

## India and the Khalistan Liberation Movement. Fleshing Out The Future Vision Of Indian Federalism

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

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*The Khalistan national liberation movement should emphasize the 1973 Anandpur Sahib Resolution's decentralizing and democratic principles in order to become the core of a new nationwide opposition movement that inspires India's diverse population to unite in challenging the centralizing and fascist tendencies of the country's current Hindutva rulers.*

### The Roots Of India's Fear

[India's Hindutva rulers are deathly afraid of the Khalistan national liberation movement](#), though not so much for the separatism that it supports but because of the decentralizing and democratic principles enshrined in its 1973 [Anandpur Sahib Resolution](#). That revolutionary document could enable the movement to become the core of a nationwide opposition movement to the BJP's vision of creating a Hindu Rashtra, but only if the country's diverse population becomes aware of it in the first place. New Delhi has been doing all that it can over the decades to suppress any serious discussion about the constitutional reforms contained in that manifesto, which is why the Khalistan movement should prioritize spreading its details far and wide in order to counter the state's de-facto censorship of their proposals.

### Making The Best Of Bad Developments

India is already [extremely worried](#) about the political consequences of the [Kashmiri national liberation movement's](#) recent successes in raising awareness about their cause, so the Khalistani one would do well to emulate its informational tactics in order to achieve a similar level of global renown. The Sikhs For Justice's [Referendum 2020](#) plans to hold a vote on Punjab's independence are a step in the right direction, and the India's [recent banning of this peaceful group](#) could be taken advantage of to bring even more attention to their goals, as could Twitter's [scandalous suspension](#) of the account held by the organization's lawyer at New Delhi's demand. The contemporary zeitgeist is such that people all across the world are suspicious of states banning peaceful groups and Big Tech companies shutting down activist accounts, so that all works in Khalistan's favor.

The movement should capitalize on both of these developments by reaching out to other peaceful organizations within India and abroad that have been banned by their countries and/or Big Tech companies for political reasons. This strategy could allow the Sikhs For Justice to expand their network of supporters and possibly even gain access to other media platforms, which would further the goal of popularizing the decentralizing and democratic principles articulated in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. The international community would

become more sympathetic to the Khalistan cause if they were made aware of its political foundations, while a new Indian opposition movement could coalesce around its revolutionary vision and ultimately pose the greatest challenge to the country's Hindutva rulers.

### **Dismantling The Bollywood Myth About India**

It's that latter development that could change India forever if it succeeds, but there would have to be additional informational components to this strategy in order to make it more viable, especially in the realm of international public opinion. It's not enough for the average person to know what the Khalistan national liberation movement is, but for influential ones (especially in social media and NGOs) and foreign government officials to be aware of it too. Once people hear about it, they should also be informed of India's 1984 "[Operation Blue Star](#)" against the Harmandir Sahib, one of Sikhism holiest places. Speaking of which, many people don't even know that Sikhism is its own separate religion and wrongly think that it's a sect of Hinduism, so that misperception should be corrected whenever possible.

That's very important since Khalistan's case would engender more international sympathy — and consequently, pressure on the Indian government — if people learned that New Delhi doesn't even recognize the religion's separate standing which is one of its adherents' many grievances against the Indian government. The other more obvious one is "Operation Blue Star", the legacy of which continues to poison the Sikhs' relations with the state and explains why the decision was made to pursue separatism as opposed to the federal principles originally proposed in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. It also powerfully contradicts the notion that India is a peace-loving country that wouldn't dare kill its own people like other ones with much worse international reputations have done before on a similar scale to near-unanimous global condemnation each time.

### **Closing Down The "Prison Of Nations"**

Dismantling the Bollywood myth about India reveals that the contemporary civilization-state is actually a "prison of nations" like the USSR was once described, though one in which its many linguistic, ethnic, religious, and regional minorities are regularly oppressed without barely anyone abroad uttering a word of support on their behalf. While the Kashmiri struggle is the most well-known one in India today, the state has succeeded in discrediting it to a certain extent because of the militant tactics that some of its members have resorted to out of desperation, but the Sikhs For Justice's purely peaceful approach to Referendum 2020 means that it's not at risk of having its international reputation tarnished on that basis. That said, the organization would do well to raise the concern that India might be planning a brutal crackdown against it in the coming future.

Referendum 2020 will still happen in spite of India banning the group, but the state could exploit its "unlawful" designation as a pretext for using force against it in order to stop the vote. Depending on how much the Sikh majority of Punjab publicly expresses its support for this plebiscite in the run-up to the event, the authorities might declare part or all of the region a "disturbed area" in line with the controversial 1958 [Armed Forces \(Special Powers\) Act](#) (AFSPA) that's been abused for over half a century to [carry out crimes](#) against targeted populations all across the country that include arbitrary arrests and even extrajudicial executions. The Sikhs For Justice should warn the world about this dangerous scenario ahead of time in the hopes that foreign pressure could be put upon India to eschew this course of action.

## Fleshing Out The Future Vision Of Federalism

Unlike the Kashmiris, many Sikhs live in the influential Western countries of the US, UK, and Canada, where they're sometimes prominent members of their communities who command a lot of respect. This preconditions the citizens of those countries to having sympathy for the Khalistani cause, which could be furthered by those individuals using local, regional, and national media to advance the aforementioned informational strategy. What's most important is to bring this issue to a high level of discourse that succeeds in breaking through the Indian state's censorship about it within the country, thereby inspiring all Hindutva opponents — and especially minority groups with similar ambitions as Khalistan's and/or who would benefit the most from decentralization — to unite in presenting an alternative national vision based on the 1973 manifesto.

The proposals for decentralization and democracy shouldn't just be kept at the level of slogans, however, but should be elaborated upon in a detailed fashion for their intended domestic audience and interested members of the international one who want to know more about what exactly it entails. It might be helpful to learn from the Kurds' system of "[democratic confederalism](#)" that they adapted from the late anarchist thinker Murray Bookchin's theories about "[Communalism](#)" since their vision broadly aligns with the one expressed in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. That could add some substance to how they envision the New India functioning if the opposition movement that they might inspire ever ends up coming to power, as well as importantly give voters a sense of exactly how different it would be than the current centralized and fascist status quo.

## Concluding Thoughts

All in all, the Khalistan movement must appreciate the importance of perception management and media messaging in spreading awareness of its goals across India and the rest of the world. Conceiving of itself as the core of a new nationwide opposition to Hindutva based on the decentralizing and democratic principles of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution would imbue the government's many opponents with a much-needed sense of vision to fill the void left by Congress' lack thereof, which could therefore transform the rest of rump India for the better in the event of Khalistan's eventual secession. Even prior to the scenario of its national liberation campaign succeeding, the Sikhs can still play a leading role in national affairs by following this strategy.

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**Andrew Korybko** is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to *Global Research*.

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### About the author:

Andrew Korybko est le commentateur politique étasunien qui travaille actuellement pour l'agence Sputnik. Il est en troisième cycle de l'Université MGIMO et auteur de la monographie Guerres hybrides: l'approche adaptative indirecte pour un changement de régime(2015).

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For media inquiries: [editors@asia-pacificresearch.com](mailto:editors@asia-pacificresearch.com)