

NAIL IN THE COFFIN

The Khalistan movement is a Sikh separatist movement which seeks to create a separate country called Khalistan ["The Land of the Pure"]. It originated in the Punjab region of South Asia to serve as a homeland for Sikhs. The territorial definition of the proposed country Khalistan consists of both Punjab, India along with Punjab, Pakistan and includes parts of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Rajasthan.

The Khalistan movement began as an expatriate venture. In 1971, the first explicit call for Khalistan was made in an advertisement published in the New York Times by an expat Jagjit Singh Chohan. With financial and political support of the Sikh diaspora, the movement flourished in the Indian state of Punjab, which has a Sikh-majority population. It reached its zenith in the late 1970s and 1980s, when the secessionist movement caused large-scale violence among the local population including assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and bombing of an Air India flight killing 328 passengers. Various pro-Khalistan outfits have been involved in a separatist movement against the Government of India ever since. In the 1990s the insurgency petered out, and the movement failed to reach its objective due to multiple reasons including a heavy police crackdown on separatists, divisions among the Sikhs and loss of support from the Sikh population.

In the context of India-Pakistan relations, Kartarpur Corridor would act as a bridge between people of the two countries. The Kartarpur Corridor is a proposed border-corridor between India and Pakistan. It is meant to connect the Sikh Holy shrine of Dera Baba Nanak Sahib [located in Punjab, India] and the holy shrine of Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan. The main goal of this proposed corridor is to facilitate the crossing of religious devotees to visit the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur, located in Narowal District, Pakistan, 120 km from Lahore but only three kilometers from the Indian side of the border. The Kartarpur Gurudwara also known as Darbar Sahib Kartarpur is situated on the banks of river Ravi and is considered to be the first gurdwara ever built.

On 22nd November 2018, the Indian Government approved the construction of the Kartarpur Corridor from the Indian Side. As Kartarpur Gurdwara lies only 3 kilometers from the border with India, Pakistan in the year 2000 agreed to allow Sikh pilgrims from India to visit the shrine visa-free [and without passport] by constructing a bridge from the India side of the border to the shrine.

However, there are fears that the corridor may be used by Pakistan to promote separatist agenda in India, as it would bring the Pakistani infrastructure right to the Indian border. Pakistan has been fueling the pro-Khalistan campaign even though a similar wave in India practically ended long back. For instance, several gurdwaras in Pakistan are still being used to promote Khalistan campaign. Some pamphlets were also found at some of the gurdwaras in Pakistan that spoke of "Sikh Referendum 2020"

Even though the Indian Government was able to defeat the Khalistan Movement at that particular time, it was not able to completely eradicate the movement. It is not clear whether these signs are enough to stop the construction of the corridor but precautions must be taken to prevent Pakistan from influencing the internal dynamics of India.

TASK AT HAND

Assume the role of Ajit Kumar Doval, prepare a presentation encompassing

- A comprehensive plan to prevent Pakistan's influence on the internal policies of India.
 - A plan to eradicate the Khalistan Movement completely.
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