pose by sects like the Nirankaris...as well as the threat from Hindu organizations like the RSS" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p44). Like Bhindranwale, the AKJ vehemently opposed the Nirankaris. In the infamous clash with the Nirankaris, 13 April 1978, Fauja Singh and seven other AKJ followers lost their lives. Immediately after the clash, despite similar beliefs, "the Akhand Kirtani Jatha and Bhindranwale parted company because Bibi Amarjit Kaur felt that Bhindranwale had shown cowardice by not turning up for the anti-Nirankari demonstration despite having vowed to lead it" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p44). Amarjit Kaur's grudge seems very much personal rather than ideological. On the Sikhs, Punjab, and Khalistan her position, at least up to June 1984, was almost identical to Bhindranwale's -- she believed that the Sikhs had been short-changed at partition and, in her words, "if the Centre wants peace in

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21. Kirtan -- from the word kirti, the praise of God -- is the singing of the Sikh scriptures (Cole and Sambhi 1990, p97-8).

Punjab then they must fulfil the demands listed in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Except for four subjects (defence, foreign relations, currency, and general communication) the state must control everything else and the Sikhs must rule. If the Centre does not agree to this then there will be Khalistan" (quoted in Tavleen Singh 1984, p44). Initially, it seems that Amarjit Kaur maintained 'hit-squads' directly under her control but in 1980 or 1981 the Babbar Khalsa became an autonomous organization, although still owing allegiance to her.

The Babbar Khalsa[22] was, in its early years, primarily preoccupied with fighting the Nirankaris. The Babbar Khalsa kept a much lower profile than the much larger AISSF. Reportedly, they could "come and go from the Golden Temple as they pleased because the police had no idea who they were" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p43). The Babbar Khalsa, in fact, were based in the temple[23]. The government was so preoccupied with Bhindranwale and the Federation that they took little notice of the Babbars, who were in fact the first line of resistance the army met during Operation Bluestar but since their base of operations were unknown it is believed that some 40 Babbars quietly escaped during Bluestar. Bibi Amarjit Kaur, however, was arrested with the Akali Dal leaders, Longowal and Tohra.

Although obviously not well known to the government, the Babbars were intimately involved in the politics of the Golden Temple, which became

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22. The name is derived from the Babbar Akalis, a militant anti-imperialist Sikh group operating in the Punjab in the 1920s and 1930s (Major 1987, p48).

23. The Babbars resided in the Guru Ram Das Serai, situated on the east side of the SGPC headquarters which is on the perimeter of the Golden Temple. Bhindranwale and the AISSF were based in the Guru Nanak Niwas on the other side of the SGPC offices.

particularly vicious in the months preceding Bluestar. Jathedar[24] Sukhdev Singh 'Babbar,' the BKI leader, dismissed Bhindranwale as a "coward" and stated that "we don't care what Bhindranwale, Longowal and the others want. As far as we are concerned the objective is now complete freedom" (India Today, 31 December 1983, p70). Although the statement appears more radical than the others, it is basically ambiguous and, despite his belittling of Longowal, Sukhdev Singh was prepared to help him contain Bhindranwale. When Longowal decided in December 1983 that he could not fight Bhindranwale's guns with words, he recruited the Babbar Khalsa to forcefully evict Bhindranwale and his supporters from the Guru Nanak Niwas (Tavleen Singh 1984, p42). Bhindranwale thus shifted to the Akal Takht, the 'seat of temporal authority' inside the Golden Temple proper. Although Longowal's relationship with the BKI may appear unlikely, it is widely accepted as an established fact[25]. The Babbar-Longowal alliance can only be understood as a rational, self-interested calculation: Longowal obviously finally decided that Bhindranwale had to be removed from the Akali camp for he was pulling them too far away from the moderate ground; the Babbars, on the other hand, wanted to eliminate Bhindranwale and establish themselves as the sole representatives of Sikh militancy.

The organization's leadership is educated, although not as highly as

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24. "Originally this term was use of the leader of a unit of Sikh volunteers who had devoted themselves to the full-time service of the Panth...Jathedar is also the title given to the appointed head of one the Sikh takhts...A jathedar is a lay person, like all Sikhs..." (Cole and Sambhi 1990, p89).

25. The journalist Shekhar Gupta claims, that "the Babbars' proximity with Longowal was not a matter of conjecture. On the day the Army first moved in around the Temple, the Babbar chief, Sukhdev Singh, was ensconced in a long discussion with Longowal, who was visibly embarrassed when I walked in on 3 June [1984] afternoon" (Gupta 1984, p71).

the AISSF (Manjit) and 80% of the organization are rural Jat Sikh farmers[26]. (Chart Eight outlines the organizational structure of the highly secretive Babbar Khalsa and the social composition of the leadership). Both Sukhdev Singh 'Babbar' and his deputy have been with the BKI from the start and are followers of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha and graduates of the Sikh Missionary College. Sukhdev Singh 'Babbar' is widely believed to have been operating from Pakistan since Operation Bluestar. The high command, which also includes Sukhdev's personal assistant and the press secretary, determines general policy and plots major strategy[27]. Individually, the personal assistant is responsible for creating links with other militant groups (including Kashmiri and Assamese secessionists), and the press secretary is responsible for making public BKI statements and policy. The high command also solicits advice from an external "team of advisors" -- doctors, lawyers, professors, teachers and other professionals. There is no horizontal contact amongst district commanders, the lowest level at which "acts" may be determined. Recruitment is done at the level of area commanders and promotion is based on successful "actions." The BKI have members well placed in the civil service, police, army, and the university and colleges throughout Punjab. Only members who have been 'discovered' go underground. Outside Punjab, the BKI has state commanders and deputy commanders in Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Kashmir and Assam.

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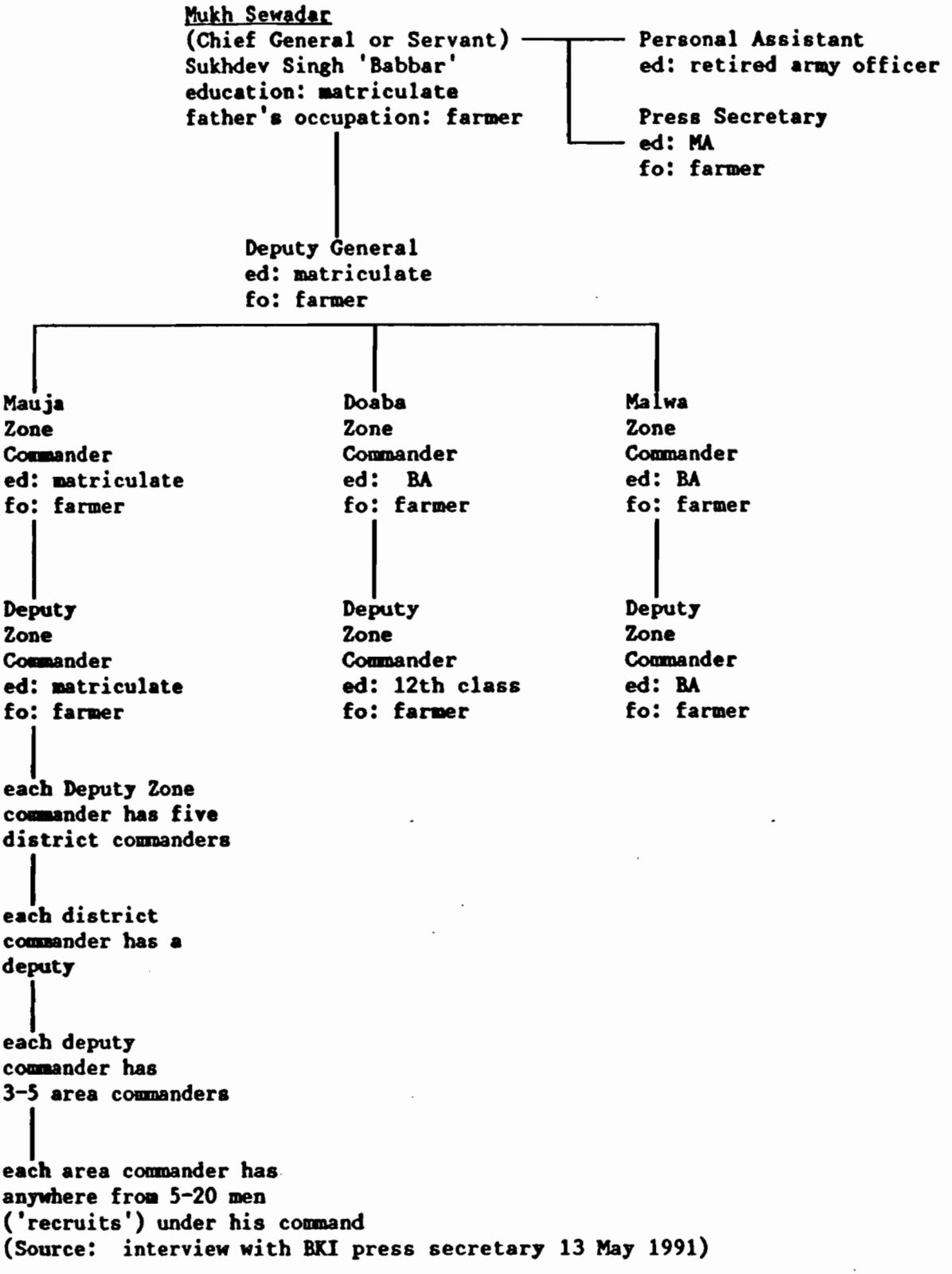
26. Interview with BKI press secretary, 13 May 1991.

27. The following paragraph has been constructed with information from the BKI press secretary, interview 13 May 1991.

TABLE 8: Structure and Social Composition of Babbar Khalsa International



(Source: interview with BKI press secretary 13 May 1991)

There was a proliferation of militant organizations after Bluestar, but today, I believe, that the BKI is the only militant group with significant legitimacy. Over the last seven years the BKI has maintained their militant credentials but have avoided the negative connotations associated with 'terrorist' groups. They are the largest and best knit group "[b]ut so far it has concentrated mainly on killing specific targets rather than innocent people. They have not so far been involved in any massacres" (India Today 13 December 1983, p72; India Today 31 July 1987, p38)[28]. Even Satyapal Dang, the veteran CPI leader based in Amritsar who has fearlessly opposed Sikh militancy, admits that the BKI is the only group to have avoided widespread corruption (Dang 1989, p54). The most plausible explanation for their continued legitimacy is their commitment to a well defined political and religious ideology. The Babbar Khalsa International is now committed to the creation of Khalistan -- the Punjab 'crisis,' says the BKI press secretary, will end "only with Khalistan"[29].

The Dal Khalsa[30]

The Dal Khalsa was an underground militant organization founded 6 August 1978, and had an estimated membership of 600 primarily in Chandigarh and Gurdaspur. The Dal Khalsa was, reportedly, a merger of two minor Sikh

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28. One report, however, holds the BKI responsible for a series of transistor bomb explosions on the Delhi Transport Commission one evening in May 1985 (India Today 15 July 1988, p46), although the article also mentions that the BKI was in alliance with a faction of the Khalistan Commando Force and the above action is more in keeping with the practices of the KCF than the BKI.

29. Interview with author 1 May 1991.

30. The name was taken from an 18th century Sikh military institution.

youth groups, the Young Sikh Association and the Sikh Sahitya Sabha, sponsored by one Kapur Singh (Satinder Singh 1982, p135), who is believed to have been influential in the drafting of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (A. C. Kapur 1985, p192). It is also widely believed that senior Congress (I) leaders were involved in the formation of the Dal Khalsa, particularly Giani Zail Singh the former Chief Minister of Punjab (1972-1977) and federal Home Minister 1980-1 and thereafter the President of India. The speculation is that Zail Singh wanted a radical Sikh organization to pressure and ultimately weaken the Akali Dal. It is also believed that he use the Dal Khalsa in his long running dispute with Darbara Singh, the Congress (I) Chief Minister of Punjab 1980-83. Although the evidence for such a connection is not yet firm, the persistence of the allegations lead some to accept it as fait accompli (see Cole and Sambhi 1990, p58). Harsimran Singh, the Dal Khalsa chief, is also alleged to have stated under interrogation that the organization received funds from Zail Singh -- as well as from Jagdev Singh Talwandi, a breakaway Akali leader -- from the outset (India Today 15 February 1982, p24).

The Dal Khalsa ideology was never clearly defined. Although in "1981 [the] Dal Khalsa was the primary extremist organization" (Joshi 1984, p34) in Punjab, involved in a number of militant actions including a few domestic hijackings, their basic strategy was to propagate their message at Akali Dal and other Sikh functions (India Today 31 October 1981, p41). Although Bhindranwale was never openly associated with the Dal Khalsa, it was always known as his party (Tully and Jacob 1985, p60). The Dal Khalsa, towards the end of its brief existence, apparently moved closer to the National Council of Khalistan, to be discussed below, which was the only truly

secessionist Sikh organization prior to June 1984. In January 1982, Harsimran Singh was arrested (India Today 15 February 1982, p24), and "[t]he Dal Khalsa, along with the National Council of Khalistan, was ultimately banned on 1 May 1982." However, "[t]he extremists who formed the Dal Khalsa...anticipating the ban, had quietly moved over to the Babbar Khalsa and the AISSF, organizations which were still legal" (Joshi 1984, p35) and the Dal Khalsa, thus, disappeared.

The National Council of Khalistan

The National Council of Khalistan (NCK), founded in 1980, was an obscure organization with few members[31] and no mass support in Punjab, although its external wing found significant support amongst expatriate Sikhs in Britain and Canada. Today, however, the outright secessionist ideology of the NCK is at the core of all Sikh militant groups in Punjab. Really, only the two founding figures of the NCK were of significance, Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan and Balbir Singh Sandhu[32]. Chauhan, the self-styled 'President of Khalistan,' is a mercurial figure who never misses an opportunity to promote Khalistan -- he has made a number of outlandish and provocative statements in BBC television interviews. He came into politics through the Students' Federation of India, the students wing of the Communist Party, and later became involved with the Akalis (Joshi 1984, p38). After the Punjabi Suba, Master Tara Singh's diminished Akali Dal was still committed to a Sikh homeland but after his death most of his party

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31. The NCK was reported to have only fifty-two members by the time of Operation Bluestar in June 1984 (Major 1987, p57fn).

32. "In 1970 they had established an International Council of Khalistan" (Major 1987, p57).

re-joined the main Akali Dal of Sant Fateh Singh. But a few Tara Singh diehards remained: "[t]his faction came to be led by Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, who was Finance Minister in Lachhman Singh Gill's ministry" (A. C. Kapur 1985, p182-3). Jagjit Singh Chauhan moved to England after the collapse of Gill's ministry in 1971.

Balbir Singh Sandhu, on the other hand, was an "affable man" based, in the Guru Nanak Niwas of the Golden Temple -- from 1980 to Operation Bluestar (4 June 1984), in which he was believed to have died[33], he reportedly never left the Temple (Tavleen Singh 1984, p35). Sandhu, previously a writer of fiction, "had a world view based on a strange mixture of progressive ideas borrowed from Marx and some very rigid beliefs based on Sikhism" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p36). There was certainly no ambiguity concerning his political objectives: "we believe that there is no alternative but to have a sovereign state -- an Azad [free] Khalistan; there is no alternative for the Sikhs" (quoted in Sunday 15-21 May 1983, p22). Sandhu spent his time in the Temple issuing press releases, drafting a Khalistan constitution, issuing Khalistani passports and producing Khalistani currency and postage stamps (Major 1987, p57fn). Although prior to June 1984 the NCK was the only real secessionist group, Sandhu felt that both Bhindranwale and the Akalis were helping his cause. And, "[a]lthough Bhindranwale had been hesitant to admit a link with the Khalistan secretary-general, Sandhu said openly that they met each other almost every evening" (Tavleen Singh 1984, p36).

The National Council of Khalistan ceased to exist after Bluestar,

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[33]. Reports have occasionally arisen which suggest that Balbir Singh Sandhu escaped during Bluestar and is now based in Pakistan (see India Today 15 May 1986, p43) but these reports have never been confirmed.

although Jagjit Singh Chauhan still actively promotes the concept of Khalistan from his home in Britain. But their influence should not be underestimated. Their outright secessionist position has been adopted by all militant Sikh groups in the post-Bluestar era. They have also become an effective lobby group, particularly in Washington where they have influenced a number of rightwing members of Congress. Moreover, Chauhan has influenced a number of Sikh intellectuals, including a number of professors at the Khalsa College in Amritsar where Amrik Singh studied[34]. And a militant graduate of the college has said that his professor was 'responsible for bringing us along.'[35]

Conclusions

At least two important points for the study of nationalism emerge from the Sikh crisis. First, national movements can and do suffer internal cleavages. Although the socio-psychological component of ethnicity is important, ethnic movements are fundamentally influenced by the economic interests of the particular class which dominates the movements' leadership. Second, the contemporary Sikh crisis, contrary to popular belief, is not a case of a prosperous peripheral group seeking secession. Rather, the Sikh separatist movement is driven by a relatively disadvantaged social class of the national group.

The Akali Dal and the Congress central governments of India have long had diametrically opposed visions of the country. The Congress has been predisposed towards political centralization and industrial development.

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34. Conversation with the author May 1991.

35. Interview with the author 4 May 1991.

The Akali Dal, on the other hand, has long been suspicious of centralized governance -- they have continually sought to have the powers to develop their nation devolved to the state level. Moreover, the Akali Dal has primarily represented agricultural interests, in particular those of Jat Sikhs. A clash between the Akali Dal and the centre was almost inevitable when Indira Gandhi began to increase the centralization of the Indian political system. However, a full understanding of how the crisis specifically arose is impossible without a comprehensive analysis of the internal political dynamics of Punjab and the Sikh community.

After 1966, in the truncated Punjab the Sikhs constituted, for the first time, a majority in the state and consequently the electoral possibilities for the Akali Dal, the party of Sikh nationalism, were greatly enhanced. Punjab, however, was still 40% Hindu and for the Akali Dal to capture power and maintain the coalition governments they formed with the Jana Sangh/Janata Party, they were compelled to adopt a more 'secular' strategy and move away from solely representing the narrow interests of the Sikh community. The space was thus created for a figure like Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to rise and capitalize on the opportunity to explicitly represent the Sikh panth. The leader of a small Sikh 'seminary' and enormously charismatic, Bhindranwale established a mass following amongst the alienated first generation of educated rural Jat Sikhs, particularly those from the economically disadvantaged districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur, loitering around the universities and colleges in urban Punjab unable to find stimulating employment. These student followers became organized by the All-India Sikh Students' Federation led by Amrik Singh, Bhindranwale's 'blood-brother.' The Bhindranwale-AISSF nexus was able to

seriously challenge the hegemony of the Akali Dal, led by 'well-to-do-rural Jat Sikhs of the prosperous Malwa region of Punjab. Unlike 1920 and 1962 when the leadership of the Sikh national movement switched from one social strata to another quickly and decisively, Bhindranwale's challenge to the Akali Dal became a protracted internal conflict. The conflict emerged as a crisis when the Sikhs (the Akalis and Bhindranwale) began an agitation against the government and, in a bid to replace the Akali Dal as the sole representative of the Sikh community, Bhindranwale and his followers chose to adopt a violent armed strategy against the central government. The armed strategy also prevented Bhindranwale from being 'out-Sikhed' by the other smaller, more militant Sikh nationalist groups in Punjab -- the BKI, the Dal Khalsa, and the NCK.

The present chapter has outlined the conditions which created the space for the rise of Sikh extremism. The following chapter will detail the interaction between the primary actors -- the Akali Dal, AISSF/Bhindranwale, and Indira Gandhi. In short, the presence of the Sikh extremists forced the Akali Dal to adopt a stronger nationalist position in their negotiations with Indira Gandhi. She, however, was unable to distinguish between the two groups. She thus considered the demands extremist and steadfastly refused to reach an accommodation with the Akalis, which sent Punjab into a deep crisis.

Chapter Four

From Revival, to Autonomy, to Secession: The Evolution of the Khalistani Movement

Introduction

The rapid social, political, and economic changes in India and Punjab after 1966 and through the 1970s created the space for Sikh extremism and militancy, and set the stage for a showdown between the centre and Punjab. After Bhindranwale burst onto the public stage in April 1978 we can disaggregate the ensuing crisis into four distinct phases. In phase one, which began in April 1978, Bhindranwale and Amrik Singh established themselves as extremist Sikh leaders challenging the leadership of the moderate Akalis. This first phase, which was really the prelude to the crisis, ended when Bhindranwale was arrested in September 1981. Phase two began immediately after Bhindranwale's arrest when the Akali Dal announced the start of a dharm yudh morcha (agitation) against the centre to secure the release of Bhindranwale and to negotiate a devolution of power from the centre to Punjab. After September 1981 the situation became increasingly more tense. Phase two came to a definitive conclusion with Operation Bluestar (June 1984) -- the army assault on the Golden Temple (the 'Vatican of Sikhism'). Although our analysis concludes with Bluestar, the Punjab crisis has moved through two more phases. Phase three, June 1984 to May 1988, marked the birth of a militant secessionist movement. In phase four, May 1988 to the present, the Sikh secessionist movement has become an extremely violent armed insurrection. Although Bhindranwale was always deliberately ambiguous on the concept of Khalistan, Sikh youth have remained at the forefront of the struggle -- in fact the Akali Dal has become almost irrelevant. While educated Sikh youths continue to lead the movement, many rank and file supporters are poorly educated -- but both groups are still predominantly Jat Sikhs from small farming families, particularly from the Majha region of Punjab (Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts).

After the clash with the Nirankaris (13 April 1978), Bhindranwale continued his public crusade. His start was not auspicious -- he was largely ignored at the all-Akali conference in October 1978 and he poored fairly in the 1979 SGPC election. However, he assiduously toured Punjab and slowly he developed a cult following with his message of Sikh orthodoxy and his ferocious denunciations of the Nirankaris. Although he was not a household name prior to being charged for the murder of a prominent Nirankari in September 1981, the Akali Dal was acutely aware of his presence.

When Indira Gandhi returned to power in January 1980, she immediately dismissed nine non-Congress state governments, including the Akali Dal ministry in Punjab. The Akalis, after losing the ensuing election, immediately began a series of agitations against the centre culminating in September 1981 with the presentation of forty-five demands and grievances, based on the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, to the government and the declaration of a dharm yudh morcha, 'religious war.' Coincidently, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who had assiduously been building support throughout Punjab since his clash with the Nirankaris (April 1978), was arrested in September 1981 on charges of murder. Amazingly, Bhindranwale was able to dictate the terms of his arrest. A huge rally was held outside his 'seminary' (the Damdami Taksal) where he not only proclaimed his innocence, but was supported by almost every senior Akali politician.

The Akali leaders were afraid that Bhindranwale posed a serious threat to their position and thus felt compelled to support him. The Akalis immediately revised their forty-five demands and made the unconditional release of Bhindranwale their first priority. Thus upon his release the

following month, the Akalis had no choice but to welcome him to their fold. Now operating from the inside, Bhindranwale was able to keep the Akalis on a strongly nationalist course. The following July (1982), Amrik Singh, the president of the All-India Sikh Students' Federation, was arrested, also on charges of murder. Bhindranwale immediately proclaimed his own dharm yudh to secure the release of his 'blood-brother,' and the Akali Dal again felt compelled to follow. This incident provides the clearest indication that Bhindranwale's influence was derived from the mass support he received from the AISSF.

As the situation in Punjab intensified, Indira Gandhi remained intransigent in negotiations with the Akalis. Gandhi flatly rejected the concept of a Sikh quam (nation) and thus she could not distinguish between the moderate, democratic nationalism of the Akali Dal and the more extreme nationalism of Bhindranwale and the AISSF. She never seemed able to understand the pressures that Bhindranwale and the AISSF placed on the Akali Dal. Consequently, she accepted the maximalist demands of the Akali Dal at face value. The Dal, however, was prepared to abandon Bhindranwale but they required tangible concessions on two issues, the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and an appropriate division of river waters between Punjab and Haryana. Gandhi repeatedly foiled such a settlement with the Akali Dal. Apparently she was afraid of alienating the voters in Haryana, and, by extension, her support bases in the Hindi-heartland. Punjab, with only thirteen seats in the federal parliament, was expendable.

The Punjab situation was thus stalemated. When Amrik Singh was unexpectedly released from prison in July 1983, Bhindranwale felt confident of advancing his movement without the support of the Akali Dal. The Akalis

and Bhindranwale finally parted company in December 1983, two months after the centre had dismissed the Congress ministry of Punjab and placed the state under President's rule. But the standoff continued and violence increased. Finally, the government grew impatient and ordered the army into the Golden Temple. Operation Bluestar was a disastrous political decision and a seriously bungled military operation. After nearly a week of heavy fighting in the Temple, Bhindranwale and Amrik Singh were dead but Sikhs around the world were devastated. Operation Bluestar succeeded only in terminating the first phase of the Khalistan movement. Indira Gandhi was assassinated six months later in retaliation and thus was never able to witness the subsequent development of a truly separatist Sikh movement.

Immediate Prelude to the Punjab Crisis (April 1978-September 1981): From the Nirankaris to Autonomy

After a fourteen year hiatus, elections for the SGPC were finally held in 1979. The Akali Dal romped to power yet again, capturing 65% of the vote and 133 of the 140 seats. The Akali Dal has dominated the SGPC from its inception in 1920, and obviously the opposition in 1979 was not particularly threatening, although Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, his status considerably elevated from the clash with the Nirankaris the year prior, was indirectly active in the fray. Bhindranwale personally supported and campaigned for some three dozen non-Akali candidates. Their concerns were primarily religious -- the 'heresy' of the Nirankaris, amrit prachar, general observance of Sikh tenets, and the 'straying' of the Akali Dal from 'the path of Sikhism.' Most of Bhindranwale's candidates were members of the Dal Khalsa, predominantly an urban based organization of 'extremist' Sikhs, which drew its support from the rural supporters of Bhindranwale,

especially in Amritsar and Gurdaspur (Gobinder Singh 1986, p284). Although none of the Dal Khalsa candidates managed to win a seat (they only polled 2.12% of the vote), three independents and a member of the Shiromani Panth Akali Buddha Dal[1] who were supporters Bhindranwale won seats from Amritsar district (Suri and Dogra 1988, p128). However, Bhindranwale's closest associate -- the president of the AISSF, Amrik Singh -- lost his bid for an SGPC seat to an influential Akali candidate (Suri and Dogra 1988, p128).

The Akali Dal, as the party of the Sikhs, can run on a secular platform in SGPC elections if they so choose, as they did in 1979. However, avowedly secular political parties, namely the Congress and the Communists, are unable to compete directly in the elections to the Sikh religious body (Suri and Dogra 1988, p124). To avoid losing influence in the Sikh community these parties often chose to support other candidates. In the 1979 elections it is widely accepted that the Congress Party, through the machinations of federal home minister Giani Zail Singh, was at least tacitly supporting Bhindranwale's candidates in a vain attempt to contain the Akali Dal (Gobinder Singh 1986, p286; India Today 15 November 1982, p73; 30 April 1983, p21). Many analysts, and the Akali Dal, have consequently accused Bhindranwale of being a 'creation' of the Congress Party, but, as argued in

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[1]. The Buddha Dal, led by Chief Baba Santa Singh and Jagjit Singh, and supported by Jathedar Santokh Singh and Giani Bhupinder Singh, was primarily a party of Sikh Nihangs. The nihangs, or 'crocodiles,' are orthodox Sikhs who devote their lives to the physical protection of Sikhism. Initially, they "were men who could be relied upon to defend desperate situations to the death in the army of Guru Gobind Singh" (Cole and Sambhi 1990, p120). At the turn of the century, they were a fighting force which helped expel the mahants from the gurdwaras. Estimates suggest that there are some 100 000 Nihangs living in group encampments outside the towns of Punjab. In the 1979 SGPC elections, the Buddha Dal reached an electoral arrangement with Bhindranwale and his candidates (Gobinder Singh 1986, p284).

the last chapter, it is best to regard Bhindranwale as a rational, self-interested actor who was simply trying to advance his status as a leader of the Sikh community.

The 1979 SGPC elections were somewhat of a debacle for Bhindranwale. However, the Akalis, and everyone else for that matter, ignored him to their own peril, for after two more years of arduous grass-roots political activity he was to re-emerge as the leading spokesperson of the Sikh community. While Bhindranwale toured relentlessly through rural Punjab, the Akali Dal bickered internally, lost the election in 1980, and tried to pull everything back together again by launching agitations against the government, culminating in the call for a dharm yudh, or religious war, in September 1981 -- the very same month that Bhindranwale burst back onto centre stage.

The Fall of the Akali Ministry and the Return to the Extra-Parliamentary Politics of Agitation

The formation of Akali Dal ministries in 1967, 1969, and 1977, as argued in the previous chapter, dramatically altered the internal dynamics of Akali politics. First, the demographics of Punjab -- 60% Sikh and 40% Hindu -- forced the Akali Dal, as a governing party, to re-orient its focus from their narrow Sikh constituency to a more inclusive Punjabi orientation. Over time, this change in orientation created the space for a force, namely Bhindranwale, to come forth and claim to represent the Sikh community. Second, the existence of an Akali government, with its associated ability to provide considerable patronage, significantly enhanced the status of the ministerial wing of the Akali Dal, to the 'detriment' of the organizational wing and the SGPC.

It was the president of the Akali Dal (that is the leader of the party's organizational wing), Jagdev Singh Talwandi, who felt particularly vulnerable in the new circumstances. As Talwandi felt his grip loosen, he attempted to maintain his influence by adopting a more nationalistic posture. In this bid, he enlisted the support of the SGPC president, Gurcharan Singh Tohra. Both Talwandi and Tohra were aware of Bhindranwale's growing appeal and reports suggest that they began to woo him shortly after the Nirankari clas of 13 April 1978 (Gandhi 1988, p256). Talwandi's courting of Bhindranwale was probably a ploy to salvage his position in the party. Tohra, on the other hand, was nervous that the ministerial wing's 'secular' approach could expose the party on its 'Sikh flank' and that Bhindranwale was a potential rival to the Akali Dal. Although Bhindranwale had faired poorly in the SGPC election, Tohra may have also been concerned that Bhindranwale was a potential threat to his position as the president of the SGPC, and thus sought to co-opt him. As these three leaders jockeyed for position, the Janata coalition government at the centre collapsed and consequently sent the Akali Dal into an internal crisis. Badal and his ministerial colleagues were prepared to continue the alliance with the Janata Party, but Talwandi and Tohra pressured him to end the coalition (Gandhi 1988, p251). Badal was thus left in a very precarious position in the state assembly, hobbling from one vote to the next.

The fall of the Janata coalition government at the centre also paved the way for federal elections in January 1980, in which Indira Gandhi made a stunning comeback and captured a majority government for the Congress (I) Party. One month after assuming office, Indira Gandhi invoked the controversial Article 356 of the Constitution and declared President's Rule

in nine states that were governed by non-Congress parties, including Punjab (Leaf 1985, p484). Her action completely undermined the processes of federal democracy and displayed a gross use of power reminiscent of her declaration of Emegency Rule five years earlier[2]. In Punjab, Badal's ministry was replaced in the subsequent election, June 1980, by a Congress (I) majority, led by Darbara Singh.

As the Akali Dal resolved its internal squabbling -- Badal continued as the leader of the official opposition, Tohra remained SGPC president and supported Badal's bid to instal Harchand Singh Longowal as party president, while Talwandi established his own rival Dal -- they immediately began extra-parliamentary agitations to de-stabilize the Congress regimes in Delhi and Chandigarh. Starting in August 1980 the Akali Dal lead seven agitations, culminating in September 1981 with the presentation of forty-five demands and grievances to the central government and the declaration by the Akalis of a dharm yudh morcha (a 'religious war').

Phase Two: Demands of the Akalis and the 'Autonomy Morcha' (September 1981-4 June 1984)

The forty-five demands and grievances presented by the Akali Dal to the central government were by-and-large derived from the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, but unlike the Resolution, the individual demands were not framed in maximalist terms. Instead, the Dal adopted a shotgun approach-- they demanded all the things imaginable as an initial position but the subsequent negotiations seemed to indicate that they were willing to discard

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2. The Janata Party, although in vastly different circumstances, perhaps established the precedent Gandhi followed when they dismissed nine Congress state governments when they came to power in 1977.

many of them in favour of their core demands. Demands or grievances such as the "failure to name any train the Golden Temple Express" were clearly superfluous. The demands were again articulated as religious/social, political, and economic. The general thrust was to protect and enhance the status of Sikhism and Sikhs across India -- the most significant religious demand was the creation of all-India gurdwara legislation which would expand the base of the SGPC -- and to improve the material well-being of Sikhs in Punjab, particularly the well-to-do rural Jat farmers and aspiring entrepreneurs. The foremost grievance was the "[k]eeping [of] Chandigarh and other Punjabi-speaking areas out of Punjab [after the Punjabi suba settlement] and taking away control of headworks and river water distribution" (quoted in Joshi 1984, p68). The other major grievance, also discussed above, was the "paucity of heavy industries in Punjab" (in Joshi 1984, p69). In sum, the Akalis were concerned with the lack of autonomy accorded to the states by the centre, but their "demands with a few exceptions were not drastic, nor were they expected to change the balance of power within the Indian political system" (Malik 1986, p353).

The core demands of the Akalis in September 1981, and really right up to the mid-1980s, were the territorial boundaries of Punjab and the distribution of river waters. The inability to resolved these two issues has perpetuated the Punjab crisis, thus an understanding of their origins is essential. The territorial concerns stemmed directly from the Punjabi Suba settlement. The traditional capital of Punjab was Lahore but when India was partitioned in 1947 Lahore fell on the Pakistan side of the border. Since India and Pakistan went to war immediately after partition, Amritsar was considered to be too close to the sensitive border and thus could not be

made the capital of the Indian Punjab. Instead, the government of India constructed Chandigarh, an entirely new city, to be the capital of Punjab. Problems arose, however, when Punjab was split in 1966 and the new state of Haryana was left without a capital[3]. Chandigarh, a Punjabi-speaking city with a Hindu majority, was declared a Union Territory and was to serve, at least temporarily, as the joint capital for Punjab and Haryana. The Akali Dal thus immediately began agitating for Chandigarh to be awarded solely to Punjab. When Sant Fateh Singh, the Akali leader, threatened to immolate himself in 1970 Indira Gandhi intervened and awarded Chandigarh to Punjab under the condition that two tehsils, the smallest administrative unit in India, in Ferozepur in southwest Punjab would be transferred to Haryana.

Gandhi obviously calculated that to maintain Congress support in Haryana, a state in the party's Hindi-heartland support base, compensation would have to be provided for the loss of Chandigarh. Gandhi's stated rationale for selecting the tehsils of Abohar and Fazilka was that they were Hindi-speaking regions which more properly belonged in Haryana. She was, however, being knowingly deceitful -- her data was taken from the 1961 census when Hindus of Punjab opposed to the Punjabi suba followed the diktat of the Arya Samaj[4] and falsely reported their mother tongue as Hindi rather than Punjabi. She really chose these two tehsils because they were, and still are, dominated by Hindus, thus "the award went against the spirit of Pundit Nehru's stand on the alteration of state boundaries on a religious basis" (Tully and Jacob 1985, p45). Not only were the Akalis firmly opposed

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3. The new state of Himachel Pradesh adopted Simla, the summer capital of British India, as their new capital city.

4. The Arya Samaj was a rightwing, Hindu nationalist organization.

to Gandhi's demographically unsound solution, it was geographically unsound. Abohar and Fazilka are not contiguous with Haryana, therefore any such transfer would require "the creation of a fifty-five kilometre corridor through Punjab linking these areas with Haryana, which is hardly a practical proposition given the history of tension between the two states" (India Today 15 May 1984, p60).

The Akali demand for Chandigarh and the retention of Abohar and Fazilka was based strictly on language. Although obtainment of the demand would please Sikh nationalists in Punjab and thus strengthen the Akali Dal, Longowal argued persuasively that "you can hardly call our territorial demands communal. We rarely win any seats in Abohar and Fazilka and the transfer of a cosmopolitan Chandigarh will only add four more non-Akali members to the Assembly, making our prospects even weaker" (quoted in India Today, 15 May 1984, p60). However, vociferous opposition from Haryana, particularly in the 1980s by Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, convinced Gandhi that she could not pass Chandigarh to Punjab without compensation, thus "[t]he award was never implemented and Chandigarh became the issue on which negotiations finally broke down just before Operation Bluestar" (Tully and Jacob 1985, p45).

The other core issue was water, which is obviously a critical resource in the hot, semi-arid agricultural states of Punjab and Haryana. Punjab, historically, is the 'land of five rivers' (pun, five; jab, river), but after partition in 1947 the Indian Punjab only had three rivers, the Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej. After the Punjabi Suba, "Haryana had none of the Punjab rivers flowing through it. It was therefore not a 'riparian state' under the usual definition and the Punjabis could argue that it therefore by

definition had no right to the Punjab waters at all" (Leaf 1985, p487). The Akalis were angered when Indira Gandhi decided in 1976 that "pursuant to a section of the act that separated Punjab and Haryana, Punjab would get only about 23% of the waters from its rivers -- the rest going to Haryana and Rajasthan" (Leaf 1985, p487). Gandhi's unilateral decision was made during the emergency when opposition was all but impossible. In 1978, however, the Akali ministry in Punjab took the case to the Supreme Court but "in 1981, Gandhi's government arranged a new agreement between the (Congress) chief ministers of Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan under which...forced Punjab to withdraw its suit" (Leaf 1985, p487). Again Gandhi's primary concern was the maintenance of her support base in the Hindi-heartland.

The narrow partisan views of Indira Gandhi, and later her son Rajiv Gandhi, repeatedly prevented a settlement on Chandigarh and the water issues. However, "[a]greement on these issues is [or at least was] feasible. The award of Chandigarh is a fait accompli, having been announced more than a decade ago...On the question of river waters...the Akalis have made clear they are not for an arbitrary award but for a considered judgement from the country's highest court" (India Today 31 October 1983, p17). With Bhindranwale creating a mass base of support in Punjab to challenge the Akalis and ultimately the centre, the failure of Indira Gandhi and the Congress to resolve these two issues with the Akalis placed Punjab on the precipice of a crisis.

The Arrest of Bhindranwale (September 1981)

After Bhindranwale's unspectacular performance in the SGPC elections of March 1979, he continued tirelessly to tour Punjab reviving interest in

Sikhism, denouncing the Nirankaris, and collecting considerable support. Bhindranwale's relentless pursuit of the Nirankaris served, at least indirectly, to place considerable pressure on the Akali ministry of Punjab. After the clash with the Nirankaris, 13 April 1978, the opposition parties in Punjab, the Congress and the two communist parties, demanded a judicial probe to investigate the incident, but Badal, the Chief Minister, preferred to leave the matter to the police and the courts. However, "[w]ithout showing the least concern for the predicament in which the Akali Legislature Party found itself as a result of the incident, both Tohra and Talwandi joined the chorus for a judicial probe" (Gandhi 1988, p253). They also orchestrated the issuing of a hukamnama (a decree) from the jathedar of the Akal Takht demanding that all Sikhs ostracize the Nirankaris. As mentioned above, Talwandi was desperately trying to preserve his influence as Akali Dal president, and Tohra wanted to ensure that he, as SGPC president, and the Akali Dal continued to represent the interests of the Sikh community and not allow Bhindranwale to capture his and the party's constituency. Bhindranwale, however, was able to strike a chord with poorer, rural Jat Sikhs. When the Nirankari 'guru,' Baba Gurbachan Singh, was assassinated in New Delhi (24 April 1980), Bhindranwale was delighted that the man who had led the Nirankaris against Sikh militants in the clash on 13 April 1978 was dead, and he promised to weigh the assassin in gold. Although Bhindranwale was implicated in the murder, he was never charged.

Even after the death of the Nirankari 'guru,' Bhindranwale continued his vitriolic rhetoric against the Nirankaris and the Nirankaris continued to be persecuted and murdered. However, it appears that Bhindranwale's tirades were largely rhetorical and that it was the members of the Babbar

Khalsa, in cahoots with the Akhand Kirtani Jatha, who were primarily responsible for the systematic killing of Nirankaris -- "[w]heras Bhindranwale has publicly disowned each act of the extremists, the Babbar Akalis[5] openly claim credit for most of these, barring the killings of Hindu bus passengers and that of [deputy inspector general of police Avtar Singh] Atwal" (India Today 31 December 1983, p70). The Babbar Khalsa adopted the most militant line amongst the Sikh political groups and, since none of these groups could afford to be 'out-Sikhed,' the Babbars forced the others to at least appear militant. When Longowal recruited the Babbar Khalsa to evict Bhindranwale from the Guru Nanak Niwas, in December 1983, their profile was raised considerably. At that time, the "Babbar Khalsa proudly stepped out of the shadows to claim credit for the killing of thirty-five Nirankaris. Sukhdev Singh was unrepentant about his group's bloody activities, saying, 'we shall continue to deal the same way with the enemies of the Panth'" (India Today, 15 January 1984). And their spiritual leader, Bibi Amarjit Kaur, added that "there was nothing wrong in these killings (the Nirankaris)," although she did condemn the killings of Hindus (India Today 15 January 1984). On the 9th of September 1981, a prominent, avowedly Hindu, pro-Nirankari, newspaper editor, Lala Jagat Narain was murdered near Ludhiana. Bhindranwale was once again implicated, and this time a warrant was issued for his arrest by the Congress (I) Chief Minister of Punjab, Darbara Singh. Punjab has not been the same since.

Bhindranwale was visiting a gurdwara in the neighboring state of

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[5]. The Babbar Khalsa are often referred to as the Babbar Akalis, a militant group of Sikhs in the 1920s and 1930s who placed pressure on the Akali Dal by disavowing peaceful agitations in favour of violent strategies. The Babbar Akalis are the inspiration for the contemporary Babbar Khalsa.

Haryana when the warrant for his arrest was issued. The existence of the warrant, however, was leaked to Bhindranwale, and he fled from Haryana to the sanctuary of the Damdami Taksal in Chowk Mehta, some forty kilometres from Amritsar. In an incredible display of political acumen, Bhindranwale dictated to the government and police the terms of his arrest. Although he maintained his innocence, he agreed to surrender to the police on the 20th of September 1981 at the Damdami Taksal, and the government accepted his terms. When the day arrived, an estimated 3,500 police and para-military forces and 75,000 supporters from across Punjab had descended upon Chowk Mehta, and "every Sikh leader who mattered had turned up to lend Bhindranwale moral support" (India Today 15 October 1981, 47) -- including Longowal, Tohra, Talwandi, the head priest of the Golden Temple, and Santok Singh the head of the Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee. The only notable exception was Prakash Singh Badal. Before his arrest, all the leaders spoke to his supporters -- "[t]he refrain of the emotional speeches was more or less the same: Bhindranwale's innocence, criticism of the government, and a call for Sikh unity." In sum, "[i]t was the most effective personality build-up Punjab has seen in recent times. In one stroke Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale...was transformed from a man hunted by the police to a household name" (India Today 15 October 1981, p47 and p44).

Bhindranwale and the Akalis Join Ranks

Bhindranwale may not have been a household name prior to his arrest in September 1981, but the Akalis had certainly known who he was and his significance ever since the clash with the Nirankaris, 13 April 1978, and they realized the importance of his arrest. The Akalis, who considered

themselves to be the 'sole representatives of the Sikhs,' could not stand by idly as a devout Sikh religious leader was arrested by government orders--to maintain their own position of influence, they were compelled to lend Bhindranwale their support. The Akalis, who had already submitted a list of forty-five demands and grievances to the central government, immediately revised their list to fifteen primary demands headed by the demand for the "unconditional release of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and [a] judicial inquiry with regard to police action in...Chowk Mehta[6]" (in Joshi 1984, p71). The main demands from the list of forty-five were also included--Chandigarh, division of river waters, all-India gurdwara legislation. Moreover, the maximalist sentiment of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was explicitly re-invoked -- "As per the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the Shiromani Akali Dal is firmly convinced that amendments should be made in the Constitution to give more rights and provincial autonomy to the states. The centre should retain foreign affairs, defence, currency, and communications (including means of transport), while the remaining portfolios should be with the state. Besides, the Sikhs should enjoy special rights as a nation" (quoted in Joshi 1984, p72). Reports suggest that the Akalis would not have insisted on the release of Bhindranwale if significant progress could have been made on the substantive social, political, and economic issues (Joshi 1984, p72), but the imperatives of being a Sikh nationalist party compelled them to at least appear to be fighting on behalf of a popular Sikh religious leader.

The decision to arrest Bhindranwale had been taken by the Congress (I)

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6. After Bhindranwale's arrest, a riot ensued and police opened fire, killing 17 people.

Chief Minister of Punjab, Darbara Singh, but his party nemesis, federal home minister Zail Singh[7] told Parliament that there was no evidence that Bhindranwale was involved in the murder of Narain. Thus Bhindranawale was released unconditionally on the 14th of October 1981, less than a month after his arrest (Tully and Jacob 1985, p69). After his release, Bhindrawale was "seen as a hero who had challenged and defeated the Indian government" (Tully and Jacob 1985, p71). Thus the Akalis had no option but to embrace him and incorporate him into the leadership of the dharm yudh. The relationship, however, was only instrumental -- they "merged for mutually beneficial considerations; the fundamentalists wanted to derive political respectability from the Akali Dal, and the latter wanted to gain popular support from the former" (Patel 1987, p272). Bhindranwale and the Akalis were, therefore, parallel movements strategically operating together, at least temporarily, to promote their own respective interests.

Previously, as discussed earlier, Bhindranwale had accepted support from the Zail Singh/Sanjay Gandhi faction of the Congress (I) to advance his movement. Bhindranwale's relationship with the Congress apparently ended shortly after he joined forces with the Akalis when his conduit to the Congress -- Jathedar Santokh Singh, head of the Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee -- was murdered in Delhi, 21 December 1981[8]. Zail Singh

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[7]. The Zail-Darbara feud (to be discussed further below) was one of the primary reasons why the Bhindranwale-Akali-government dispute lingered and escalated.

[8]. Santokh Singh was a close follower of Master Tara Singh, but "he was expelled from the Akali Dal during the Emergency for his support to Mrs. Gandhi. He used his standing with the prime minister to push various causes of the Delhi Sikhs and in return effectively delivered the Sikh vote at election time" (India Today 15 January 1982, p28). Santokh Singh's alliance with the Congress (I) was probably more strategic than ideological. In return for delivering the Sikh vote in Delhi, the Congress provided him

apparently wanted to continue using Bhindranwale after Santokh Singh's death (Jacob and Tully 1985, p71-2), but Bhindranwale was now using the Akali Dal to advance his position in the Sikh community and no longer required Congress support. In fact, continued Congress support would have been a liability as it would have undermined his credibility with the Sikhs, even as it was he was suspected by many to be a Congress 'agent.' At Santokh Singh's funeral, Bhindranwale emphatically broke with the Congress when he publicly ridiculed Zail Singh who was also present.

When Bhindranwale was released from prison and joined the Akalis, he was the most important Sikh leader, bar none. From April 1978 to September 1981, Bhindranwale was a potent force in the background pulling the Akalis to a more nationalistic position, which created considerable difficulties for Badal's Akali ministry. Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, who replaced Talwandi as the Akali Dal president, was acutely aware of Bhindranwale's potential to replace the Akali Dal, with his own charismatic leadership and AISSF support, and "[h]is launching of the dharm yudh in September [1981] was done to achieve the twin purposes of wooing back extremist Akalis into the fold as well as combatting the communist parties in the state" (India Today 31 October 1981, p41). Bhindranwale, although he never became a member of the Akali Dal, exercised considerable influence over the Akali leaders -- Talwandi, Tohra and particularly Sant Longowal who "it is said, often seeks Bhindranwale's advice on the future of the agitations" (India

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support to capture the Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee. The DGMC is responsible for the management of Sikh temples in the Delhi area and is autonomous from the SGPC. The DGMC annually collects some Rs 70 million from the Sikh institutions in Delhi -- as much as the SGPC collects annually in the whole of Punjab (India Today 15 January 1982, p28). In the 1979 SGPC elections, Santokh Singh supported Bhindranwale's candidates and other nationalistic candidates opposing the Akali Dal.

Today 30 April 1983, p19-20). Only Prakash Singh Badal, a firm moderate with a solid base of support, was "staunchly opposed to Bhindranwale...But even he [would] not profess his disapproval of Bhindranwale openly, for the fear of weakening the agitation's momentum" (India Today 30 April 1983, p19-20). Until Bhindranwale made his break from the Akali Dal in December 1983, virtually no Akali decision could be "made without his covert support" (India Today 15 November 1982, p72).

Akali Negotiations with Indira Gandhi and the Congress (I)

After their stint in government, one might have expected the Akalis to maintain their pragmatic, secular strategy but the presence of Bhindranwale and his tens of thousands of supporters in the AISSF, a direct outcome of the secular strategy, compelled the Akali Dal to re-adopt their traditional opposition strategy of agitation. In addition to pressuring Indira Gandhi, the Akalis hoped that they could further weaken the Congress by exploiting the intra-party rivalry between Darbara Singh, the Chief Minister of Punjab, and Zail Singh, the federal home minister. They may even have hoped that sufficient unrest would result in a declaration of President's Rule and fresh elections, and, in fact, President's Rule was declared in October 1983 but elections were not held for another two years. In any case, the Akali Dal had already begun agitating when they presented their list of forty-five demands and declared a dharm yudh morcha in September 1981, with Sant Harchand Singh Longowal as the self-declared 'dictator of the morcha.' After the arrest of Bhindranwale, the Akalis entered negotiations with the Indira Gandhi and the Congress (I) government in New Delhi -- the Congress (I) government of Punjab was essentially ignored as the Akalis chose to deal

directly with the real source of power.

The first Akali meeting with Indira Gandhi on 16 October 1981 was concerned primarily with securing the release of Bhindranwale. Follow-up meetings were held on the 29th of November and the 5th of April 1982 to discuss the demands and grievances the Akalis had distilled from the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. The talks were a complete failure, and after the third meeting Indira Gandhi did not participate directly in any of the numerous future meetings between the Akalis and the Congress (I) central government -- "[t]his is a clear indication of the fact that even as the situation deteriorated to alarming proportions and Punjab was in flames from 1982 to 1984, the Prime Minister was obviously negligent of her responsibilities and isolated from reality by her advisers" (Joshi 1984, p71).

There were at least nine further meetings but the government's negotiators, a variety of cabinet ministers and secretaries of the prime minister, did not have the authority, in the absence of Gandhi, to complete a deal with the Akalis[9]. But on the other hand, the Akali team -- Longowal, Badal, Tohra, Talwandi, amongst others -- under pressure from Bhindranwale and Amrik Singh, required substantial concessions from the government. Fairly early in the negotiations, Indira Gandhi was prepared to accept the Akali religious demands unilaterally but she wished to reserve judgement on the larger political-economic demands (India Today 31 March 1983, p56). Ironically, however, the religious demands were not the primary concern of the Akali Dal -- they were concerned with territorial issues (Chandigarh),

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9. The Akali Dal parliamentary leader, Prakash Singh Badal, queried, "[w]hat is the point of talking endlessly when the Union ministers have no power to decide?" (quoted in India Today 30 April 1983, p21).

the distribution of river-waters, and further state autonomy. Parenthetically, Gandhi's concession on the religious issues was given via a pro-Congress Akali faction, Akali Dal (Tara Singh)[10], which could not be portrayed as a political victory for the Akali Dal (Longowal), and thus could not be accepted by Longowal et al who needed a tangible victory to contain Bhindranwale. The government and the Akalis remained stalemated for the remainder of 1982, which strengthened the hands of the Bhindranwale and the AISSF.

Escalation of the Morcha

After the third set of talks with Indira Gandhi, April 1982, the Akalis were frustrated and directionless. Jagdev Singh Talwandi, the ostracized former Akali Dal president, seized the initiative and declared the beginning of a new morcha for the adoption of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Unfortunately for Talwandi, he was unable to muster much enthusiasm, and consequently his position remained somewhat marginal. A critical moment in the general agitation occurred when Bhai Amrik Singh, the president of the AISSF, was arrested on charges of attempted murder -- along with Tara Singh, another Bhindranwale associate -- 19 July 1982. First, Bhindranwale, fearing his own security, moved from his residence at the Damdami Taksal to the Golden Temple -- during the British administration of India there was a general understanding that the security forces would not enter religious places and that implicit understanding was maintained after independence. Bhindranwale remained at the Temple, apparently without ever leaving, until

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10. The Akali Dal (Tara Singh) controls the Delhi gurdwara management committee and are the sworn enemies of the Akali Dal (Longowal).

his death during Operation Bluestar, 4 June 1984. Immediately after taking sanctuary in the Temple, he declared, on July 16th, his own morcha to obtain the release of his 'blood-brother,' Amrik Singh.

The Akalis, who had long felt the pressure from Bhindranwale and had sought to contain him to preserve their own position, were clearly alarmed. After huddling on 26 July, the Akalis, including Talwandi, announced on 4 August 1982, with the support of Bhindranwale, the beginning of a new dharm yudh morcha, for implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, but the first concern was securing the release of Amrik Singh. Again, Harchand Singh Longowal was to be the 'dictator of the morcha.' Longowal, and his associates, thus deftly re-established control over the movement, at least temporarily, "[b]ut, in undertaking leadership of the more extreme demand, Longowal needed meaningful concessions from New Delhi. If these were not forthcoming, and they were not, Longowal risked losing support to the more militant Talwandi and Bhindranwale groups" (Wallace 1988, p38). The Akali response is not only the clearest indication of Bhindranwale's influence but it also unambiguously reveals the political importance of Amrik Singh and the AISSF — Bhindranwale was influential precisely because of the mass support he received from the AISSF not because of the patronage he received from larger political forces.

In November of 1982, the first of many incidents occurred which served to dramatically escalate the emerging crisis. In November of 1982, the Akalis frustrated by the lack of progress vis-à-vis negotiations with the government, and under constant pressure from Bhindranwale and the AISSF, declared their intention to hold protests in New Delhi during the Asian Games to increase the pressure on Indira Gandhi's regime. Longowal

declared, "we shall fight Mrs. Gandhi in her home and lead jathas to show the world community during the Asiad that she was unjust to us. We will not let the government sleep until our demands are accepted" (quoted in India Today, 30 November 1982, p17). The government regarded the games as a reflection of India's pre-eminent status in Asia, and as an opportunity to project India internationally. Indira Gandhi, moreover, had a personal political investment in the games -- they were the political 'coming-of-age' for her son, Rajiv Gandhi, whom she had been grooming as her heir apparent since the death in 1980 of her younger, more political son, Sanjay Gandhi. The government's home minister, P. C. Sethi, thus "directed officials from Delhi, Punjab and Haryana to crush any attempt to disrupt the games" (India Today 30 November 1982, p18). The Chief Minister of Haryana, Bhajan Lal, interpreted the order almost literally and undertook much of the government's 'dirty work.'

The government response to the Akali challenge was a dual strategy of severe police intervention and deceitful Machiavellian politics. First, more than 50,000 security forces were deployed to prevent the Akalis reaching Delhi from Punjab. The 450 km highway from Amritsar to Delhi was blocked at ten points and police armed with machine guns stopped every car going towards Delhi. All trains from going from Punjab to the capital were also searched (India Today 15 December 1982, p18). In short, every Sikh moving from Punjab or Haryana towards Delhi was stopped and searched, including Members of Parliament, the Punjab Assembly, members of the civil service, retired army generals, and even senior officers in uniform.

In addition to this police action, the government created an elaborate sham which suggested that a negotiated solution was at hand, drawing Prakash

Singh Badal and his former finance minister, Balwant Singh, to Delhi --

> While Badal and Balwant Singh waited for an invitation to the talks, which never came, the government had already fed a story to the press that an agreement was as good as ready...The reports all carr[ied] profuse details and said amongst other things that Chandigarh would be handed over to Punjab after Asiad. They also claimed that the Supreme Court would decide the river waters issue, and that a commission would be set-up to decide territorial claims (India Today 15 December 1982, p18).

In the end, the government ended up announcing that the 'talks had broken down over procedural issues.' Even if the government had intended to hold talks, "steps had been taken to ensure that the Akalis would not be able to resume their agitation quickly -- soon after the Asiad started, the Punjab Government had rounded up middle-level Akali activists. Later, when the Akalis realized the Centre's game and there seemed a danger that the agitation might be resumed, all the senior-most Akali leaders, except Longowal, were arrested" (India Today 15 December 1982, p18).

The government's behaviour, unacceptable for an aspiring liberal-democracy, played right into the hands of the extremists. Bhindranwale stated, "I tell Akalis not to go to Delhi. Let Indira Gandhi come [to Amritsar] if she really wants to help. The central government is dishonest" (quoted in India Today 15 December 1982, p18), thus leaving the moderate Akalis exposed and vulnerable. The Asiad scandal generated considerable support for the extremists and prompted many to join the ranks of Bhindranwale. Most of the retired army generals who came to advise Bhindranwale joined him at this juncture. Balwant Singh, the former Akali finance minister, stated bluntly, "Bhajan Lal with his strong-arm tactics did a great service to our cause. By humiliating respectable Sikhs he has proved that Sikhs are second-class citizens in his state. He has done that

which we could not in two decades" (quoted in India Today 31 December 1982, p30). In sum, the severe police action against the Sikhs during the Asian Games served to underscore Bhindranwale's message and radicalize the movement.

The calculations Bhajan Lal made during the Asiad are not difficult to comprehend. Lal, who repeatedly hampered peace negotiations, provides an excellent illustration of Paul Brass' argument (see chapter three) on the accumulation and maintenance of political power during Indira Gandhi's reign. When Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, she dismissed nine non-Congress state governments. Bhajan Lal was the Chief Minister of the Janata government in Haryana but saved his political career by transfering his loyalty to Gandhi. His fickleness, however, meant he was still regarded with suspicion, thus Lal was anxious to ingratiate himself with the leaders of the Congress Party[11] (Tully and Jacob 1985, p67). The Asian Games and the directive of the home ministry to stop all Akalis from reaching Delhi gave him the opportunity to prove his loyalty to Indira Gandhi, and demonstrate to the voters of Haryana that he was not going to compromise their interests. The 'Akali threat' was a tailor-made issue for Bhajan Lal's political survival. As argued previously, the two core concerns of the Akali Dal -- Chandigarh and the division of river waters -- materially affect Haryana, and this unfortunate episode illustrates Haryana's disruptive role in the Punjab crisis. The state administrations of Haryana have repeatedly hampered the attainment of a negotiated settlement to the Punjab crisis.

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11. It is also suspected that, a year earlier, to please Zail Singh, Lal allowed Bhindranwale to 'escape' Haryana when his arrest warrant for Lala Jagat Narain's murder was issued (Tully and Jacob 1985, p67).

The situation moved into 1983 completely stalemated, with no apparent solution in sight. In March the government again moved unilaterally and announced the creation of a commission to review centre-state relations, led by Justice Sarkaria. The Akalis, desperate for a settlement, were willing to drop their autonomy demands in lieu of the commission but they still needed tangible concessions on Chandigarh and the division of river-waters, or at least one of the two, before they could suspend the morcha and face the wrath of the extremists, but the government was not forthcoming on these issues. In July 1983, the government inexplicably released Amrik Singh, which again strengthened the hands of the extremists and further marginalized the Akalis.

After his release from prison, "Amrik Singh was lionized by all sections of the Akali Dal and Giani Kirpal Singh, head priest of the Akal Takht, bestowed a saropa (shawl) on Amrik Singh...in the presence of Longowal and Bhindranwale at the Akal Takht for 'suffering in jail for the cause of the Sikh panth'" (Joshi 1984, p143). Bhindranwale, who had always politely deferred to the older Sant Longowal, now had the confidence to move beyond the Akalis. With the return of Amrik Singh, Bhindranwale again had his 'blood-brother' and primary political confidant at his side. Moreover, the retired Major-General Shabeg Singh had joined him, and created an elaborate praetorian guard. Bhindranwale proceeded to exhort Sikhs to 'buy one motorcycle and one gun,' appealing to the adventurist sentiment of the young Sikh men who were drawn to him.

By September 1983, Bhindranwale was functioning de facto independently from the Akali Dal. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the SGPC president and consequently the chief administrator of the Golden Temple, was the only

Akali who could freely approach Bhindranwale (Tavleen Singh 1984, p38). In December 1983, as discussed in the last chapter, Longowal felt compelled to move against Bhindranwale and he apparently recruited the Babbar Khalsa International to evict him from the Guru Nanak guest house, which is adjacent to the Golden Temple. Although the Guru Nanak Niwas was regarded as his fiefdom (the Babbars occupied the Guru Ram Das guest house two buildings away), Bhindranwale, in order to maintain his integrity as a leader of the panth, ingeniously declined to fight, prompting the Babbars to again brand him a "coward." He then moved to the Akal Takht, the 'seat of temporal authority,' in the Golden Temple proper. The Akal Takht "head priest, Kirpal Singh, said that he would not allow arms inside the Akal Takht [but] Bhindranwale then complained to Tohra, who persuaded Kirpal Singh to withdraw his objection. What could the head priest do when he was one of the employees of the SGPC, headed by Tohra?" (Kuldip Nayar 1984, p80).

Bhindranwale was now symbolically and <u>de facto</u> the leader of the Sikh panth — and "Longowal's core political base began to flow away as about a third of his SGPC members and district Akali presidents reportedly defected to Bhindranwale" (Wallace 1988, p39). Bhindranwale and his supporters, and the Akali Dal and the BKI, were all now jockeying for maximum position, plotting assassinations and committing murders (see Tavleen Singh 1984), and as the Temple intrigue continued the situation in the Punjab, now under President's rule and martial law, continued to decline.

<u>President's Rule (October 1983)</u>

While negotiations ceased and the Akalis squabbled, violence in Punjab

began to escalate. In the first phase of the movement, the victims of extremist violence were almost exclusively Nirankaris. After 1981, pro-Nirankari Hindus, avowedly secular Sikhs, and police officers who prosecuted or detained Sikh extremists, were targeted. On October 5th 1983, the first attack on innocent Hindus occurred. A bus going from Amritsar to Delhi was commandeered by Sikh militants, and seven Hindu men were summarily executed. The action was obviously designed to create terror and more specifically, the murderers may have wanted to generate a migration of Hindus out of Punjab and incite anti-Sikh riots which would draw more Sikhs into the struggle (Jeffery 1986, p46). The central government took the opportunity to dismiss Darbara Singh's Congress (I) ministry and impose President's rule.

Darbara Singh's ministry had been rendered largely ineffective because of the power emanating from Indira Gandhi in the centre and the deliberating undermining of his government by his fellow Congress-man, Giani Zail Singh. Moreover, the Akali opposition had chosen to by-pass him and deal directly with the centre. In fact, the Akalis had been trying to precipitate the fall of Darbara Singh's ministry since the election in 1980. Upon hearing of the imposition of President's rule, Badal stated, "[w]e welcome this step -- we have been asking for the dismissal of the Darbara Singh ministry for a long time" (quoted in India Today 31 October 1981, p16). The move, however, probably was of greater service to Bhindranwale, who, with his usual vitriol, stated, "[t]hese are the tactics of Hindu rulers. They want to exterminate us. But we should not worry, the Gurus taught us not to be afraid" (quoted in India Today 31 October 1983, p15). The declaration of President's rule closed the democratic space which ensured that further

political opposition would occur in the streets.

Explaining the Political Failure

A common analysis asserts that "[t]he origins of Punjab's complex and tragic civil disorder can be traced to the political conflict between Indira Gandhi and the Akali Dal" (Kohli 1990, p354). Although the situation was perpetuated by the irreconcilability of Gandhi and the Akalis, the origins of the crisis were more complex. Under militant pressure from Bhindranwale and the AISSF, the Akali Dal could not forgo the morcha until they had obtained significant and tangible concessions, either Chandigarh or a water distribution settlement, from the central government -- the quid pro quo would have been the suspension of the morcha and the isolation of Bhindranwale, who was a greater threat to the Akali Dal than he was to the government. Moreover, in the process of maintaining support of their Sikh constituency, in light of Bhindranwale, the Akali Dal initiated a campaign of civil disobedience. This meant the only alternative for Bhindranwale et al, to outbid the Akali Dal, was armed violence.

In her dealings with the Akali Dal, Indira Gandhi made a number of mistakes and miscalculations, which not only demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of the dynamics in Punjab but also indicated that she was receiving very poor advice from her political confidants. First, she was apparently unable to distinguish between the Akali Dal -- who were moderate, democratic Sikh nationalists -- and the more nationalistic Bhindranwale and AISSF, and thus she did not understand the pressures which were being placed upon the Akali Dal from within the Sikh community. Consequently, the centre treated the Akalis and Bhindranwale/AISSF with

equal severeness, which "not only eroded the authority of the government...[it] undermined the democratic approach of the Akali Dal and gave credibility to violence and terrorism" (Patel 1987, p284).

Implicit in the government's approach, was, and still is, the notion that the Punjab was essentially a 'law-and-order' problem and not a political conundrum. But in legal terms the centre "did not have very much against Bhindranwale," just nine cases of "inflammatory speeches" (India Today 31 December 1983, p70). Extremism became an attractive political strategy when moderation failed. Then and now, "Sikh political realities dictate that any group being seen to openly compromise with the government will be rejected by the others; the Akalis must be seen in their own constituency as victors, not collaborators" (India Today 15 May 1984, p58)[12]. An accommodation with the moderates would have isolated the extremists, but Indira Gandhi did not wish to engage in an accommodation with the Akalis.

Relatedly, Indira Gandhi seemed to accept the maximalist demands of the Akali Dal at face value, which she deemed wholly unacceptable. Thus she dismissed them outright and offered only minor concessions. Apparently, "[t]he reference that most Congressmen object to is the description of the Sikhs as a quam, which in Urdu and Punjabi means community but which, translated into English, can take on the meaning of 'nation'" (India Today 15 February 1985, p71). Gandhi regarded the concept of a 'Sikh nation' as unpatriotic, at best, and more likely, as treasonous, which again displays a profound misunderstanding of nationalism — nationhood is, by definition,

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12. The Akalis are today not politically relevant. The same logic, however, still holds true but the moderates are now the AISSF.

self-defined, and if the Sikhs perceive themselves as a nation, that perception cannot be denied. It does not mean, however, that they must be accorded sovereignty over an independent state -- it does not even mean that the Sikhs want an independent state. Nor should the concept be considered unpatriotic -- India is a state composed of multiple nations, all of whom can be loyal, or in other words be patriotic, to India.

The Akalis knew Gandhi would never concede their demands on devolution, but they honestly believed that the issues of Chandigarh and the distribution of river waters could have been resolved. Her calculus, however, was that any concessions to the Akali Dal would hurt the electoral interests of her party, the Congress (I), not only in Punjab and Haryana but across the densely populated Hindi-heartland of northern India, the traditional Congress strongholds (Brass 1988, p206). The Akalis required substantive concessions to contain Bhindranwale and the AISSF. It has been reported that between September 1982 and June 1983 the Akalis concluded three agreements with the centre but "the agreements were finally scuttled on all three occasions by reversals of position by Mrs. Gandhi herself. These reversals allegedly were made in response to protests from Congress chief ministers in Haryana and Rajasthan who argued that they would have difficulty explaining [it] to the people of their states (Brass 1988, p205).

Unfortunately for all Punjabis, it appears that Gandhi was intent upon using the Punjab as an electoral 'punching-bag.' With Sikh consciousness piqued, Congress could forget about electoral success in Punjab but, in the larger picture of Indian federal politics, Punjab has only 13 seats in a parliament of some 540 seats and thus a firm anti-Akali policy could be used to appeal to the Hindi-speaking, Hindu majority vote who comprise half of

the electorate (two thirds if you also include Maharashtra and Gujarat, which are not technically part of the Hindi-heartland but are traditional Congress strongholds). In the past, the Congress party had prided itself on its committment to secularism, but after her 1980 electoral victory, Indira Gandhi "turned to Hinduism in her personal and political life, and Congress (I) became a primary vehicle to mobilize and exploit Hindu militancy" (Malik and Vajpeyi 1989, p320). Indira Gandhi never got the opportunity to test this strategy in an election campaign, but it was obvious in Rajiv Gandhi's 1984 "unity" campaign and again in his 1991 election promise to cancel elections in Punjab, extend President's rule, and eradicate 'terrorism' in the state. Although Indira Gandhi did not initiate the crisis in Punjab, it is clear that her "narrow partisan concerns" served to perpetuate the crisis -- "[i]n retrospect, therefore, there is little doubt that a more self-assured or more enlightened leader could have put the evolving crisis in Punjab on a different track" (Kohli 1990, p362).

The central government also suffered from sycophancy, frequent personal changes[13], and Giani Zail Singh's political power games. Giani Zail Singh's covert activities in Punjab are not fully known, he is widely believed to have provided support to Bhindranwale and the Dal Khalsa, as early as 1978, as a foil to the Akali Dal. It has also been reported that he engineering the election of Santok Singh, "the sworn enemy of the SGPC and the Akalis" and his conduit to Bhindranwale, as the president of the powerful Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee[14] (India Today 31 October 1981,

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[13]. Between 1981 and 1985, there was nine different governors in Punjab and over the same period there were at least five police chiefs in Punjab (India Today 31 July 1984, p35).

[14]. See footnote 7.

p37). Zail Singh was from a poor, lower caste Sikh family who made his start in politics with the Akali Dal before crossing the floor to the Congress. After serving as the Chief Minister of Punjab from 1971-7, he moved to federal politics and after the stunning 1980 election victory of the Congress Party, he became the home minister. However, he still wanted to retain his position as the preeminent Punjabi Sikh in the Congress Party. Indira Gandhi, however, could not tolerate any minister cultivating too powerful a support base at the state level (see Brass 1988) and thus appointed Darbara Singh, an arch rival of Giani Zail Singh[15], as the chief minister of Punjab when Congress won the state assembly election in 1980 (Tully and Jacob 1985, p63). Zail Singh, who "could not countenance the selection of Darbara Singh as Punjab chief minister, for he would certainly use his position to eliminate Zail Singh's supporters from power in Punjab" (Brass 1988, p188), thus did everything in his power to undermine the effectiveness of the Darbara Singh ministry. Zail Singh was appointed the President of India in July 1982, and ultimately he won his battle with Darbara Singh when Indira Gandhi asked him to dismiss the Punjab ministry and impose President's rule. In sum, however, Zail Singh's pursuit of narrow, personal political interests served to exacerbate the Punjab crisis.

The Akali Role in the Failed Negotiations

A number of observers have tried to accord at least equal blame to the

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15. The feud between Zail Singh and Darbara Singh, which began in the 1950s when they were both cabinet ministers in Pratap Singh Kairon's Congress goverment in Punjab, is a straight forward power struggle with no ideological complications (India Today 15 February 1982).

Akalis for the spiralling crisis in Punjab, notably Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh (1984). Although Kohli is very critical of Indira Gandhi, he also states that "to jump from such an understanding of Indira Gandhi's role to a normative conclusion that she was the main villain in the conflict and, by implication, that the Akalis were heroes of sorts imply is not sustainable against the available facts" (Kohli 1990, p362). Kohli criticizes the Akalis for their agitational strategy, their factionalism, and their "unprincipled electoral opportunism." He also believes that the Akali Dal legitimized many of the goals of the militants, and thus, he says, "the Akalis can hardly be seen sympathetically as victims of the conflict, let alone as heroes in Punjab's civil unrest" (Kohli 1990, p363).

However, it ought not to be the job of political scientists to label political actors as "heroes" or "villains." The Akalis, as has been argued repeatedly, were placed in a very awkward situation when they received a very real and powerful challenge from Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, and his supporters in the AISSF, for hegemony in the Sikh community. The Akalis were thus compelled to adopt a more nationalistic position and to underscore that position they had to resort to their time-honored strategy of agitation. Moreover, in light of the increasing centralization of power under Indira Gandhi, the Akalis felt compelled to bypass the duly elected government of Darbara Singh in Punjab, and deal directly with the source of all power in the Indian polity, the central government and especially Indira Gandhi herself.

Kohli criticizes the Akalis for being severely factionalized. Indeed they were, but factionalism has been a facet of Indian politics for most of the century. With the presence of Bhindranwale et al, however, political

logic dictated that all Akali leaders had to move to more nationalistic positions which in turn made a negotiated settlement with the government more difficult. One report succinctly states that "the Akali leadership has been taking an increasingly militant position and each leader fears that to initiate talks [with the centre] would result in his being dubbed a traitor by the others" (India Today 15 October 1982, p35-6). However, agreements were apparently reached with the central government at least three times but it was Indira Gandhi who recanted, not the Akalis. And when the Akalis were forced to walk back to Bhindranwale et al empty handed, they had no choice but to continue their agitation. Moreover, they felt compelled to produce new demands to maintain the momentum of the agitation (Aurora 1984, p90). Thus the criticisms that the Akalis "insisted on an immediate commitment on their demands" (India Today 30 November 1982, p18), or that they were inconsistent, fail to understand the pressure that the Akalis were facing from below, via Bhindranwale and the AISSF.

Finally, the criticism they have received for failing 'to condemn the actions of Bhindranwale and the militants' are politically naive. Brass argues that from the viewpoint of Tohra, "Bhindranwale was useful as an ally in his struggles with the Longowal-Badal faction. Consequently, Tohra permitted Bhindranwale to move into the Golden Temple with his men" (Brass 1988, p181). The threat to Tohra was not Longowal and Badal, but Bhindranwale. Tohra's fear was that if the party remained secular it would lose it's support base amongst the Sikhs to Bhindranwale, which could have jeopardized his job as SGPC president. The task was then to appease and contain Bhindranwale. Tohra, furthermore, had no option but to let Bhindranwale take up residence in the Golden Temple. By the time he

settled in the Temple, July 1982, he was already the most popular Sikh leader in Punjab. How could Tohra prevent him from entering the holiest shrine of Sikhism? It would have been akin to barring the Pope from the Vatican. In sum, the Akalis were placed in an extraordinarily difficult position, and, in the end, Gandhi's stubbornness, inability to distinguish moderates and extremists[16], and sheer impatience led her to order the catastrophic raid of the Golden Temple, the infamous 'Operation Bluestar.'

Operation Bluestar (4 June 1984)[17]

Operation Bluestar was a disastrous political decision and a severely bungled military operation. The assault was completely unnecessary -- a reasonable settlement between the government and the Akalis would have eliminated the need for such an action. Negotiations aside, the level of violence, approximately 400 people killed between 1980 and 1984, and the political demands, a devolution of constitutional powers which were in keeping with demands from some other states, did not warrant a full-scale military assault on the Golden Temple. Indira Gandhi's calculations, however, were obviously different. In the end, she ordered the army attack to fall on a Sikh holiday, the 'martyrdom anniversary of Guru Arjan,' and over 1000 people died, including at least 800 innocent Sikh pilgrims who

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16. See Chapter 3, footnote 8.

17. A detailed analysis of the military operation will not be undertaken here -- for details see Tully and Jacob (1985) Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle; The Punjab Story (1984) has two eye witness accounts by journalists of the assault and commentary by Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora (ret); Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh (1984) Tragedy of Punjab reviews Bluestar, as does Chand Joshi (1984) Bhindranwale: Myth and Reality. India Today also has extensive coverage of the battle, see 30 June 1984, and 15 August 1984.

died from army fire.

Operation Bluestar dramatically illustrated the immoral rule of Indira Gandhi. For Sikhs around the world, the operation was as traumatic as the Roman desecration of Jerusalem -- "[i]n the eyes of the Sikhs, the Golden Temple is more than a shrine: it is a sanctuary, an affirmation of the community's sense of identity" (India Today 15 October 1982, p78). Although the Sikh movement had been becoming increasingly more piqued over the years 1978 to 1984, the 'crisis' really did not begin until Bluestar.

Bhindranwale, the AISSF cadres, the Akal Federation and the Dashmesh Regiment had been fortifying the Temple for almost a year, under the guidance of retired Major-General Shahbeg Singh. It is estimated that Bhindranwale had 50-60 well armed supporters, and approximately another 200 men who were willing to fight (India Today 31 December 1983, p70) -- there was also 40-50 well armed Babbars. If the army had attacked prior to December 1983, they would have been able to isolate Bhindranwale's forces in the Guru Nanak Niwas, two buildings away from the Babbars' headquarters in the Guru Ram Das Serai, on the periphery of the Temple but when Bhindranwale was 'evicted' from the Niwas, reportedly by the Babbars under instructions from Longowal, "it became increasingly clear to the government that a decision to act would not just mean invading the Guru Nanak Niwas but the entire temple complex, including the Akal Takht. And that was something no Sikh, not even the staunchest opponent of Bhindranwale, was going to accept" (India Today 31 December 1983, p70). The army not only invaded the Temple, the Akal Takht was virtually destroyed.

When Lt. General Krishnaswamy Sunderji was summoned to New Delhi by the Prime Minister on 25 May 1984 to receive the orders for Bluestar, he

requested that the army be given at least three weeks to prepare but Indira Gandhi ordered him to have the operation in place within one week. Although the army had been alerted to the possibility of an operation at the Golden Temple by December 1983, they had very little intelligence information from the Temple. They did not know how many militants were in the temple, nor did they know the extent of their arsenal or where they were located, and they did not know how the militants had fortified the temple (Kuldip Nayar 1984, p92).

Furthermore, the plan of attack was completely inappropriate. The Golden Temple is a complex structure[18], located in the densely populated walled city of Amritsar. Under such circumstances, one would have expected any military operation to employ a large force, of extremely well trained commandos. A battle of attrition was ruled-out since the army was concerned with the threat of a public uprising. Instead, the army employed a small commando team on its first mission, supported by regular infantry troops. On the other hand, the militants in the Temple were very well motivated and prepared -- Chand Joshi (1984, p152-3) even asserts that the entire operation was leaked to the militants. Although such an assertion is difficult to believe, it is plausible, indeed likely, that Shahbeg Singh, a master of guerilla warfare, accurately predicted the strategy of the army and prepared his forces accordingly.

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18. The Temple is constructed around a large pool, 150m square, with the holy sanctorum in the middle connected to a marble walkway surrounding the pool by a causeway. The entire complex is enclosed by three-story walls lined with rooms facing the pool. On the south side of the temple, is a wide entrance with the community kitchen on the east and a community hall on the west. The Akal Takht is opposite the main entrance, on the other side of the pool. Across the street from the entrance is the SGPC headquarters and the two guest houses.

It is clear that the army was not expecting a significant battle--"[o]n the afternoon of June 3, as the first units of the army began the siege of the temple the generals still strongly felt that it would be possible to overawe the extremists with a show of strength and prevent large-scale bloodshed" (India Today 15 August 1984, p65). The army also only constructed a 50 bed field hospital, although they suffered over 500 killed and wounded, which is further evidence of this reasoning. When initial army firing did not succeed in succumbing the militants, they opened fire with howitzers and tanks. An infantry unit then stormed into the temple followed by commandos but they were easily picked off by the militants. The army storm troopers therefore requested armoured support. Tanks entered the temple first to crush the marble steps to allow the entry of amoured-personnel vehicles (APVs). The militants responded with rocket fire. Essentially, from this point onward, the army, clearly surprised and frustrated, proceeded to quell the militants with heavy bombardment, despite the orders to use 'minimum force.' The battle, which began in the late afternoon of 3 June was not over until the early hours of 7 June and sniping continued for another week. In fact, a single sniper attempted to assassinate President Zail Singh when he visited the temple just two days after the battle[19]. In the end, Bhindranwale, Amrik Singh, and Shahbeg Singh, were killed, along with at least 800 pilgrims visiting the temple, some 100 soldiers, and 100-150 militants. Although the holy sanctorum

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19. Zail Singh undertook the visit to the Temple without consulting the Prime Minister or the Home Minister, probably because he was not fully consulted in the Bluestar decision-making process and because he wanted to try and protect his standing in the Sikh community. His efforts, however, were in vain -- when militants recaptured the Temple in January 1986 one of their first actions was to excommunicate the President.

received only bullet damage, the temple library, which contained invaluable handwritten manuscripts of the Gurus, was destroyed by fire when the army dislodged a single militant with a world-war one vintage, bolt-action .303 bore rifle with grenades, after the fighting had finished -- yet another example of the primitive use of excessive force by the army. And, the Akal Takht, the 'seat of temporal authority,' was virtually destroyed.

The actual storming of the Temple was only the most dramatic part of a larger operation. At the same time, 70,000 troops were moved into Punjab and were deployed across the state "to mop up the terrorist remnants from the countryside" (India Today 15 August 1984, p65). Other units were used in 'Operation Woodrose,' which sealed the Punjab border with Pakistan. In addition to eliminating Bhindranwale and Amrik Singh, hundreds of people were arrested from the Golden Temple, and across Punjab, including the just released Akali leadership -- Longowal and Tohra were arrested at the Temple, along with Amarjit Kaur (the leader of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha) and Badal and Baranla were arrested at their homes. The BKI, and reportedly the Akal Federation, however, were apparently able to escape through an entrance overlooked by the army, another example of the military incompetence. Longowal, Barnala and Talwandi were released in March of the following year, but Badal and Tohra were not released until later. The arrest and detention of the Akali leaders was incredibly short-sighted. The government still had a political problem in Punjab, but the government was left with no Sikh leadership with whom to negotiate. Furthermore, the arrest of the Akali leaders during Bluestar eroded their credibility because it made them appear to have surrendered, while Bhindranwale fought to the death to defend the Golden Temple. The leadership void in the Sikh community was inevitably

filled by militants.

While the Akalis were discredited, Bhindranwale became a martyr--"that the Akal Takht was destroyed made a deep wound in the Sikh psyche; it had been the seat of their Gurus. That it was Bhindranwale who had defiled that shrine, making it a fortress and the refuge of killers, was forgotten; what was remembered was only that he had died defending it, as any true Sikh would have done" (Kuldip Nayar 1984, p127). To the faithful, he died in the same vein as the eighteenth century Sikh folk hero Baba Deep Singh, the founder of Bhindranwale's Damdami Taksal. The assault on the Golden Temple was very disturbing to almost all Sikhs -- in fact, "[m]ost Sikhs see Operation Bluestar as the starting point of the process of alienation. All that went before is forgotten" (India Today 30 June 1985, p64).

Thus "far from ending Bhindranwale's influence and activities, the attack, and the government actions associated with it, actually served as evidence of what he was trying to prove. In a religious frame of reference, it was one more dramatic piece of evidence that Gandhi's government was hostile to Sikhs as such, would not react reasonably to their demands, and was in fact either indifferent to their destruction or positively in favour of it" (Leaf 1985, p494). The large pool of alienated youth who had supported Bhindranwale -- most especially the young, poorer, Jat-Sikh men, from Amritsar and Gurdaspur, who faced bleak economic prospects, regardless of education -- made it possible for the AISSF and the Damdami Taksal to survive underground and to re-emerge two years later, with a vengeance, as influential actors in the Punjab crisis.

Conclusions

The Akali Dal and the central government, particularly Congress regimes, have long been engaged in processes of political conflict. This chapter, however, demonstrates how the emergence of Sikh extremists (Bhindranwale and the AISSF) served to place pressure on the moderate Sikh nationalists (the Akali Dal), which in turn severely strained centre-Punjab relations. Although the Akali leaders did not enjoy full autonomy or support in their community, they were willing to pursue an accommodation with the centre in an effort to isolate the extremists. However, Indira Gandhi's misunderstanding of the dynamics of Sikh nationalism led her to believe that she would lose support in the Hindi-heartland if she pursued an accommodative settlement with the Akalis. A serious conflict was thus inevitable.

Upon returning to power in January 1980 Indira Gandhi, in a move reminescent of her 'Emergency' rule, dismissed nine non-Congress state governments, including the Akali Dal ministry in Punjab. The Akalis immediately resorted to their time honoured strategy of extra-parliamentary agitation against the central government. In September 1981, the Akali Dal presented Indira Gandhi with a list of forty-five demands and grievances based on the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. The very same month Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was arrested on charges of murder. He was able to elaborately orchestrate his arrest -- he 'surrendered' to the police outside his 'seminary' (the Damdami Taksal) during a huge rally. At the rally, Bhindranwale not only proclaimed his innocence, he recieved the support of almost every Akali leader. The Akali Dal was in the process of re-establishing their 'Sikh credentials' after their 'secular' administration

in Punjab and they believed that they had to be seen supporting the most popular Sikh religious leader in the state or potentially sacrifice their own standing. The Akali Dal immediately revised their list of demands and made the unconditional release of Bhindranwale their first priority. When he was released the following month the Akalis had no choice but to accept him into their fold and from the inside he was able to keep the Akalis on a strongly nationalistic course. The Akalis and Bhindranwale thus united in their campaign against the centre. Although the Akalis and Bhindranwale were 'aligned,' Bhindranwale and his student supporters also initiated an armed struggle which was designed to pressure the government further and undermine the Akalis. Indira Gandhi, however, adamantly refused to conclude any settlement.

Gandhi had a poor understanding of the dynamics of Sikh nationalism. Consequently she was unable to separate the Akalis from Bhindranwale and she thus accepted the Akali demands at face value. Although the Akalis would have dropped their maximalist demands in lieu of substantial movement on the issues of Chandigarh and the division of river waters, Gandhi refused to accept a negotiated settlement because she perceived that any settlement with the Akalis would have damaged her electoral successes her primary base of support, Haryana, and by extension the Hindi-heartland. The rapidly deteriorating situation in Punjab was thus stalemated. Indira Gandhi, growing impatient with the increasing violence in the state, finally ordered the army into the Golden Temple. After a week of heavy fighting, Operation Bluestar succeeded in killing Bhindranwale and Amrik Singh, and approximately a thousand other people.

The repressive military presence in Punjab stiffled the agitation but

only temporarily. Less than two years later, Sikh militants took control of the Golden Temple and declared the independence of Khalistan -- a demand never annunciated publicly by Bhindranwale. After a second raid on the Golden Temple by the Indian Army (Operation Blackthunder, May 1988), the militant secessionist movement was transformed into an armed insurrection. The Punjab 'problem' is still fundamentally a political problem and thus requires a political solution but, as we approach the eighth anniversary of Operation Bluestar, the successive governments of India have been wholly incapable of devising a political solution. Punjab is therefore unfortunately embroiled in a violent political quagmire. Prior to Operation Bluestar the death toll in Punjab was a few hundred. Eight years later, over 25,000 people have been killed and there is no resolution on the visible horizen.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

The Sikh nationalist movement illuminates a number of important issues for the study of nationalism. First, the development of the religion, particularly over the last one hundred years, illustrates the socio-psychological importance of ethnicity. Second, the Sikh nationalist movement clearly demonstrates the importance of class. The Sikh nationalist movement can be broken down into four distinct periods with different social leadership and thus different ideologies and goals -- 1) the Singh Sabhas were led by the aristocratic Sikh classes; 2) the Akali Dal was established by the urban Sikh intelligentsia of the middle stratas; 3) in 1962, the wealthy Jat Sikh agriculturalists of the Malwa region of southern Punjab wrestled control of the Akali Dal; and 4) in the 1980s, low to middle level Jat Sikh peasants, particularly of the Majha region of northwestern Punjab, challenged the wealthy Jats of the Malwa, for hegemony in the Sikh community. Third, the Sikh movement illustrates the importance of political entrepreneurs and organizations -- without them nationalist movements cannot be started or maintained. Finally, on a micro-level, Sikh secessionism, contrary to popular opinion, does not represent a wealthy peripheral group attempting to secede. The aggregate data suggests that the Sikhs are one of the wealthiest groups in India, but Sikh secessionism is being driven by a relatively disadvantaged group of Sikhs, not necessarily the poorest Sikhs but the lower to middle level Jat Sikh peasants (led by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and Amrik Singh) and not by wealthy agricultural Jats, or by the urban industrialists or intelligentsia.

The Sikh case, therefore, illustrates that national groups may suffer from factionalism along these three broad sources: 1) different visions of the nation; 2) class; and 3) leadership rivalry. And, unfortunately, factionalism tends to sacrifice the long-term interests of the group for the

short-term interest of political entrepreneurs. A quick recapitulation of the case will attempt to highlight all the major points.

Although Sikhism is a relatively new religion, it has a rich history. The religious doctrines of Sikhism were established over a two-hundred year period following the 'founding' of the religion in 1499. Throughout the eighteenth century the Sikhs fought for survival against the Moghuls and Afghans in the turbulent Punjab, until finally a Sikh military leader, Ranjit Singh, established political control over the region in 1799. The 'Golden Era' of Sikhism, however, was short lived -- Ranjit died in 1839 and the British annexed Punjab a decade later. Faced with imperial rule, Christian missionaries, and Hindu revivalism, a Sikh national consciousness developed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Members of the Sikh aristocracy organized Sikh revival groups, known as Singh Sabhas. The major contribution of the Singh Sabhas groups, founded in 1873, was the establishment of a modern Sikh identity based on the tenets of the Khalsa. As the Sikh nationalist movement developed over the twentieth century, two important concepts were added to the basic definition of Sikhism -- at the time of partition in 1947, the concept of a Sikh state was articulated for the first time; and Bhindranwale encouraged Sikhs to demonstrate their inner conviction to Sikhism by becoming amritdhari (baptized).

Although the Singh Sabhas were instrumental in creating a modern Sikh identity, they lost moral legitimacy in the second decade of the twentieth century due to their cooperation with the British. In 1920, Sikh nationalists of the urban intelligentsia established the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and the Akali Dal. The Akali Dal almost immediately surpassed the Singh Sabhas as the leaders of the Sikh community,

and instead of cooperation with the central authorities, the Akali Dal has most often pursued a strategy of non-cooperation. From the 1920s up to the 1960s, the Akali Dal vigorously pursued issues of concern to the Sikh community -- gurdwara reform, special political representation for Sikhs, partition, and the Punjabi Suba -- but during an internal struggle concerning strategy in the mid-1960s, wealthy Jat Sikhs, primarily from the Malwa region of southern Punjab, wrestled control of the Akali Dal. The move quickly paid dividends -- the new leadership was able to obtain the Punjabi Suba within four years. The linguistic division of the state in 1966, and the ascension of Indira Gandhi in the same year, provides the point of departure for the contemporary secessionary movement in Punjab.

Under Indira Gandhi, the Indian political system, already very centralized, under went a process of centralization. The Akali Dal has long been suspicious of centralized governance -- they have continually sought to have the powers to develop their nation devolved to the state level. They were thus at the forefront of the anti-Emergency campaign, 1975-1977. Indira Gandhi was tossed from office in 1977, but another clash between the Akali Dal and the centre was almost inevitable when she resumed her authoritarian practices after winning the 1980 election. However, to understand how the crisis arose, we must undertake a comprehensive analysis of the internal political dynamics of Punjab and the Sikh community.

With the creation of a Sikh majority state in 1966, the electoral opportunities for the Akali Dal were greatly improved. But since 40% of Punjab was still Hindu the Akali Dal had to pursue a more secular orientation in order to maintain the coalition governments they established with the primarily Hindu Jana Sangh/Janata Party. Whilst the Akali Dal was

compelled to follow a more pragmatic secular approach, the strategy served to distance themselves from their primary constituency -- nationalistic Jat Sikhs. The space was thus created for Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to rise and capitalize on the opportunity to lead the Sikh community.

To succeed, however, Bhindranwale required a mass base. He developed a following in the large number of well-educated rural Jat Sikhs loitering around the campuses of Punjab. The green revolution of the 1960s had created the opportunity for a first generation of Jat Sikhs to leave the farm, attain higher education and seek urban employment. The stagnating urban economy, however, meant that many graduates had little prospect of fulfilling employment. This emerging underclass, primarily from the poorer Majha region of Punjab, was particularly receptive to Bhindranwale's message and they became organized by the All-India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) led by Amrik Singh, Bhindranwale's childhood friend and 'blood-brother.' Bhindranwale gave the AISSF religious legitimacy and the Federation extended to Bhindranwale an organized mass base of support. There seems to be a general aversion in the literature to regard a religious fundamentalist with limited education as a rational, self-interested actor but, the Bhindranwale/AISSF nexus posed a serious challenge to the hegemony of the Akali Dal in the Sikh community. The Akalis thus felt compelled to adopt a more nationalistic posture.

After being evicted from office in 1980 by Indira Gandhi, the Akali Dal immediately attempted to regain their credibility in the Sikh community and thus launched a series of protests against the increasing centralization of Indira Gandhi's rule. In September 1981, the Akali Dal presented a list of forty-five demands and grievances, based on the Anandpur Sahib Resolution,

to the central government. The same month, however, Bhindranwale was arrested on charges of murder. To maintain their legitimacy with the Sikh community, the Akalis felt compelled to defend Bhindranwale and immediately revised their demands to make his unconditional release their top priority. When he was released the following month, the Akalis had no option but to accept him into their fold. From the inside, Bhindranwale was able to keep the Akalis on a strongly nationalistic course. He placed additional pressure on the Akalis by initiating an armed agitation against the centre with his supporters in the AISSF, Dashmesh Regiment, Akal Federation, and more indirectly, the Dal Khalsa. The Babbar Khalsa International, and its parent organization the Akhand Kirtani Jatha, also served to place pressure on the Akali Dal. Moreover, the BKI and the other militant groups forced the AISSF/Bhindranwale to maintain a militant position -- the BKI, in particular, was more militant than Bhindranwale and was seriously challenging him for leadership in the Sikh community.

The Akalis were willing to negotiate a settlement with the government and dump Bhindranwale, but Indira Gandhi, unable to distinguish between the Akali Dal and Bhindranwale, adamantly refused to give the Akalis tangible concessions. Her calculus was that any concessions to the Akali Dal would harm her electoral opportunities in her bases of support, Haryana, and by extension, the Hindi-heartland of north-central India. After a long stalemate, Indira Gandhi made the disastrous decision to send the army into the Golden Temple. After a week of heavy fighting Bhindranwale and Amrik Singh were dead but so too were a thousand other people, and worse still, the entire Sikh community was devastated.

Bluestar succeeded only in terminating Bhindranwale. In the post-

Bluestar phase, which included the retaliatory assassination of Indira Gandhi, the agitation for autonomy shifted into an armed, clearly secessionist, movement for an independent Khalistan. In January 1986, a group of Sikh militants recaptured the Golden Temple and quickly 'announced the independence of Khalistan.' There was also a tremendous proliferation of militant groups. Three strands have emerged from the Bhindranwale/AISSF nexus -- those who owe allegiance to Bhindranwale; those owe allegiance to Amrik Singh; and those loyal to the Damdami Taksal. The Akhand Kirtani Jatha/Babbar Khalsa nexus still provides the core of the another militant pole. In May 1988, a much better trained commando team stormed the Golden Temple but unlike 1984 the militants were based outside the Temple and the operation thus provided little success. Since 'Operation Blackthunder,' there has been a tremendous escalation of violence in Punjab. Prior to Bluestar only some 500 people were killed. Between Bluestar and Blackthunder, the number dead rose to about 2,300, and since Blackthunder the number has escalated to a staggering 15,000[1]. The movement is now resembles an armed insurrection, with over twenty militant groups vying for supremacy. Although many militants remained committed to the creation of Khalistan, the movement, in large measure, has lost its ideological coherence and moral purpose. With the economy suffering from ten years of political instability, the movement has, for many young (male) Sikhs, simply become the best 'career' opportunity in Punjab. But the 'problem' in Punjab is still fundamentally political and thus requires a political solution.

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[1]. Data collected from various media sources, most especially India Today. These figures exclude Operation Bluestar (June 1984) and the Delhi Riots (after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, 31 October 1984) which respectively left about 1000 and 3000 people dead.

In the early 1980s, the government of India was incapable of distinguishing between the moderate, democratic nationalism of the Akali Dal and the more extreme nationalism of Bhindranwale and the AISSF. From the earliest moments of the Punjab crisis, the best solution would have been to cut a deal with the moderates and isolate the militants. Rajiv Gandhi did negotiate a deal with Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal but unfortunately failed to live up to the terms of the settlement. Gandhi's failure to implement the Accord seriously undermined the legitimacy of the Akali ministry of Surjit Singh Barnala, who had won the election subsequent to the Accord, and was directly responsible for the rise of militancy. As the militancy increased through 1986 and 1987, Barnala's government was rendered less and less effective and was finally dismissed in May 1987 by the central government. The Akali Dal suffered from rampant factionalism during this troubled period, but after May 1987 they were all virtually irrelevant. The Sikh 'moderates' are now the AISSF, whose position may be best stated as 'Khalistan if necessary, but not necessarily Khalistan' -- unlike the BKI and the other twenty some militant groups in Punjab who are firmly secessionary. If the government wants to solve the Punjab crisis, they cannot afford to allow the AISSF to be squeezed out of the moderate ground.

In my opinion, the key to solving the Punjab crisis is a return to the electoral process. The agenda for centre-Punjab negotiations can only be established once the democratic will of the people has been determined and after the issue of representation is solved. Without a free and fair election in Punjab, the government has no basis on which to decide with whom they should negotiate. On the other hand, without an election, the various militant groups cannot empirically state who they represent. For an

election to be effective, however, the Indian political system must undergo a fundamental normative shift, which the government of India will almost certainly find unpalatable. But the Punjab crisis is much deeper than when it began, consequently any solution will have to concede much more than it would have before Operation Bluestar.

First, the government must allow for complete freedom of expression. In a liberal democracy, people have freedom of belief, expression and to associate and if the people believe in secession they not only should have the right to state their belief, they should also have the right to vote themselves out of the union. The government of India has adamantly refused to allow people to express their desire to separate but the government cannot keep people in the union against their will by force. If the government wants to maintain the unity of the state, they must provide incentives to those who want to separate to change their minds. Moreover, I believe that only a minority of Punjabis (including a minority of Sikhs) support secession. If Sikh militant groups still want to pursue secession, they must provide the incentives that would entice a majority of Punjabis to support Khalistan. (If, however, a majority of Sikhs come to ardently support secession -- and Punjabi Hindus prefer to remain in India -- another partition would, unfortunately, be the only solution). Second, to draw the militants into the political process there will have to be a large-scale amnesty. Finally, to overcome the widespread perception that an election would not be fair if held under the watch of the Indian Army, an international observer team (preferably under United Nations auspices) should be assembled to scrutinize the election. And once the democratic process is made free and fair, the government and Sikh separatists alike

must accept the democratic will of the people.

The caretaker government of Chandra Shekar courageously announced in the spring of 1991 that an election would be held in Punjab in the end of June 1991. However, the federal election held in May/June 1991 produced a new Congress government, which inexcusably cancelled the Punjabi poll within thirty-six hours of voting. And they subsequently reneged on their own promise to hold a poll rescheduled for September 1991. Unfortunately, the election that was finally held in February 1992 was a farce. The Congress (I) government called the election in Punjab simply to strengthen their minority standing in the federal parliament. The elections were not free because Sikhs were not able to campaign on a secessionary platform. And with more than 250,000 Indian security forces in Punjab, most Sikhs did not perceive the election to be fair. Virtually all Sikh political parties thus boycotted the elections. The Congress (I) 'won' 87 of 117 state assembly seats and 12 of 13 federal seats, but with a 21.6% voter turn-out the Congress regime in Punjab has little popular legitimacy. Unfortunately, Punjab is not moving in a truly democratic direction and is thus nowhere near a resolution.

After 25,000 deaths, the resentment, bitterness, and distrust are palpable. The militant movement may well fizzle in the coming years as the ever growing death toll undermines its legitimacy. If such an outcome is observed, the government's 'wait-and-see' strategy will have 'succeeded' in terminating the crisis, but at tremendous human cost and without addressing the genuine and reasonable concerns of the Sikh community. Failure to redress the bitterness felt in the Sikh community would be a political injustice, with potentially dire consequences.

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