

OPINION

# Why Indians of almost every political persuasion are backing New Delhi in its dispute with Canada

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This week Canada expelled half a dozen Indian diplomats and accused New Delhi of running a criminal racket from its mission in Ottawa, [claiming it was linked](#) to assassinations and extortion on Canadian soil. Canadians justly outraged by India's alleged behaviour might profit from considering the view from India.

To Indian eyes, Canada now looks like the sanctuary of choice for Sikh terrorists. Most Indians are skeptical of Ottawa's extraordinary allegation that New Delhi's recently withdrawn high commissioner to Canada, Sanjay Kumar Verma – an exceedingly distinguished career diplomat – is in reality the kingpin of an international crime syndicate. It's not just nationalists who are dubious.

Indians of almost every political hue now regard Canada, if not as an adversary, then as a state that gives succour to India's avowed enemies.

The gravamen of New Delhi's grievance against Canada is the seemingly privileged treatment extended to Sikh separatists who champion the idea of Khalistan: a Sikh theocracy hacked from the Indian state of Punjab.

Canadians, long exposed to Quebec separatism, may regard Khalistan as another run-of-the-mill secessionist demand. But the thought of territorial disintegration to accommodate the demands of religious nationalism evokes a

more visceral response in a country forged in the horrors of Partition in the name of faith at its independence from Britain.

Khalistan is a dead and discredited cause in India, but its memory remains profoundly harrowing. Its campaign of terror, peaking in the 1980s, claimed thousands of lives. It took years for its wounds – from the slaughter of innocent Sikhs who refused to renounce India to the assassination of prime minister Indira Gandhi by her own Sikh bodyguards to the killings of thousands of Sikhs in the riots that followed – to heal.

Yet for all the turbulence it provoked, the Khalistan agitation was fated to fail for a simple reason: most Indian Sikhs rejected it. It was a cause pursued, financed and overseen by a zealous minority in the Sikh diaspora. As Andrew Major, the distinguished scholar of Punjab, emphasized at the time: “Genuine commitment to the creation of a separate Sikh state is still rare within the Punjabi Sikh community; it is, in fact, strongest among overseas Sikhs.” Most Indians, including Sikhs, view Canadian Sikhs who support Khalistan as shameless beneficiaries of Canadian multiculturalism and tolerance who would like nothing more than to spawn an intolerant monocultural ethnocracy by incinerating the pluralism of India and Punjab.

To New Delhi’s abiding chagrin, Canada, home to the largest Sikh population outside India, has emerged as the global headquarters for the diasporic proponents of Khalistan. In 1985, its members detonated a bomb on an Air India flight departing Toronto that killed 329 passengers – the worst terrorist atrocity in Canada’s history.

Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the Sikh separatist whose murder last year sparked the rift between New Delhi and Ottawa, arrived in Canada in 1997 on a [forged passport](#). After becoming a Canadian citizen, he reinvented himself as a cleric and travelled to Pakistan, where he mixed with convicted terrorists and posed with an AK-47. In his sermons in Canada, he called for violence against India. New Delhi designated him a terrorist in 2020.

Mr. Nijjar’s lawyer, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a dual American and Canadian national, was also designated a terrorist the same year. Weeks before that, he made [a veiled threat](#) against Air India and warned Sikhs to avoid flying the airline, and promised to [rename the airport](#) in New Delhi after Indira Gandhi’s killers. He also [warned Hindus](#) to leave Canada and declared that his group, Sikhs for Justice, was going to “Balkanize” India.

Given this record, it's breathtaking to see Justin Trudeau pander to identity politics. During his disastrous visit to India in 2018, his office invited a convicted terrorist to an official reception. Last year, his own former foreign policy adviser admitted that [the Canadian Prime Minister resisted](#) "steps to ensure our land was not used for terrorist financing" because he "did not want to lose the Sikh vote." All of this is offensive and inimical to India, but it is no less insulting to Canada.

No country should be allowed to evade accountability, and India is no exception. But as Canada pursues justice, Canadians will have to ask themselves some difficult questions. How and why did their country mutate into a haven for convicted and aspiring terrorists? As Ottawa accuses India of bringing terror to the streets of Canada, Canadians should ask: has their government become a facilitator of international terrorism? And finally: are radical ethno-religious chauvinists who pledge loyalty to – and are willing to shed blood for – a noxious fantasy really worth losing the goodwill of the citizens of the world's most populous democracy?

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-why-indians-of-almost-every-political-persuasion-are-backing-new-delhi/>

This is getting so blatant and political, with Justin's judgment terrible. These d\_mn\_ed Khalistani Sikhs—the only Sikhs I am singling out for criticism, though I can understand some of their sentiment; the vast bulk of Sikhs I have no quarrel with—come here taking advantage of a place they can get away with insurgent things they couldn't at home. These Sikhs have infiltrated the Liberal Party and Canadian politics, and need to be thrown out on the street. If they want to mess with Indian authorities, they can go back home and die with dignity. Right now they are just a curse in Canadian TJB politics unfairly affecting other Canadians with interests in India. But have these "Khalistan" idiots infiltrated the Conservatives and Jagmeet's NDP too?