

WARID: **India (Punjab) 1983-1993**
STARDATE: **1 January 1983**
ENDDATE: **31 December 1993**
Related cases: none
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Conflict overview

Punjab is a region in northwest India that became a state within the Indian Union, defined by the Punjabi language and a Sikh majority of 60.2% as of 1966. Individual states in India were formerly quite independent from the central government in terms of economic and political decision-making. However, policies aimed at the centralization of power became prominent when Indira Gandhi of the Indian Congress Party became Prime Minister in the mid-1960s. Feeling threatened as a community by such policies, and in light of economic grievances, Punjabi Sikhs sought to counter the government's centralization efforts. In 1973, the Shiromani Akali Dal, a predominantly Sikh party, drafted the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (1973), the 'Magna Charta of Sikh demands' in which political and economic grievances were addressed and demands for greater sovereignty made. The unresponsiveness of the government with regards to the Sikhs' demands and the implementation of President Rule in Punjab led to a conflict spurred by the Sikh in Punjab in 1982. Due to sub-state as well as center-state dynamics, extremist forces within the Sikh opposition eventually prevailed, marginalizing moderate Akali Dal voices that were committed to non-violence. As a result, a violent Sikh insurgency developed.

For ten years, numerous Sikh militant groups engaged in terrorist acts against the central government in Punjab and greater India as well as against moderate Sikhs in Punjab who did not support the insurgents' separatist ambitions. Moreover, the militant groups fought "against each other for supremacy within the movement" (Chima 2014: 264). The most prominent armed militant groups were the Babbar Khalsa International, the Khalistan Commando Force, the Khalistan Liberation Force and the Bhindranwale Tigers Force of Khalistan. Some of the militants' political front groups included the Damdami Taksal, the All Indian Sikh Students Federation (AISSF), the 'United' Akali Dal, International Sikh Youth Federation and the

Akali Dal (Amritsar faction).¹ The Sikh insurgency was slowly weakened and eventually turned into a conflict below the threshold of 25 battle-related deaths per year through massive counter-terrorist operations initiated by the central government and mainly implemented by Punjab police forces who were supported by paramilitary forces and the armed forces, [WARENDUC=5]. According to case-specific literature, the war ended with the government's victory [WARENDOS=4].²

On the basis of the beginning and end dates as defined by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), the civil war lasted 132 months [WARDUR=132]. According to UCDP estimates, 7,247 people died in the conflict [FATALUC=7000].³ Many other sources provide higher death estimates, ranging from 17,000 to 25,000. We settle on an average figure [FATALOS=21000].⁴ In 1981, Punjab had a population of 16,789,000 [PREWARPO=16800000].⁵ Thus, the war killed 0.04% or 0.13% of the pre-war population, depending on the death toll estimate used [INTENSUC=0.04; INTENSOS=0.13].

The military balance at the end of war

The government's strategy for a war of attrition was the decisive factor that ended the Sikh insurgency (Chima 2002; Mahadevan 2008; Singh 2000). As such, even though the conflict 'faded' throughout the years rather than ending in a clear victory, the government can still be named the ultimate victor of the civil war [VICTORY= -1].

Cunningham et al. (2009) note that the Sikh insurgency did not control any territory during the war. Marla Stukenberg (1995: 143) does, however, describe state-like structures such as 'Khalsa Courts' and parallel systems of taxation, especially in the rural areas of Punjab along the Pakistani border. At the end of war, the government regained the control of the whole state of Punjab [REBTERR= -1; MORETERR= -1].

The relative fighting capacity of the insurgents is considered 'low' [REBFIGHT= -1].⁶ Given that the Sikh insurgents used terror-like fighting strategies, their actions were sporadic throughout the war. The government, on the other hand, had both a strong military presence and fighting capability. In 1992, there were about 250,000 central security forces in Punjab

1 On the conflict, see: Chima 1994; Dos Santos 2007; IISS 2004-2009; Leaf 1985; Mahadevan 2008; Major 1987; Singh 1984; Singh 1987; Singh 1996; Singh 2000.

2 Chima 2002; Mahadevan 2008; Singh 2000.

3 http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdata/gpcountry.php?id=74®ionSelect=6-Central_and_Southern_Asia (3 Mar 2014).

4 Chima 2012: 19; Chima 2014: 258; Dos Santos 2007: 93; Mahadevan 2008; Telford 2001; Singh 1996: 411; van Dyke 2009: 975.

5 <http://indiabudget.nic.in/es2006-07/chapt2007/tab97.pdf> (18 Feb 2015).

6 Cunningham et al. 2009.

(Telford 2001) who achieved a breakthrough with their counter-terrorist operation at the end of that year. Thus, only the government was able to continue fighting with the same intensity throughout [CONFIGHT= -1].⁷

Due to the length of the war and the heterogeneity of the insurgency movement (Chima 2002: 26; Major 1987; Telford 2001), several different leaders stood out throughout the years, many of whom were murdered. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the most important militant leader at the beginning of the insurgency, was killed in Operation Bluestar at the Golden Temple in Amritsar in June 1984 (Dos Santos 2007: 100). However, the insurgency in Punjab did not end with his death. Similarly, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her bodyguards in October 1984. While both assassins were Sikhs, it was never clearly determined whether they acted as part of a Sikh insurgency or for other reasons (Leaf 1985: 495). Either way, the conflict continued despite her death. Neither the death of leading figures such as Akali Dal President Harchand Singh Longowal in 1985 nor Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 had an immediate effect on the end the war (Telford 2001). However, in mid-1992, several leaders in the Sikh insurgency were killed; the militants were subsequently severely weakened and unable to efficiently reorganize [LEADER= -1].⁸

In summary, the military imbalance was clearly to the benefit of the government [WARBAL= -1].

The military balance in the post-war period

The percentage of Sikhs in the Indian security forces has always been disproportionately high. It is estimated that, in 1991, “20 percent of all Indian officers and almost a quarter of Indian Air Force pilots were Sikh” (Kundu 1994: 49). Sikhs have also occupied high military ranks – the chief of army staff has been a Sikh since 2012.⁹ However, being a Sikh does not imply that one is from Punjab or part of the Sikh insurgency. In fact, many Sikhs in the Indian army fought against the insurgency in Punjab. For instance, three Sikh generals were involved in planning Operation Bluestar in 1984 (Telford 2001). Moreover, in the 1980s, 65% of the police officers were Sikhs (Van Dyke 2009: 992). Consequently, the representation of Sikhs in the Indian military and police cannot be seen as a representation of the integration of Sikh insurgents in such structures. There is no evidence of large groups of Sikh insurgents having joined the Indian military of police [STATEFOR 1994-2012= -1].

7 Singh 1996: 413.

8 Mahadevan 2008; Singh 1996: 414.

9 The Times of India: Bikram Singh assumes charge as new Army chief, 31 May 2013, online edition.

Throughout the post-war period, the government had separate forces at its disposal (IISS 1994-2012). According to the "The Military Balance" Yearbooks (IISS 2004-2009), two separate non-state armed forces – the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) – were active as part of the Sikh insurgency with a few hundred militants between 2004 and 2009 [**SEPFORCE 1994-2003= -1, SEPFORCE 2004-2009=0, SEPFORCE 2010-2012= -1**].

Given that the Sikh insurgency was not a coherent body of militants but consisted of numerous small groups, it is difficult to assess the number of arms and troop size. Consequently, relevant literature has not provided any specific information on these figures [**TROOPS 1994-2003=n.r. TROOPS 2004-2009=n.d., TROOPS 2010-2012=n.r.; ARMS 1994-2003=n.r., ARMS 2004-2009=n.d., ARMS 2010-2012=n.r.**].¹⁰

Case-specific literature emphasizes that the government's counterinsurgency "wiped out militancy in Punjab" (Mahadevan 2008). The Sikh insurgency therefore did not have any control over Punjab with regards to extracting resources or mobilizing people after 1993; the central government continued to have the ability to do so [**TERRCON 1994-2012= -1**]. Since the insurgents did not control any territory at the end of the war, neither the insurgents' nor the government's control of territory increased or decreased in comparison to the war period. The matter of territory is coded in favor of the government [**TERRWIN 1994-2012= -1**]; otherwise, the fact that the Sikh insurgency did not hold any territory throughout the war and post-war periods would incorrectly be coded as a compensating factor in the calculation of post-war military balance [**VULNERAB 1994-2012= -1**].

Since the end of the war in 1993, there have not been any peacekeeping missions sent to Punjab [**PEACKEEP 1994-2012=n.r.**].¹¹ None of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council announced their specific support for one of the sides in the case of a renewed civil war [**P5ALLY 1994-2012=n.r.**].

The military balance after the end of the war slightly fluctuated due to the change in opposition forces as well as the data available on them [**POSTBAL 1994-2003= -1, POSTBAL 2004-2009= -0.8, POSTBAL 2010-2012= -1**]. As a combined value of the military balance at the end of the war and in the post-war period, the total military balance shows that the government was much stronger [**BALANCE 1994-2003= -1, BALANCE 2004-2009= -0.9, BALANCE 2010-2012= -1**].

10 Telford 2001.

11 Fortna 2008: 30.

Economy

The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in India since the end of the Sikh insurgency is noted below. It roughly quadrupled in the post-war period.

Table 1: GDP per capita in post-war in India in current USD¹²

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population (total)</i>	<i>GDP per capita</i>
1994	938,452,550	355
1995	955,804,355	384
1996	973,147,577	411
1997	990,460,131	427
1998	1,007,746,556	425
1999	1,025,014,711	455
2000	1,042,261,758	457
2001	1,059,500,888	466
2002	1,076,705,723	487
2003	1,093,786,762	565
2004	1,110,626,108	650
2005	1,127,143,548	740
2006	1,143,289,350	830
2007	1,159,095,250	1069
2008	1,174,662,334	1042
2009	1,190,138,069	1147
2010	1,205,624,648	1417
2011	1,221,156,319	1509
2012	1,236,686,732	1484

The scale of compromise after the war

As described, the Sikh insurgency was almost entirely destroyed in 1992 and only very small armed groups remained engaged in violent action against the government and against moderate Sikhs. The movement never established an effective political arm; consequently, only parties opposed to the insurgency – including the Indian Congress Party (ICP) and the Shiromani Akali Dal party – participated in Punjab’s post-war governments.¹³ Even in the case of former insurgents joining the Akali Dal in order to bring forward their demands, we do not consider this as participation in the government: by joining this party, they are bound by the moderate politics of the Akali Dal [**GOVERN 1994-2012= -1**]. Due to their lack of political representation, the Sikh insurgency did not hold a veto [**VETO 1994-2012= -1; VETOSAT 1994-2012=n.r.**].

The Akali Dal (Amritsar faction), committed to the aim of establishing the independent state Khalistan, took part in elections in Punjab but did not win a single seat in the state’s assembly

12 <http://data.worldbank.org/country/india> (15 Apr 2015).

13 <http://www.elections.in/political-parties-in-india/shiromani-akali-dal.html> (18 Feb 2015).

in the post-war years. Freedom House rates political rights in India consistently between 2 and 4, which implies that elections can be considered free and fair [**ELECT 1994-2012=0**].¹⁴

Before Operation Bluestar in 1984, both the mainstream Akali Dal and Bhindranwale – the most important leader of the insurgents – demanded the implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Following Operation Bluestar, the Akali Dal continued to demand the Anandpur Sahib Resolution whereas the militant groups clearly demanded independence from India in the form of a separate Sikh state to be called ‘Khalistan’ (Chima 2014: 262; Jodhka 2001; Major 1987: 48-49). The Declaration of Khalistan (1989) was published in 1986, when an elected Akali Dal government was in place (van Dyke 2009: 989). The statement (1989: 533-534) declared the formation of Khalistan as an independent state that seeks recognition by India and “all the powers of the world”. Punjab did not gain independence but continued to be a state of the Indian Union [**EXBORDER 1994-2012= -1**].

Territorial adjustments – especially the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab as demanded in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution – never materialized even though Prime Minister Gandhi promised this in the Rajiv Longowal¹⁵ Accord of 1985 [**INBORDER 1994-2012=-1**].¹⁶

Concerning questions of allocating competences among the various political levels, the government took steps towards the demands of the Sikh insurgency to restrict the government’s responsibilities and to decentralize power (Chima 2002). Case-relevant literature emphasizes that, from the 1990s onwards, India – under a Congress as well as under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government – is considered to have been going through a process of decentralization (Chima 2002: 30; World Bank 2000). Particularly highlighted are the 73th and 74th constitutional reforms, implemented in 1993, through which a new tier of competence – the local level within the individual states in form of the ‘Panchayats’ – was introduced and quickly adopted by the government of Punjab [**COMPETEN 1994-2012=0**].¹⁷

As for economic issues, certain demands of the Sikh insurgency were met. Generally, the government supported Punjab in implementing several economic reforms in 1992, 1996, 2003 and 2009 to improve agricultural development and facilitate industrialization (Sawhney 2012: 52). Moreover, it supported Punjab in tackling its high fiscal deficit. These reform initiatives, however, proved difficult due to implementation problems on side of the Punjabi administration (Sawhney 2012: 59). Nevertheless, the government can be said to have been willing to

14 <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Country%20Ratings%20and%20Status%2C%201973-2014%20%28FINAL%29.xls> (18 Feb 2015).

15 Harchand Singh Longowal, a moderate Akali leader, who was later assassinated (van Dyke 2009: 987).

16 Heitzman/Worden 1996: 492; Mullick, Rohit: Chandigarh belongs to Punjab, says governor; sparks debate again, *The Times of India*, 22 March 2012, online edition; Singh 1996: 412; van Dyke 2009: 977.

17 Johnson 2003: 1; Sawhney 2012: 52.

compromise, as demonstrated by actions such as amendments to the Punjab Land Reform Rules 1973 with regards to the land ceiling [ECONOMY 1994-2012=0].¹⁸

In terms of special programs for the Sikh community or the implementation of measures against their discrimination, there are no demands clearly assigned to the Sikh insurgency. While the “enactment of an All India Gurdwara Act” is called for in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (1973), case-specific literature does not provide any information that this demand was of great importance for the Sikh insurgency. Also, after the end of the conflict, this act was only mentioned in relation to the Akali Dal and the Akali-controlled Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) [SPECPRO 1994-2012=n.r.].¹⁹

The Declaration of Khalistan (1989: 535) demanded “the religion to act as the custodian of State. The Sikh religion will be the official creed of Khalistan”. In contrast, the Constitution of India (2011: preamble) continued to define India as a secular state. Moreover, it emphasizes the right to freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion (Part III. art. 15, 25-28). The insurgents’ demands were therefore not met [ISSUE 1994-2012= -1]. Apart from issues of independence, territorial adjustments, decentralization, economic improvement and the role of religion, the Sikh insurgency did not voice any other major demands and no other relevant issues arose after the end of the conflict [ISSUE2 1994-2012=n.r.; NEWCON 1994-2012=n.r.; NEWCON2 1994-2012=n.r.].

While compromises within the economy and the distribution of competences were made, the central government’s power position was generally not endangered. The steps implemented were not as far reaching as demanded by the insurgency and, due to implementation problems, the economic and political reforms and constitutional changes did not reach their full potential (Sawhney 2012: 59). These reforms can therefore be said to have largely been in favor of the central government [BENEFIT 1994-2012= -1; BENEFIT2 1994-2012= -1].

In total, the interests of the central government prevailed in the post-war period [COMPROM 1994-2012= -0.7].

Stability of peace

After 1994, the conflict between the central government and the Sikh insurgency in Punjab did not become ‘hot’ again [SAMEWAR=0; DATESAME=n.r.]. Thus, until December

18 The Punjab Land Reforms Rules, 1973 available at <http://punjabrevenue.nic.in/lrefrls73.htm> (15 Mar 2014), Amendments of the Punjab Land Reforms available at <http://punjabrevenue.nic.in/N-AR-Branch.htm> (15 Mar 2014).

19 Akalis have not commented on All India Gurdwara Act: Cong MLA, One India News, 16 Nov 2008, online edition.

2012, 228 months of peace could be counted [PEACMON1=228]. While the government faced opposition in different parts of the country from countless other groups, only one new conflict developed after 1994 involving the People's War Group (PWG) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) [ANYWAR=1; DATEANY=1 Jan 1996; PEACMON2=24].

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