



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DRUGS AND  
INSURGENCY: THE CASE OF PUNJAB**

by

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March 2017

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**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DRUGS AND INSURGENCY: THE CASE OF  
PUNJAB**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Punjab is a strategically and economically important state for India. It shares a border with both Pakistan, a historical rival, and with the state of Kashmir, which is at the center of India's conflict with Pakistan. Punjab is also the breadbasket of India and provides a number of recruits for the military, both of which are essential for food and physical security for an economically rising country. In the 1980s, Punjab experienced a decade-long violent insurgency caused by grievances arising from the unequal distribution of benefits from the Green Revolution. The state's economy has been in decline for the past decade, which, along with a rise in drug use and trade, represents grounds for a crisis that threatens its post-insurgency stability. The unaddressed drug epidemic allows the emerging drug-crime-terror nexus to thrive. However, national and state-level elites and politicians continue to use identity as a mobilization tool for engaging with the population, mirroring the setting that led to the previous insurgency. Specifically, this research provides an insight into the growing possibility of instability in Punjab. This research derives implications for stability in a border state with porous borders experiencing increased drug use.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ABVP	Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad
ASR	Anandpur Sahib Resolution
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BSF	Border Security Force
CM	Chief Minister
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDC	Institute of Development and Communication
INC	Indian National Congress
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
MP	Member of Parliament
SAD	Shiromani Akali Dal
SDP	State Domestic Product
SGPC	Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Punjab has been described as the “granary of India” and is more commonly referred to as India’s breadbasket as a result of the Green Revolution, and was considered “a model province” and “an object of envy” for other states in India.<sup>1</sup> Historically, Punjab also underwent a prolonged period of an insurgency that lasted from the late 1970s to early 1990s, in which the state became the setting for a protracted battle between the central government and a robust separatist movement led by Sikh extremists. The critical nature of the insurgency was highlighted because of the state’s shared border with Pakistan with whom India has fought four wars since 1947. Recent reports highlight a new element of concern that may produce instability again in this important region of India. A significant rise in the number of drug users and addicts in the state points to a pending crisis that is a threat to the state’s economy, stability, and external relations.<sup>2</sup> An increase in illegal drug seizures by the Indian authorities from 2012–2014 indicates the rise of the drug trade in the country overall and specifically in Punjab, which accounts for most of the heroin seized in India originating from Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> The important question that emerges from these conditions is: could the growing drug use and trade in Punjab, if left inadequately addressed, create conditions similar to the ones leading up to the Khalistan insurgency? Widespread drug use, especially among the youth, in Punjab may lead to domestic instability in the state, especially because “the Indian authorities are

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<sup>1</sup> J. S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 209.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Jaiveer Shergill, “It’s Time to End Punjab’s Drug Epidemic,” *Daily Mail India*, November 26, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2850879/It-s-time-end-Punjab-s-drug-epidemic.html>; Jim Yardley, “Indian State Finds Itself in Tight Grip of Addiction,” *The New York Times*, April 18, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/19/world/asia/drug-addiction-is-a-growing-problem-in-punjab.html>; Deeptiman Tiwary, “Use of Synthetic Drugs on the Rise in India - Times of India,” *The Times of India*, November 25, 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Use-of-synthetic-drugs-on-the-rise-in-India/articleshow/26334302.cms>; Swati Mahajan, “Drug Use Rising among Adolescents in Chandigarh,” *The Indian Express*, April 17, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/drug-dealers-punjab-drug-use-rising-among-adolescents-in-chandigarh/>; Simon Denyer, “Drug Epidemic Grips India’s Punjab State,” *Washington Post*, January 1, 2013, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/drug-epidemic-grips-indias-punjab-state/2012/12/31/092719a2-48f6-11e2-b6f0-e851e741d196\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/drug-epidemic-grips-indias-punjab-state/2012/12/31/092719a2-48f6-11e2-b6f0-e851e741d196_story.html).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *International Narcotics Control Board Report 2015*, 74, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www.incb.org/incb/en/publications/annual-reports/annual-report-2015.html>.

currently failing to address adequately the issue of drug use within their own borders.”<sup>4</sup> The drug menace further provides an opportunity for extremist elements or non-state actors to provide oxygen to fuel the population’s dissent within Punjab resulting from the state’s slow economic decline compared to other states in the country.<sup>5</sup>

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

Although Punjab is considered to be stable since the mid-1990s, economic decline associated with the increasing drug economy may create an environment conducive for regional instability. Punjab’s stability has regional implications as it is a border state with both Pakistan and the Indian state of Kashmir, and at the same time, the breadbasket of India, which is essential for the nation’s food security. The Indian government was able to end the Sikh separatist insurgency in the 1990s. However, the government’s use of overwhelming force and the destruction resulting from the Indian Army’s offensive into Sikhism’s holiest site, The Golden Temple, during Operation Blue Star to flush out the militants remains fresh in the memories of a large number of Sikhs.

Punjab has and will continue to play a central role in Indian politics. Thus, the research question is particularly important not only for India’s border security but for the nation’s stability as it continues to address the Naxalite insurgency in the northeast and the Kashmir separatist movement in the north.<sup>6</sup> The Indian authorities may not be well-prepared to deal with an additional insurgency as it could embolden the already active movements in Kashmir and the northeast, and at the same time provide the opportunity for external actors to play a more active role in destabilizing the country. Unrest in a region also provides opportunities for criminals “to exploit instability caused by

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<sup>4</sup> Molly Charles, Dave Bewley-Taylor, and Amanda Neidpath, “Drug Policy in India: Compounding Harm” (The Beckley Foundation, October 2005), 7, <http://reformdrugpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Drug-Policy-in-India-Compounding-Harm.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar, “Why Punjab Has Suffered Long, Steady Decline,” in *Economic Freedom of the States of India 2012*, by Bibek Debroy et al. (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2013), 33–65, <https://object.cato.org/economic-freedom-india/Economic-Freedom-States-of-India-2012.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Shay, “Expansion of Mining Risks a Naxalite Resurgence in India’s Red Corridor,” *IISS Voices*, May 4, 2016, <https://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2016-9143/may-12f3-mining-and-naxalites-b551>; Vinay Kaura, “India’s Challenge: Containing Kashmir’s Insurgency,” *The Diplomat*, July 14, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/07/indias-challenge-containing-kashmirs-insurgency/>.

conflicts,” and allows them to thrive in situations where the government cannot provide security.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, instability in Punjab, having the distinction of being India’s breadbasket, can have dire consequences for India’s food security. Punjab’s share of wheat and rice procured by the Indian government for food security purposes accounted for 40.6 percent and 26.1 percent, respectively, for the 2014–2015 fiscal year.<sup>8</sup>

Punjab also has the distinction of being over-represented in the armed forces, comprising “as much as 8 percent at independence to as high as 10–13 percent in the 1980s” of the service, while the total Sikh population according to 2011 census in the country is about 2.29 percent.<sup>9</sup> During the Khalistan insurgency in the 1980s, the Indian government had to contend with a number of mutinies in the Sikh regiments of the Indian Army—this may reoccur if an insurgency re-appears in the state.

Lastly, as is the case with Kashmir, Punjab also represents the ideals of India’s secular policy; the only Sikh-majority Indian state is a testament to the world that populations of different religions can prosper in a pluralistic India.<sup>10</sup> If the Indian government wants to ensure stability for the nation, it needs to place a premium on addressing the current “Punjab Problem.” To that extent, this study addresses the possibility of widespread instability and mobilization accounting for the complex interplay between economic decline, drug-crime-terror nexus, and social impacts of drug addiction.

More generally, this research derives implications of increased drug use among a population in a border state with porous borders for the domestic and regional stability. Scholars have studied extensively the causes of instability (economic deprivation, religious differences, state violence, discrimination, etc.), but there exists a gap in

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations, *Crime and Instability: Case Studies of Transnational Threats* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, February 2010), iii, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/frontpage/Crime\\_and\\_instability\\_2010\\_final\\_low\\_res.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/frontpage/Crime_and_instability_2010_final_low_res.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> India Brand Equity Foundation, “Industrial Development & Economic Growth in Punjab,” February 2016, <http://www.ibef.org/states/punjab-presentation>.

<sup>9</sup> Omar Khalidi, “Ethnic Group Recruitment in the Indian Army: The Contrasting Cases of Sikhs, Muslims, Gurkhas and Others,” *Pacific Affairs* 74, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 536.

<sup>10</sup> Sumit Ganguly, “Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay,” *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 79, doi:10.2307/2539071.

explaining how rising drug addiction in a region can contribute to group mobilization and subsequent instability. This thesis will make contributions towards this literature as well.

## **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review provides the theoretical framework and the historical background of Punjab necessary for this research. It also analyzes relevant published work regarding causes of insurgencies, the factors that contributed to the Sikh separatist insurgency in India, options available to governments for confronting such movements, and how the Indian government has historically dealt with insurgencies within its borders. Lastly, a review of published material regarding the impact of drugs on local economies is presented, which is essential to answering the research question and detailing the manner in which drug abuse directly contributes to destabilizing a region.

### **1. Insurgencies**

Bard O'Neill defines an insurgency as "a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics."<sup>11</sup> The main goal of the insurgents is to achieve their political objectives by increasing their control over the local population, while making it difficult for the government to administer the region, and diminishing the government's influence in the territory.<sup>12</sup> Insurgencies can use both violent and non-violent tools such as coercion, terrorism, propaganda, and political mobilization to attain their objectives.<sup>13</sup> It is important to make the distinction between an insurgency and terrorism, as the former's energy is directed against the existing political authority "with an unwavering will to change the status quo," while the latter may be used as a deliberate strategy to achieve the

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<sup>11</sup> Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Washington: Brassey's, 1990), 13.

<sup>12</sup> Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, "U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide" (Department of State, January 2009), 6, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

intended political objective.<sup>14</sup> Although all insurgencies are not the same, they do share some common characteristics: they are mainly internal conflicts, seek to weaken a “state’s grip on power,” do not distinguish between military forces and civilian populations, and their desire for change is based on “uprising from within.”<sup>15</sup>

Jugdep Chima asserts that “violent subnationalist [ethnonationalist] movements arise when competing ethnic and state elites cannot resolve their political differences and ethnic militants emerge often, but not always, facilitated by either traditional ethnic elites or state elites to use in their respective intra-system struggles or against each other.”<sup>16</sup> He further adds that interaction between state and ethnic elites have significant influence on the direction of an ethnonationalist movement because they can define “the relationship between an ethnic group and the central state.”<sup>17</sup> Shahid Siddiqi argues that root causes of insurgencies “are invariably to be found in political, socio-economic or religious domains, their nature and scope depending upon the nature of the grievances, motivations and demands of the people.”<sup>18</sup> Atul Kohli argues that periodic self-determination movements are to be expected, especially in developing-country democracies.<sup>19</sup> Sumit Ganguly explains that political mobilization, specifically in India, resulted from “growing education opportunities and concomitant increases in literacy and media exposure.”<sup>20</sup> These mobilizations were mostly “class-based and ethnic agitation for autonomy and even secession.”<sup>21</sup> Ganguly focuses on the likelihood of political mobilization resulting in political violence if governments fail to accommodate political demands in regions

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<sup>14</sup> Archana Upadhyay, *India’s Fragile Borderlands: The Dynamics of Terrorism in North East India*, vol. 39 (London, UK: IB Tauris, 2009), 19.

<sup>15</sup> R. Scott Moore, “The Basics of Counterinsurgency,” *Small Wars Journal* 14 (2007): 3–4, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/moorecoinpaper.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Jugdep S. Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India: Political Leadership and Ethnonationalist Movements* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications India, 2010), 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>18</sup> Shahid R. Siddiqi, “Insurgency Movements in India,” *Foreign Policy Journal*, December 22, 2010, <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2010/12/22/insurgency-movements-in-india/>.

<sup>19</sup> Atul Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism? Rise and Decline of Self-Determination Movements in India,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 2 (1997): 325.

<sup>20</sup> Ganguly, “Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency,” 83.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

with institutional decay.<sup>22</sup> Scott Moore points to the complex interaction of competing beliefs (identities and culture, opinions and perceptions, historical narratives), unacceptable structures (ineffective authority, military occupation, struggle for natural resources, modernization, poverty, social stratification), and catalytic actions (state violence, intervention, deprivation, repressing, corruption, discrimination, crime) as causes of insurgencies.<sup>23</sup>

It is difficult to point to any one event or aspect of grievances by the mobilizing group to determine the cause of an ethnonationalist movement, and similarly how a government responds will vary depending on each situation. Drug addiction or abuse, as it turns out, is not described as a contributing factor to insurgencies. Yet, drug addiction can facilitate conditions that Moore describes. A decline in participation in the economy, decaying civil society, and an increase in crime associated with drug trade and use, can all lead to instability in a society. In this context, it is important to understand the causes of the Punjab insurgency in the 1980s. What were the conditions that created the insurgency?

## **2. The Separatist Insurgency in Punjab**

The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in Punjab was a violent ethnonationalist movement led by Sikh extremists against the Indian central government—with demands for a separate land for the Sikhs called Khalistan—that started in the late 1970s and lasted through the early 1990s. The causes of this movement are important to review because Punjab is one of the richest states in India, yet its trajectory into having to confront a robust militancy is puzzling. Determining the causes of the historical movement will allow comparison between the contemporary conditions in Punjab, and help identify whether the same conditions are reoccurring due to expansion of the drug trade and increased addiction.

Tara Kartha argues that conflict in Punjab “arose from a complex web of economic factors, political malfeasance, and sheer opportunism, cloaked in religious-

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>23</sup> Moore, “The Basics of Counterinsurgency,” 8.

ethnic vituperation.”<sup>24</sup> Paul Brass does not believe that economic disparities were the primary reasons behind the rise of the Punjab militancy; he argues that one of 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.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, he implies that there were no economic grievances leading up to the insurgency. He instead puts forth the notion that the militancy in Punjab “was precipitated by a religious conflict between militant orthodox and fundamentalist Sikh groups and a heterodox Sikh-Hindu sect.”<sup>26</sup>

However, several scholars disagree with Brass, and instead highlight the importance of the economy in insurgencies generally, which is important for us to understand as it relates to the drug trade in Punjab today. Hamish Telford argues that support for the insurgency was “generated out of the unequal distribution of benefits from the green revolution.”<sup>27</sup> He further points out that explanations attributing the “Punjab Crisis” to religious conflict alone fail to realize that “aggregate data do not differentiate among various social strata.”<sup>28</sup> Murray Leaf cements Telford’s belief that “the Punjab crisis has not, fundamentally, been a clash between Sikhs and Hindus,” but rather about the changing socio-economic conditions in the state.<sup>29</sup> Shekhar Gupta states that “conflicts that seem completely religious or political on the surface in India usually have an ethnic, linguistic, or regional dimension.”<sup>30</sup> Rajshree Jetly describes the movement as

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<sup>24</sup> Tara Kartha, “Terror Roll Back: Militancy in Punjab,” in *Tools of Terror: Light Weapons and India’s Security* (New Delhi: Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, 1999), 167.

<sup>25</sup> Paul R. Brass, “Socio-Economic Aspects of the Punjab Crisis,” *Punjab Journal of Politics* 13 (January 1, 1989): 10.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14.

<sup>27</sup> Hamish Telford, “The Political Economy of Punjab: Creating Space for Sikh Militancy,” *Asian Survey* 32, no. 11 (1992): 970.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 976.

<sup>29</sup> Murray J. Leaf, “The Punjab Crisis,” *Asian Survey* 25, no. 5 (1985): 498.

<sup>30</sup> Shekhar Gupta, “The Separatist Threat,” *The Adelphi Papers* 35, no. 293 (January 1995): 23, doi:10.1080/05679329508449286.

a “result of a multitude of social, economic, and political factors” leading to a feeling of alienation among the Sikhs in India.<sup>31</sup>

For more detailed and straightforward explanations of the forces at work, Gurharpal Singh categorized the explanations for the “Punjab Problem” into five groups: conspiracy theories, Sikh nationalism, primacy of regional factors, Marxist interpretations, and primacy of national factors.<sup>32</sup> Conspiracy theories claim that events leading up to the Indian Army’s Operation Blue Star in 1984 were caused by “external aggression and internal extremism” hoping to divide India through the use of terror.<sup>33</sup> Although the government’s own position at the time did not detail who the external actors were, author Balraj Madhok clearly pins the blame on efforts of “Muslim imperialism,” led by Pakistan, to wedge a divide between Hindus and Sikhs.<sup>34</sup> Explanations focusing on Sikh nationalism claim that the militancy resulted from “heightened sense of nationalism within the Sikh community” in the early 1980s as a result of an increase in perceived discrimination.<sup>35</sup> Primacy of regional factors contribute the rise of the militancy to unequal distribution of wealth resulting from the Green Revolution, combined with increased unemployment and sidelining of rural youth. Primacy of national factors seeks to explain the role of the leadership at the center—primarily from Jawaharlal Nehru’s more neutral and accommodative position to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s controlling and interventionist style—and the diminishing role of the Congress Party.<sup>36</sup> Marxist interpretations align closely with the regional factors assertion and argue that conflict was facilitated by the economic disparity between the social classes in Punjab resulting from the Green Revolution.<sup>37</sup> These interpretations look at effects of the

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<sup>31</sup> Rajshree Jetly, “The Khalistan Movement in India: The Interplay of Politics and State Power,” *International Review of Modern Sociology* 34, no. 1 (2008): 61.

<sup>32</sup> Gurharpal Singh, “Understanding the ‘Punjab Problem,’” *Asian Survey* 27, no. 12 (1987): 1268.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1270.

<sup>34</sup> Balraj Madhok, *The Punjab Problem: The Muslim Connection* (New Delhi: Hindu World Publications, 1985), iv.

<sup>35</sup> Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Singh, “Understanding the ‘Punjab Problem,’” 1272; Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Sucha Singh Gill and K. C. Singhal, “The Punjab Problem: Its Historical Roots,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1984, 603–8.



interaction between the national factors, economic policies in the state, and the role of the Indian government.<sup>38</sup>

Tara Kartha describes the rise of the insurgency in Punjab in two stages: the militancy initially was “created almost entirely due to internal factors” although it received external support in the form of funding, publicity, and benefits emanating from smuggling networks; the second phase resulted in increased violence as a result of clear physical support in the form of weapons from external actors.<sup>39</sup> Punjab stood out as a problematic region because it moved “into a spiral of violence,” whereas other regions in India were contained by the government that were facing similar economic disparities and where corresponding grievances were being voiced.<sup>40</sup> According to Kartha, similarly organized movements in other states—non-border states—such as the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh or unrest in Gorkhaland were viewed more as “troubling irritant[s]” than as threats to national security.<sup>41</sup> Punjab’s geographical location made it especially open to external influence as neighboring lands provided ideal locations to not only retreat after strong handed response from the state, but as places to become better equipped—namely, to receive training and weapons—to take on the government.<sup>42</sup>

The factors outlined earlier also do not point to drugs as playing a central role in facilitating the Sikh insurgency. However, the question remains: could the spread of drug use create similar socio-economic conditions that led to the previous insurgency?

### **3. How Drugs Impact Economies**

Illicit drug abuse is a menace to society on many different fronts—its effects are primarily felt in the domains of health, public safety, crime, productivity, and governance—and places tremendous burden on the “peaceful development and smooth

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<sup>38</sup> Singh, “Understanding the ‘Punjab Problem,’” 1274.

<sup>39</sup> Kartha, “Terror Roll Back: Militancy in Punjab,” 167.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 167–168.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 168.

functioning of many societies.”<sup>43</sup> The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) dismisses the misperception that “income generated from the illicit drug industry automatically fosters economic development” due to lack of proof.<sup>44</sup> The INCB found evidence of short-term economic gains from illicit drugs sales, but there is no direct evidence that the economic benefits can be sustained over the long-term.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the illicit drug trade imposes costs on the taxpayers through expenditures on the healthcare system to treat addiction, additional burden placed on the criminal justice system to counter the threat, and associated costs with setting up social programs.<sup>46</sup> The Colombian government, for instance, has seen its cost to fight drug trafficking increase from \$1 billion to \$12 billion annually from 1991 to 2011.<sup>47</sup> Gathering quantifiable data on the impacts of illicit drug trade and subsequent abuse on a region’s economy is difficult, but a recent report estimated that cost to be \$193 billion for the United States in 2013 alone.<sup>48</sup> Developing nations like India are especially prone to the effects of the illicit drug trade and addiction.

Fabio Mesquita notes that “the developing world is extremely affected by the health and social impacts of the illicit drug market.”<sup>49</sup> Giorgio Giacomelli agrees with Mesquita, and explains that “the drug phenomenon is unique in the number of aspects of people’s lives which it affects—the health of the individual, political and economic

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<sup>43</sup> United Nations, *International Narcotics Control Board Annual Report 2013*, 1, accessed September 1, 2016, <https://www.incb.org/incb/en/publications/annual-reports/annual-report-2013.html>.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations, *International Narcotics Control Board Annual Report - 2002*, 4, accessed September 6, 2016, <https://www.incb.org/incb/en/publications/annual-reports/annual-report-2001-2010.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> David M. Luna, “The Destructive Impact of Illicit Trade and the Illegal Economy on Economic Growth, Sustainable Development, and Global Security” (Workshop, The OECD High-Level Risk Forum, Paris, France, October 26, 2012), <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/rm/199808.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> “Cocaine Seen Harming Economy of Colombia,” *The New York Times*, February 19, 1991, sec. Business, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/02/19/business/cocaine-seen-harming-economy-of-colombia.html>; Mamta Badkar, “11 Shocking Facts About Colombia’s \$10 Billion Drug Industry,” *Business Insider*, April 22, 2011, <http://www.businessinsider.com/colombias-drug-backed-economy-2011-4>.

<sup>48</sup> White House, “How Illicit Drug Use Affects Business and the Economy,” accessed September 6, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/ondcp-fact-sheets/how-illicit-drug-use-affects-business-and-the-economy>.

<sup>49</sup> Fabio Mesquita, “The Health and Social Impacts of Drugs in Brazil and Indonesia: What It Means for Development,” *Development Bulletin* 69 (2006): 66.

development, the safety of the streets and the stability of governments.”<sup>50</sup> Singer adds that “significant social and health problems” contribute in undermining development efforts and “contribute to the maintenance of social inequality.”<sup>51</sup> This social inequality, usually perceived as economic inequality, can be the catalyst for group mobilization. Lama points out that aside from the impact on society, the illicit drug has—in the northeast of India—resulted in “artificially high cost economy.”<sup>52</sup> Additionally, the northeast economies could potentially feel the impact of drugs trade through a decline in tourism, and agriculture when drugs such as poppy and marijuana are chosen for their profits over cultivating food needed for the nation.<sup>53</sup> Punjab could face a similar situation if the drug problem is left unaddressed.

Economic growth and sustainable development are priorities for developing and advanced nations alike. However, the illicit drug trade poses barriers and has negative implications for economic growth globally.<sup>54</sup> Yet, even with resources allocated to address the problem, the international system established for limiting the rampant drug addiction “underestimates the social, economic, and political repercussions” of an easily accessible illicit drug market.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, criminal organizations that run the illicit trafficking business “undermine state authority and the rule of law by fueling corruption, compromising elections, and hurting the legitimate economy.”<sup>56</sup> When a government

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<sup>50</sup> Giorgio Giacomelli, “World Drug Report 1997,” *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, accessed September 7, 2016, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-1997.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Merrill Singer, “Drugs and Development: The Global Impact of Drug Use and Trafficking on Social and Economic Development,” *International Journal of Drug Policy* 19, no. 6 (2008): 476.

<sup>52</sup> M. P. Lama, “India’s North-East States: Narcotics, Small Arms and Misgovernance,” *Ethnic Studies Report* 19, no. 2 (2001): 243–58, quoted in Ningthoujam Koiremba Singh and William Nunes, “Drug Trafficking and Narco-Terrorism as Security Threats: A Study of India’s North-East,” *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs* 69, no. 1 (2013): 73.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> “Thematic Debate of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Drugs and Crime as a Threat to Development,” § General Assembly of the United Nations (2012), <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/66/Issues/drugs/drugs-crime.shtml>.

<sup>55</sup> Management of Social Transformations Secretariat, “The MOST Project: Economic and Social Transformations Connected with the International Drug Problem,” *International Social Science Journal* 53, no. 169 (September 1, 2001): 348, doi:10.1111/1468-2451.00320.

<sup>56</sup> Thematic Debate of the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Drugs and Crime as a Threat to Development.

fails to provide economic opportunities and security for its population, the government's legitimacy is questioned, and can lead to instability in a region.

Punjab has seen a recent economic slowdown relative to other states in India. Its growth rates from 2013 to 2014 was 5.3 percent, while the states of Bihar and Gujarat had growth rates of 13 percent and 9 percent, respectively.<sup>57</sup> Vikram Chadha foresees the corresponding unemployment resulting from the economic slowdown manifesting in social tensions.<sup>58</sup> Sukhpal Singh proposes that “poor governance, lack of industrialization, poor social sector investments, and excessive focus on agriculture” as the key reasons for Punjab's economic slowdown.<sup>59</sup> Of these factors, poor governance falls right into the hands of those actors who control the drug trade and wish to exert their influence in the political outcomes for the state. Effects of drug addiction in Punjab can go beyond the social impacts; failure to address the problem may pose serious hurdles for Punjab's hopes to recapture its claim as the most prosperous state in the nation. Worse still, drug addiction can fuel economic instability in the state and possibly provide the window for extremist elements to garner support and mobilize.

#### **4. Drugs in India**

India is sandwiched between two of the world's most notorious regions known for the illicit drug trade, The Golden Crescent and The Golden Triangle, and its porous borders in the northwest and northeast present themselves as ideal routes for smuggling illegal drugs. Due to its shared border with Pakistan—through which drugs are smuggled into India—Punjab, has seen a dramatic rise in drug use. The subsequent discussion highlights the rising drug trade's implications for instability in the region.

N. S. Jamwal claims that narco-terrorism—“the nexus between narcotics and terrorism”—is considered “the oldest and most dependable source of terrorist

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<sup>57</sup> Vikram Chadha, “Unemployed Educated Rural Workforce in Punjab: A Cause for Concern,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 50, no. 3 (January 17, 2015), <http://www.epw.in/journal/2015/3/web-exclusives/unemployed-educated-rural-workforce-punjab.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Sukhpal Singh, review of *Economic Development in Punjab*, by Inderjeet Singh, Sukhwinder Singh, and Lakhwinder Singh, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 7, accessed September 7, 2016, <http://www.epw.in/journal/2015/26-27/book-reviews/economic-development-punjab.html>.

financing.”<sup>60</sup> According to him, effects of narco-terrorism were felt in the Indian state of Kashmir, where Pakistan used the narcotics trade to fund extremist elements to fight against Indian rule within the state; estimates place drug trafficking’s contribution to terrorism funding for groups in Jammu and Kashmir at 15 percent.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, Sikh militant groups in Punjab and insurgent groups in the northeast also rely on drug trafficking to fund their operations.<sup>62</sup> Arun Kumar supports Jamwal’s claims by showing that drug profits were indeed used to finance terrorism in the south, northeast, Punjab, and Kashmir regions of India.<sup>63</sup> S. P. Sinha points to the illegal drug trafficking trade as the main source of funding insurgencies in India’s northeast.<sup>64</sup> The alarming part, according to Kumar, is that only one percent of the total drug trafficking and money laundering activities seem to have been detected by law enforcement.<sup>65</sup> Illicit drug trafficking’s role in aiding organized crime and terrorism is recognized by the United Nations Security Council, which called for “redoubling efforts to prevent terrorists from benefiting from transnational organized crime.”<sup>66</sup> Complicating the matter is a transformation of some drug trafficking groups such as Dawood Ibrahim’s gang that have, at best, asserted themselves into “the business/logistics end of terrorism,” and at worst, resorted to carrying out terrorist acts themselves.<sup>67</sup> With the increasing population now using drugs, from rich, poor, and middle class families, Punjab’s landscape may likely see an increase in narco-terrorism as well.

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<sup>60</sup> N. S. Jamwal, “Terrorist Financing and Support Structures in Jammu and Kashmir,” *Strategic Analysis* 26, no. 1 (April 3, 2008): 145, doi:10.1080/09700160208450030.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 143–145.

<sup>62</sup> Pushpita Das, “Drug Trafficking in India: A Case for Border Security,” IDSA Occasional Paper (Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, May 2012), 5, <http://www.idsa.in/occasionalpapers/DrugTraffickinginIndia>.

<sup>63</sup> Arun Kumar, *The Black Economy in India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2002), 27.

<sup>64</sup> S. P. Sinha, “Northeast: The Role of Narcotics and Arms Trafficking,” in *Lost Opportunities: 50 Years of Insurgency in the North-East and India’s Response* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers LLC, 2012), 234.

<sup>65</sup> Kumar, *The Black Economy in India*, 285.

<sup>66</sup> United Nations, *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - World Drug Report 2015*, preface, accessed June 1, 2016, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr2015/World\\_Drug\\_Report\\_2015.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr2015/World_Drug_Report_2015.pdf).

<sup>67</sup> Das, “Drug Trafficking in India: A Case for Border Security,” 6.

With varying degrees of explanations, including geography, religion, and economics for the rise of the insurgency in Punjab in 1980s, it is clear, as Moore argues, that the causes of insurgencies are much more complex than they seem at the surface. Some scholars have highlighted the need for India to address the drug problem, in the context of threats to national security because the drug trade is funding sources for militant groups.<sup>68</sup> Those looking at the origins of the insurgency and forecasting its reemergence believe that the Khalistan movement—aside from some diaspora support—is unlikely to reemerge, but do not take into account the impacts of the growing drug problem in the state.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, there are reports that point to the social impacts of the drug use within Punjab resulting from lack of economic opportunities.<sup>70</sup> However, very few connect these issues. To that extent, this thesis attempts to determine the possibility for the reemergence of separatist movements, and impacts to stability through a declining economy with the rising drug abuse and addiction serving as the catalyst.

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESIS**

This thesis hypothesizes that the increased drug trade in Punjab will contribute to destabilizing the already declining economy, and subsequently, will lead to political instability in the state as institutions required to maintain law and order weaken. Furthermore, the competing political parties will likely continue to use drug addiction in the state as a means to levy blame onto each other, rather than addressing the core problem. Additionally, their inability to deal with the issue due to political divisions may further lead to weakening of the state, causing the emergence of more ethnic and religion based mobilization. Meanwhile, the Indian government may fail to realize the underlying threats to its national security leading to last-minute planning, and execution of a plan

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<sup>68</sup> Das, “Drug Trafficking in India: A Case for Border Security”; Saroj Kumar Rath, “Why Narcotics in India Should Be Treated as a Threat to National Security,” *Global Asia: A Journal of the East Asia Foundation* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 94–101.

<sup>69</sup> Virginia Van Dyke, “The Khalistan Movement in Punjab, India, and the Post-Militancy Era: Structural Change and New Political Compulsions,” *Asian Survey* 49, no. 6 (2009): 975–97; Jasdev Rai, “Khalistan Dead! Long Live Khalistan!,” *Sikh Formations* 7, no. 1 (2011): 1–41.

<sup>70</sup> Michael Edison Hayden, “Welcome to India’s Heroin Alley,” *Foreign Policy*, March 27, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/27/india-heroin-alley-punjab-opium/>; Denyer, “Drug Epidemic Grips India’s Punjab State.”

weaker than the one required to deal with the consequences of the rising drug trade and addiction.

## **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

A single case study is used in a comparative method to answer the research question, focusing on Punjab, India. Two time periods are considered: first, the Khalistan insurgency, to understand the economic and social conditions that contributed to mobilization, and second, the current landscape in Punjab is used to illustrate that similar economic and social trends are emerging. The extensive scholarly literature written about the Khalistan separatist insurgency, Punjab's economy, and the drug trade in India are used to illustrate the current situation in Punjab. These include journal articles, books, and reports published by national and international organizations. The wide literature available regarding the causes of insurgencies provides a broad perspective of the issues that lead to the initial mobilization. The published reports (i.e., by the United Nations) provided the needed data on drug trafficking in and around India. Regarding the drug use in Punjab (and for comparative purposes in India), relatively few published reports are available. For this information, current newspaper and magazine articles provided analysis of Punjab's social, political, and drug setting.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The thesis is organized into four chapters. After the introductory chapter, Chapter II is dedicated to explaining the rise and demise of the Khalistan separatist insurgency, with special attention to economic and social factors that mobilized Sikhs and provided support to the insurgents. Chapter III details the "drug problem" India is faced with, its ramifications for Punjab socially, economically, and in terms of state security, and the political landscape and how it deals with the drug epidemic. Lastly, Chapter IV provides implications for security, concluding analysis, and recommendations for the Indian government.

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## **II. PUNJAB: FOUNDATIONAL MOVEMENT AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICS**

Punjab's drug problem is not unique and at the same time, not a surprise given the state's location next to the golden crescent. However, what makes it a threat to stability in the region is its critical position at the center of Indian security and at the same time, the central authorities' neglect of the ongoing grievances from the Sikh community. This chapter provides an important historical background of the state including the significance of its geographical layout, role in India's food security, representation in the military, as well as the reasons behind its prolonged insurgency in the 1980s that make it vulnerable to instability. The current drug epidemic introduces a new threat variable into the state.

### **A. PUNJAB'S IMPORTANCE TO INDIA'S SECURITY**

Punjab means the land of five (*panj*) waters (*ab*); the rivers running through the state are Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas.<sup>71</sup> It is a fertile region with a large amount of land devoted to agriculture. India's 2011 census estimated Punjab's population to be 27.7 million, comprising 2.29 percent of the nation's total population.<sup>72</sup> It is the only Indian state with Sikhism as the majority religion (57.69 percent), followed by Hinduism (38.49 percent), and a smaller presence of Islam (1.93 percent) and Christianity (1.26 percent).<sup>73</sup> Punjabi is the official language of the state; Hindi, Urdu, and English are also widely used and are second languages to many in the state.<sup>74</sup> The state is strategically located in India's northwest. The state's borders with Pakistan and the disputed territory of Kashmir, highlights the importance of its location for India's border security.

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<sup>71</sup> Eleanor M. Nesbitt, *Sikhism a Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 21, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=422677>.

<sup>72</sup> Census 2011, "Punjab Population 2011," accessed November 3, 2016, <http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/punjab.html>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Government of Punjab, India, "Know Punjab," accessed November 4, 2016, <http://punjab.gov.in/know-punjab>.

Punjab is also essential to India's internal security as over the years it has become critical for the nation's internal well-being as a major contributor to food security as well as the military. Sikhs identify "themselves as a rural, unsophisticated, farming people" with Punjab securing the designation as India's breadbasket.<sup>75</sup> The importance of agriculture to the state is summed up in a joke that is well known in Punjab: "the only culture Punjabis have is agriculture."<sup>76</sup>

Punjab's agriculture sector is essential in ensuring food security for the entire nation. Punjab is responsible for contributing astounding two thirds of total food grains and one third of the milk produced in India.<sup>77</sup> Punjab's share of wheat and rice procured by the Indian government for food security purposes accounted for 40.6 percent and 26.1 percent, respectively, for the 2014–2015 fiscal year.<sup>78</sup>

Punjab's importance for Indian food security increased during the Green Revolution in the mid-1960s that enabled India to obtain large gains in agriculture output using high-yielding varieties of food crops.<sup>79</sup> For instance, from 1966 to 1974, in Punjab, wheat production increased more than nine percent per year, rice production grew at a staggering 18 percent per year, and the total agricultural production increased at six percent a year.<sup>80</sup> In recent years, both the agriculture and economic growth have slowed. Between 1993–94 and 2000–2001, agriculture growth in the state at 2.19 percent per year was more than half percent lower than the average in India. Wheat production in the 1990s slowed to 2.23 percent per year, and rice production only grew at 2.80 percent per year.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, between 2002–2011, Punjab's GDP growth of 6.61 percent per year

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<sup>75</sup> Nesbitt, *Sikhism a Very Short Introduction*, 22.

<sup>76</sup> Naintara Maya Oberoi, "What Does It Mean to Be a Punjabi," *Quartz*, accessed March 16, 2017, <https://qz.com/528366/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-punjabi/>.

<sup>77</sup> Government of Punjab, India, "Know Punjab."

<sup>78</sup> India Brand Equity Foundation, "Industrial Development & Economic Growth in Punjab," 14.

<sup>79</sup> Deepali Singhal Kohli and Nirvikar Singh, "The Green Revolution in Punjab, India: The Economics of Technological Change," *Journal of Punjab Studies* 12, no. 2 (2005): 285.

<sup>80</sup> Rinku Murgai, "The Green Revolution and the Productivity Paradox: Evidence from the Indian Punjab," *Agricultural Economics* 25, no. 2–3 (2001): 199.

<sup>81</sup> H. S. Sidhu, "Production Conditions in Contemporary Punjab Agriculture," *Journal of Punjab Studies* 12, no. 2 (2005): 205.

was almost 20 percent lower than the national average of 7.95 percent per year.<sup>82</sup> The recent slowdown in its economic growth is not only a threat to Punjab, but India's food security. The drug menace contributes to this problem and needs to be understood in the context of Punjab's contribution to food security.

Sikhs are also highly represented in the Indian armed forces. They, as a minority community, make up 2.29 percent of the Indian population,<sup>83</sup> yet are visibly present in the armed forces making up 8–13 percent of the total numbers since independence.<sup>84</sup> Robin Jeffrey highlights the significance of the large proportion of Sikhs in the military by asserting that “Punjab [had] the makings of a formidable people's army.”<sup>85</sup> Sikhs' high presence in the armed forces highlights the importance of Punjab for India's security considerations, especially because there may be a backlash if Sikhs perceive themselves to be discriminated against. Such threats to armed forces became clear in 1984, when government forces entered the Golden Temple in order to flush out Sikh radicals, some 2,000 Sikh military recruits mutinied in retaliation.<sup>86</sup> As many as 170 officers above the rank of colonel were publically supporting the Sikh insurgency in the 1980s.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, two high-ranking officers of the Indian army were known to have advised the leader of the Sikh extremist group.<sup>88</sup> Again, the drug epidemic and its destabilizing capacity needs to be understood in the larger context of Punjab's importance in India's stability, both externally and internally. At the same time, a historical context of the insurgency is required as the Sikh community has mobilized at various times to express their socio-economic grievances against the Indian central government (subsequently referred to as the “center” or “central government”). High number of youth using drugs in

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<sup>82</sup> Aiyar, “Why Punjab Has Suffered Long, Steady Decline,” 33–34.

<sup>83</sup> Census 2011, “Punjab Population 2011.”

<sup>84</sup> Khalidi, “Ethnic Group Recruitment in the Indian Army,” 536.

<sup>85</sup> Robin Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India?: Punjab, Ethnic Conflict, and the Test for Federalism* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), 149.

<sup>86</sup> Khalidi, “Ethnic Group Recruitment in the Indian Army,” 537.

<sup>87</sup> Mahmood, *Fighting for Faith and Nation*, 81.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

Punjab raises the question of their contributions to the military and the state's economy, which is linked to military recruitment.

## **B. FOUNDING OF SIKHISM: POLITICAL IDENTITY FORMATION**

The roots of identity-based mobilization behind Punjab's insurgency lie in the socio-economic foundation of the Sikh community. Sikhs have long struggled to create their own distinct identity and separate themselves from both Hindus and Muslims in India. Some of the demands and grievances can be understood in this context of attempts to maintain a separate identity. Perception of attacks against their identity and economic discrimination are major sources of grievances between Sikh leaders and the central government. Furthermore, because the Sikhs are not a socially homogenous group, any social or political influences perceived to be undermining the Sikh identity is at times leveraged by extremist elements as was the case with the Khalistan movement in the 1980s.

Sikhism's foundation lies in the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Guru Nanak (1465-1539), the first guru, formed a new monotheistic religion due to dissatisfaction with Hinduism and Islam. He believed in equality, rejected idol worship, and disapproved of the caste system prevalent in the subcontinent.<sup>89</sup> Guru Nanak's teachings along with those of subsequent nine gurus defined Sikhism.<sup>90</sup> The five k's mark the most important and apparent symbols for the Sikh community. The Sikhs are required to not cut their *kesh*—hair; carry a *kirpan*—a ceremonial dagger; wear a *kara*—a steel bracelet; wear a *kacchara*—military-style shorts; and carry a *kanga*—a wooden comb.<sup>91</sup> The Sikhs view themselves as distinct from Islam and Hinduism, and have sought a separate identity since the founding of the religion.

In addition to forging a distinct Sikh identity, the community has “managed to acquire a high degree of internal social and political cohesion and subjective self-

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<sup>89</sup> Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*, 22.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 22–23.

awareness.”<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, this does not imply uniformity, as “the boundaries of the Sikh people remain flexible and uncertain.”<sup>93</sup> This blurring of lines includes Hinduistic tendency of adopting an “inclusive attitude” towards other religions, especially those originating in India.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, the Sikh identity is complicated due to the “existence of cross-cutting cleavages, including caste, class, and partisan affiliation.”<sup>95</sup>

In contrast to what Guru Nanak had envisioned, caste remains an aspect of the Sikh society; the four major ones are the “Jats, the merchant and trading castes, the intermediate artisan castes, and the lower castes.”<sup>96</sup> The Jats, primarily agriculturalists, comprise majority of the Sikh population making up from 50–75 percent of the Sikhs.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, the urban merchant and trading castes and the artisan castes makeup the intermediate castes, and finally, the lower castes are placed on the lower strata of social life and are referred to as Scheduled Castes.<sup>98</sup>

Additionally, within Sikhism there are four sub-sects based on symbolic and scriptural emphasis that further determine Sikh sub-divisions. The *amritdhari* Khalsa Sikhs are the orthodox Sikhs who have taken *amrit* (holy nectar) and maintain all of the five K’s.<sup>99</sup> The *keshdhari* Sikhs have not taken amrit, but keep unshorn hair; the *Sahajdhari* Sikhs have not taken amrit nor do they keep unshorn hair, but they mostly “identify exclusively with the Sikh religion.”<sup>100</sup> The last group comprises of various other divisions, which blur the lines between Sikhism and Hinduism, who are considered by some orthodox Sikhs as heterodoxical. These sects include the Hindu-Sikh sect like Nanakpanthis or “new reformist sects such as Radha Swamis and Nirankaris.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Nesbitt, *Sikhism a Very Short Introduction*, 19–20.

<sup>95</sup> Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 22–23.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Over the years, these social and religious differences have played into the hands of the radicals by providing cleavages that are used for mobilization. Furthermore, Sikhs view their slowly decreasing majority in Punjab as a threat to their identity and culture as more Hindus migrate to Punjab. The number of people who identify with Sikhism as their religion has decreased from 60 percent in 1996 to approximately 57.7 percent in 2011.<sup>102</sup> This creates an urgency on the part of Sikhs to enhance the differences between Hindus and Sikhs.

### C. POST-1947 SIKH IDENTITY AND MOBILIZATION FOR STATEHOOD

The relationship between the Sikh community and the center in India in the post-colonial period can best be summed up as sensitive. The politics that emerged during the nationalistic anti-colonial phase continued to shape the distinctions between Hindus and Sikhs in the post-1947 period and formed the foundation for mobilization for economic and political demands.

The partition of India was one of the bloodiest periods in human history resulting in one of the largest transfers of human population as two countries were created; Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan.<sup>103</sup> Some estimates place the number of people displaced at 14 million,<sup>104</sup> while the number killed ranges between one and two million.<sup>105</sup> Punjab, as border state, became the epicenter of the large migration and incredible violence as Hindus and Sikhs moved east, and Muslims headed west.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Census 2011, "Punjab Population 2011."

<sup>103</sup> William Dalrymple, "The Great Divide: The Violent Legacy of Indian Partition," *The New Yorker*, June 29, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple>.

<sup>104</sup> Mark Cutts, "The State of The World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), January 1, 2000), 59, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/sowr/3ebf9bab0/state-worlds-refugees-2000-fifty-years-humanitarian-action-chapter-3-rupture.html?query=rupture%20in%20south%20asia>.

<sup>105</sup> Dalrymple, "The Great Divide: The Violent Legacy of Indian Partition."

<sup>106</sup> Paul R. Brass, "The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab, 1946–47: Means, Methods, and Purposes 1," *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, no. 1 (2003): 76–77. Bengal also saw a partition and mass migrations, but the violence was higher in the Punjab region.

During the partition, Punjab witnessed dramatic change in territory, but the shift in demographics plays a central role in the state's self-identity.<sup>107</sup> In 1947, with the India-Pakistan partition, Punjab lost approximately two-thirds of its territory and almost half of its population to Pakistan.<sup>108</sup> The Muslim population comprised half of Punjab's total population before the partition; the balance shifted in the post-partition period in favor of the Hindu population (60 percent) while the Sikh population comprised 31 percent of India's Punjab.<sup>109</sup>

However, the partition reflected pre-independence Hindu-Muslim elite demands, rather than the Sikh demands. Prior to the partition, the Sikh population had a choice to make as the British planned their departure starting at the end of WWII. Should the Sikhs merge with Pakistan, stay with India, or demand their own independence as the state of Khalistan? The Indian National Congress (INC), led by Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, made the Sikh leaders' decision easier by making certain promises; the main one being creation of a Sikh majority state (Punjabi *suba*) to secure their unique and distinct identity within India's borders. The Indian government's reluctance to fulfill this promise post-1947 prompted protests in the 1950s that lasted until 1966 when the state was formed. The territorial changes ended with the formation of two separate states of Punjab (Sikh-dominated) and Haryana (Hindu-dominated) with remaining areas being absorbed by Himachal Pradesh. This reorganization created the current Punjab, which is the only Sikh majority state in India, reversing the Hindu-Sikh population numbers to 37 percent and 60 percent, respectively.<sup>110</sup>

The demand for the creation the Punjabi suba was critical in shaping the contemporary Sikh identity.<sup>111</sup> In the pre-independence phase, Arya Samaj, a Hindu

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<sup>107</sup> Ashutosh Kumar, "Electoral Politics in Punjab: Study of Akali Dal," *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 14/15 (2004): 1515.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. Pakistan also maintained the name of Punjab for its divided state. Therefore, there are two Punjabs, one in Pakistan and one in India, reflecting the ethnic identity of Punjabis, rather than their religious ones.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

movement, mobilized Punjabi Hindus to register Hindi as their mother tongue and placed “emphasis on the Vedic traditions” in order to differentiate from Punjabi Muslims. The origins of the language controversy emerged when the Hindus of North India demanded “foreign” languages such as Urdu in Persian script and English, be replaced with Hindi in Devanagari script.<sup>112</sup> Consequently, this resulted in the “crystallization of a Sikh identity as the basis of punjabiyat sowing the seeds of a communal identity and politics based on that identity.”<sup>113</sup> Sikhs mobilized to demand a Sikh majority Punjabi speaking state to solidify and protect their distinct identity, and out of fear of being enveloped under the Hindu umbrella.<sup>114</sup> Interestingly, language, not religion, allowed them to gain political autonomy in 1966.

Language is often the medium through which political expression plays out in the linguistically diverse nation. In India, as in other regions around the world, language is not simply a means of communication, but also a mechanism by which to organize identities “under one umbrella during the emergence of nationalism.”<sup>115</sup> The Indian National Congress’ (INC) use of language for mobilization against the colonial powers to undercut religious divisions in the country underscored the prominent role of language in forging separate identities. In Punjab, however, religious divisions solidified through the medium of language, which remained in the post-colonial period as a tool for further mobilization.

India is a diverse country with many languages and dialects; these different sources of people’s identities can lead to governing difficulties for the central government. Language remains at the forefront of political agendas of the central, state, and provincial governments.<sup>116</sup> Decisions at these levels that provide for the

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<sup>112</sup> Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*, 28.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Pranjali, “In Search of a National Language: Literary Nationalism, Script Controversy and Nationalist Discourse in Colonial Northern India,” *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies* 3, no. 6 (June 2015): 91.

<sup>116</sup> Joseph E. Schwartzberg, “Factors in the Linguistic Reorganization of Indian States,” in *Language and Politics in India*, ed. Asha Sarangi (Oxford University Press, 2009), 182.



reorganization of territories in favor of a major linguistic group also have to consider and guarantee the protection of language rights for minority groups as well. Specifically, in India, the quest to make or provide a more prominent status to a single language without accounting for desires of the minority population can result in agitations. Sarangi describes the complexities of languages in India by pointing out that there were 237 recorded languages (188 languages and 49 dialects) in the 1881 Census; the Linguistic Survey of India conducted over a 20-year period (ending in 1923) identified 179 languages and 544 dialects; by 1991, there were only 114 languages counted, which is attributed to disputes of how the category of “mother tongue” has been defined since the Census of 1951.<sup>117</sup>

After 1947, the Indian government wanted to keep religion out of politics due to the violence of the partition. The government “refused to recognize communities on the basis of religion, or to recognize religion as the ground for territorial and administrative reorganization,” thereby, catapulting language to the forefront of identity politics.<sup>118</sup> It could be argued that the division of power in the form of states divided along language lines is the reason India has managed to sustain the world’s largest democracy. Schwartzberg gives the Indian government credit to this effect by acclaiming “the remarkable success to date of the nation’s decision makers in keeping violence within manageable limits, in effecting workable territorial arrangements, in forestalling threats of secession by powerful linguistic groups, and in safeguarding the rights of linguistic minorities.”<sup>119</sup>

In independent India, linguistic reorganization affected Punjab greatly and also helped solidify the Sikh identity. Nehru’s unwillingness to mix religion with politics facilitated a struggle for power in Punjab between Hindus and Sikhs. Punjabi language claimed by the majority allowed the people of Punjab to achieve their goal of having a state of their own. Sikhs and Hindus of north India, continued to declare themselves as

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<sup>117</sup> Asha Sarangi, “Introduction: Language and Politics in India,” in *Language and Politics in India*, ed. Asha Sarangi (Oxford University Press, 2009), 16.

<sup>118</sup> Radhika Chopra, *Militant and Migrant: The Politics and Social History of Punjab* (New Delhi, India: Routledge, 2012), 2.

<sup>119</sup> Schwartzberg, “Factors in the Linguistic Reorganization of Indian States,” 182.

distinct language groups: Punjabi and Hindi, respectively.<sup>120</sup> Post partition, with Urdu out of the picture, the dispute narrowed between Hindi and Punjabi, with Gurmukhi serving as the Punjabi script. Gurmukhi means Guru's tongue; it is the script that the religion's founding guru, Guru Nanak Dev, used to write Sikhism's holy book, *Guru Granth Sahib*, therefore, the language is integral to Sikhism. Gurmukhi became the religious symbol for Sikhs while Hindi, in Devanagari, was promoted by Hindus, "as being the central core of a post-independence 'Indian' identity."<sup>121</sup> Specifically, language served to further cement the Sikh identity when Punjabi-speaking Hindus declared Hindi as their mother tongue in an effort to subdue Sikh domination through reorganization of Punjab.<sup>122</sup> Brass argues that the opposition against choosing Punjabi as their mother tongue by non-Sikhs was "an overt and deliberate political act designed to undercut linguistic basis of Punjabi *suba* [community] demand."<sup>123</sup> Many Hindu Punjabis taught their children to "lose the language" as Punjabi was promoted as a hopeless and inferior language compared to Hindi.<sup>124</sup> The Punjabi suba movement in the early 1960s countered with a rejection of Devanagari script and securing "Gurmukhi as the authentic script for Punjabi."<sup>125</sup> Due to the prominence of language in creating Indian states, the collective narrative of Gurmukhi as the language of Punjab was therefore able to place political pressure on the Indian government to grant the people a state of their own. Under the pressure of strong protests, the Indian government divided the state of Punjab in 1966 via the Punjab State Reorganization Bill.<sup>126</sup> The maps of Punjab before and after the split are shown in Figure 1. The Punjabi language, of the Gurmukhi script, is the official language of the state of Punjab.

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<sup>120</sup> Chopra, *Militant and Migrant: The Politics and Social History of Punjab*, 2.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Van Dyke, "The Khalistan Movement in Punjab, India, and the Post-Militancy Era," 983.

<sup>123</sup> Paul R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 327.

<sup>124</sup> Chopra, *Militant and Migrant: The Politics and Social History of Punjab*, 2

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, "Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD): Political Party, India," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 12, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Shiromani-Akali-Dal>; Telford, "The Political Economy of Punjab," 970.



Figure 1. Left: Administration Division of India in 1956; Right: The Split of Punjab after 1966.<sup>127</sup>

Punjab's creation appeased the major grievance of the Sikhs at the time, but subsequent issues over Punjab's river waters, a shared capital of Chandigarh between Punjab and Haryana, and demands for more autonomy led to a long and bloody struggle between radical elements in the Akali Dal and the central government.<sup>128</sup> These, along with economic and religious concerns, were some of the underlying causes that upset the Sikh population and facilitated the Khalistan insurgency. It is important to study these factors because similar conditions appear to be emerging in Punjab today.

#### D. FOUNDATIONS OF PUNJAB'S SEPARATIST INSURGENCY

The turbulent Sikh insurgency captivated Indian politics during the 1980s. The conflict resulted in numerous deaths of innocent civilians and considerable damage to the Golden Temple, the holiest of Sikh shrines, during Operation Blue Star launched to flush out militants in the temple. In retaliation for the army's actions, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her two trusted Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984. Following

<sup>127</sup> Adapted from Maps of India, "India Map in 1956," accessed February 15, 2017, <http://www.mapsofindia.com/history/1956.html>.

<sup>128</sup> Mahmood, *Fighting for Faith and Nation*, 82–83.

Gandhi's death, anti-Sikh riots erupted in the capital and elsewhere resulting in the death of hundreds of innocent Sikhs. The Sikh insurgency that began in the late 1970s reached its peak in the 1980s and ended in the early 1990s with negotiations and the coming to power of a non-INC government.

Although the insurgency was expressed along religious lines and center's discriminatory policies against the community, the foundation of the insurgency lay in the changing economic and political setting in Punjab. Understanding the underlying causes of the insurgency sheds light onto linguistic, economic, religious, and political grievances the insurgents fused together in order to secure support. It will also illustrate how the government's response and the resultant violence levied onto the Sikh population further served to alienate moderate Sikhs. More importantly, for Punjab's stability, it further delineated Sikh identity as the insurgency and the center's discrimination became part of their identity narrative.

### **1. The Green Revolution: The Expanding Disparities and Political Divisions**

The Green Revolution, initiated in the 1960s by the Nehru administration sought to address the issues of a starving nation. Due to severe droughts in the late 1950s, India faced a food shortage, which it dealt at the time through purchasing food from the United States through the PL-480 program. Immediately afterwards, India sought to solve its food security issues by increasing food production in the country through subsidizing the agricultural sector. This policy led to growth in the agricultural sector, especially in states that were in fertile areas of the country. Punjab, with its five rivers, benefitted tremendously under the Green Revolution plan; the white revolution followed to meet India's dairy requirements. As mentioned earlier, from 1966 to 1974, Punjab saw a staggering growth in wheat and rice production that made it essential for India's food security, and making it the breadbasket of India.

However, like any other major economic policy, Green Revolution did not come without significant structural changes. First, Punjab experienced an expansion in wealth as well as disparities between wealthy Jats and urban Hindu populations, and poorer rural

Sikhs. Second, it brought focus to the unfair central government policies, which culminated in the reaffirmation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR) in 1973. Third, it made education accessible for rural Sikh youth, but failed to provide commensurate employment opportunities to advance their socio-economic conditions, effectively creating a well-educated support base for the militancy. And finally, it brought about social changes that threatened the Sikh identity and compelled Sikhs to pursue Sikh revivalism. Combined, these factors led to the expansion of radicalism that had to be contained. However, it now remains part of the Sikh communal memory and therefore, identity.

The Punjab insurgency can be viewed as two principal conflicts: one between the Jat Sikhs and the Indian central government, and the other being a struggle for power among the Jat Sikhs themselves.<sup>129</sup>

The first is the issue of disparities. Punjab's economy reflects well in the macro numbers, but the distribution of wealth did not commensurate with the size of landholdings and across districts in Punjab. It was the smaller farmers (jats) who benefitted from this policy as they were the targets of food security policy, therefore creating a new competing elite who then clashed with the larger landholders. In addition, the poor laborers did not benefit either. Top ten percent of the owner-farmers reaped majority of the economic benefits; meanwhile, the "average area tilled by each agricultural labour fell from 2.24 hectares [5.54 acres] to 1.75 hectares [4.32 acres]." The disproportionate benefits are illustrated by the fact that only 13.3 percent of the arable land was owned by 48.44 percent of the farming families, leaving majority of the arable land for large-scale farmers.<sup>130</sup> The wages for an average laborer fell as their numbers grew in the state due to migration from other regions and advancement in technologies that displaced them.<sup>131</sup> This expanded the disparities in the rural areas and initiated a

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<sup>129</sup> Telford, "The Political Economy of Punjab," 976.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Scott Gates and Kaushik Roy, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Punjab," in *Unconventional Warfare in South Asia: Shadow Warriors and Counterinsurgency* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 163.

struggle “for hegemony within the Sikh community.”<sup>132</sup> This struggle was particularly visible between the well-off Jat peasants, the “traditional Akalis” of the Malwa region, and the poorer Jat Sikh peasants primarily of the Majha region.”<sup>133</sup> Amritsar and Gurdaspur of Majha region were especially among the poor performers, failing to benefit from the advancements in agricultural technology.<sup>134</sup> Later, such slow growing regions became the recruiting grounds for the militancy; “Jat Sikh youths from farming families of the Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts” contributed majority of the militants to the insurgency.<sup>135</sup>

A look at rates of return also sheds light on the impacts of the agricultural productions gains. Average rate of return for wheat—the prominent crop in Punjab—in 1970–71 was 24.50 percent, the return decreased significantly in 1977–78 to an astonishing 1.32 percent, resulting in a decrease of 83.5 percent for per hectare income for the same crop between 1971–72 and 1981–82.<sup>136</sup> These negative outcomes are especially important because the Sikh rural population in 1971, which was 69.37 percent of the population, saw an overall decline in their income in the 1970s. Meanwhile, the Hindus, who made up 66.39 percent of the population, saw an expansion in their income as business owners who benefitted from overall growth in the state. Sikhs also depended on Hindu merchants to supply modern inputs such as biochemicals and machinery for agriculture, and further relied heavily on urban markets, which were also dominated by Hindu merchants, to sell their surplus produce. When food prices stopped increasing, while inputs prices stayed the same, the imbalance created a clash between the Hindu traders and Sikh farmers.<sup>137</sup> This disparity produced a sense of discrimination among the Sikh population who felt the negative effects of the Green Revolution the most. They

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<sup>132</sup> Telford, “The Political Economy of Punjab,” 977.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Birinder Pal Singh, “Rise of Sikh Militancy and Militant Discourses: An Appraisal of the Economic Factor,” *Journal of Punjab Studies* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 257.

<sup>137</sup> Myron Weiner, “Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in India,” *Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine*, September 1983, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/ethnic-and-religious-conflicts-india>.

viewed the government policies as helping the Hindus, further creating communal divides. The insurgency's leader, Bhindranwale's speeches highlighted the importance of these disparities:

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...hence assimilation dangers have increased.<sup>138</sup>

He understood the need to appeal to those who had fared poorly in the boom eras.

Second, Sikhs viewed the interventionist nature of the central government in Punjab as a form of discrimination. Punjab has been under President's rule six times since its establishment, two of those times the elected party was dismissed even though it enjoyed majority support in the Assembly, illustrating a tendency by the central government to confront grievances with authoritarian measures. For instance, President's rule from October 1983 to September 1985 was due to heightened protests against central government's procurement policies of food grains, and against "high costs of agricultural inputs."<sup>139</sup>

Demands for autonomy emerged throughout the Green Revolution period and were ignored by the central authorities. In 1973, these demands were articulated as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR), which the Sikhs continue to use to complain against the central authorities' treatment of their religious community, although majority of these demands are not based on religion. The demands highlight important issues such as distribution of resources, Punjabi language, and the Sikh presence in the military. The ASR specifically demands:

The massive decentralization of power from the center to the states, the merger of Chandigarh and Punjabi-speaking areas into Punjab, giving control of the Bhakra-Nangal Dam headworks to Punjab, a more "just"

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<sup>138</sup> Joyce Pettigrew, "In Search of a New Kingdom of Lahore," *Pacific Affairs* 60, no. 1 (1987): 14–15, doi:10.2307/2758827.

<sup>139</sup> Vandana Shiva, "Chapter 5: The Political and Cultural Costs of the Green Revolution," in *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics* (University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 182–183, <http://staff.washington.edu/jhannah/geog270aut07/readings/GreenGeneRevolutions/Shiva%20-%20Ch%205%20Pol&Cult%20Costs%20of%20Green%20Rev.pdf>.

redistribution of river waters flowing through the state, giving Punjabi second-language status in other north Indian states, the creation of a larger airport at Amritsar and a stock exchange in Ludhiana, direct relaying of *gurbani* (Sikh scriptures or religious hymns) from the Golden Temple, maintain the policy of merit-based army recruitment, more economic facilities for scheduled castes, and various changes in tax laws to benefit Sikh women.<sup>140</sup>

The crucial points of ASR were centered on issues driving the state's economy, specifically water rights for the large agriculture sector, and around military recruitment—another source of economic input for the state rather than religious issues. It remains unresolved and a contentious issue. Recent agitations from Scheduled Castes to implement a quota for them in the military also challenges Sikh presence in the military as they see it as an important aspect for their economy, and wish it to be merit-based. Any changes that negatively influence Sikh recruitment in the military and unwillingness on the part of the central government to settle water rights issues were, and continue to be, perceived as anti-Sikh. By the 1980s, the militants used economic and political demands laid out in the ASR to further their agenda.

Third, as the economy expanded, so did people's aspirations. Education provides an example of this. Education rates increased in conjunction with the Green Revolution. New agricultural technologies decreased the number of farm labor required—freeing children from manual labor and facilitating increased enrollment in schools.<sup>141</sup> The wealth in the Majha region, however disproportionate, was sufficient to make secondary school and college a reality for many youth from Punjab's rural families. The number of students attending college “increased from 35,000 between 1964–1965 to 100,000 in 1968–1969 and 110,000 in the mid-1970s.”<sup>142</sup> By 1974, Punjab at 78 percent, was second only to Kerala (96 percent) in percentage of its school-age children attending school; the state's literacy levels increased by 50 percent from 1961 to 1981.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*, 46.

<sup>141</sup> Telford, “The Political Economy of Punjab,” 978–79.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 979.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*



Yet these educated youth were faced with a lack of employment opportunities, leading to high unemployment rates among the newly educated demographic.<sup>144</sup> Punjab's heavy reliance on agriculture and the inability of both the state and central governments to invest in developing other industries failed to provide jobs for the youth—leaving them with a sense of discrimination. Schools provided the gathering environment for youth from similar socio-economic backgrounds to come together to share and discuss their ideas. These two factors combined to allow the newly educated youth to forge a new outlook on their identities and the “fairness of the political system” in which they lived.<sup>145</sup> When faced with lack of opportunities to advance their own social status, even through education, these youth viewed the Indian political system as unfair. By the late 1970s, the dire employment outlook of newly education Jat youth, combined with the alienating urban environment in which they attended college provided the reasons for these youth to be angry and ready to change the perceived unjust system.<sup>146</sup>

Finally, the short-lived riches brought by the Green Revolution also threatened Punjab's culture as there was a visible conflict between “traditional values and the culture of conspicuous consumption.”<sup>147</sup> By the 1980s, there was a “genuine culture upsurge” to counter the “commercialization of Punjab's culture.”<sup>148</sup> The influx of cash led to increased “alcoholism, smoking, drug-addiction, pornographic literature, lewd music and vulgar cinema,”<sup>149</sup> and domestic violence targeting women.<sup>150</sup> The impact of these destructive forces was especially pronounced among the male rural population—the primary breadwinners for the family. Religion provided a “corrective source of values” to counter these degenerative forces.<sup>151</sup> “Religious revivalist groups found a responsive

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 981.

<sup>147</sup> Shiva, “Chapter 5: The Political and Cultural Costs of the Green Revolution,” 185.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Pritam Singh and G. Singh, “Two Facets of Revivalism,” *Punjab Today*, 1987, 169, quoted in Pritam Singh and Navtej K. Purewal, “The Resurgence of Bhindranwale's Image in Contemporary Punjab,” *Contemporary South Asia* 21, no. 2 (2013): 135.

<sup>150</sup> Shiva, “Chapter 5: The Political and Cultural Costs of the Green Revolution,” 185.

<sup>151</sup> Singh and Purewal, “The Resurgence of Bhindranwale's Image in Contemporary Punjab,” 135.

audience among the rural Sikh population”; their “moral and ideological crusade” against these menacing influences on their distinct Sikh identity was widely supported. Bhindranwale was at the forefront of this crusade to end “vulgar consumerism and casteism,”<sup>152</sup> and initially received significant support from women and children, who did not participate in the new forms of “degenerative consumption,” but were hard-hit at home from its impacts.<sup>153</sup> Bhindranwale led an effort to encouraged men to visit and pray in gurdwaras and to take an oath against watching vulgar movies.<sup>154</sup> The social impacts of the Green Revolution in creating support for the militancy cannot be understated.

## **2. Politics of Radicalization in Punjab: Sikhs Divided**

In 1978, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the Sikh party of Punjab, became part of the Janata coalition, the first non-Congress central government in power since India’s independence. The SAD party was formed in December 14, 1920 as a task force for the Sikh religious body, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (Central Gurdwara Management Committee, or SGPC), at the Akal Takht—a holy shrine located within the Golden Temple complex. The Akali Dal is the most prominent political organization representing Sikhism and the Punjabi nationalistic ideology.<sup>155</sup> The Akal Takht plays a central role in Sikh religious and political affairs as it is considered the “primary seat of Sikh religious authority and the central altar for Sikh political assembly.”<sup>156</sup> It retains the authority to “issue a *hukamnama* (edict) to provide guidance or clarification on religious and, sometimes, political matters.”<sup>157</sup>

In the 1920s, the somewhat militant Akali movement was successful in securing control of gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) from the British authorities in India

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Shiva, “Chapter 5: The Political and Cultural Costs of the Green Revolution,” 185.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> C. Christine Fair, “Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights From the Khalistan and Tamil EELAM Movements,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 11, no. 1 (April 2005): 151, doi:10.1080/13537110590927845; Elections.in, “Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD),” *Political Parties in India*, March 10, 2015, <http://www.elections.in/political-parties-in-india/shiromani-akali-dal.html>.

<sup>156</sup> Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*, 26.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

through the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925, which created the SGPC.<sup>158</sup> It is important to note that SAD was an integral part of the Indian independent movement since the 1920s; its members played an active role in “protests and civil-disobedience programs” advocated and led by Mohandas K. Gandhi and the Indian National Congress (INC).<sup>159</sup> However, the Akali Dal remained focused on advocating for the protection of Sikh minorities in India and of those all around the world; its core belief is that politics and religion are synonymous and one is required if the other is to function.<sup>160</sup> Akali Dal’s control over the Sikh religious body, SGPC, illustrates the intimate relationship between the political party and the religious authority.

Over time, the party splintered into several factions, but the main political party, sometimes referred to as Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) to eliminate confusion, is currently led by Sukhbir Singh Badal.<sup>161</sup> The party was instrumental in the formation of a Punjabi-speaking province, although it failed in stirring up an agitation for a sovereign Sikh nation in 1946.<sup>162</sup> In 1978, the party became part of the ruling alliance in the center for the first time providing it with an opportunity to advance its agenda, but at the same time, it led to further divisions within the party and eventually, its participation in the insurgency.

Previously, Akali Dal’s relationship with the INC-ruled central government had been largely confrontational attributing to INC’s policies over who would control Sikh gurdwaras in Delhi, its attempt to “unilaterally amend the 1925 Sikh Gurdwara Act,” and other unresolved inter-state issues.<sup>163</sup> By challenging Akali Dal’s control, INC under Indira Gandhi had sought to “steal” Sikh constituencies of the Akali Dal. While joining the Janata coalition elevated Akali Dal to the national level and created opportunity for

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<sup>158</sup> D’Souza, “Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD): Political Party, India.”

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Elections.in, “Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD).”

<sup>161</sup> Shiromani Akali Dal Party website, “Shiromani Akali Dal,” accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.shiromaniakalidal.net/president-shiromani-akali-dal.html>.

<sup>162</sup> Fair, “Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights From the Khalistan and Tamil EELAM Movements,” 151.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

the Sikh leadership, it also forced secularization of the party as they also had Hindu constituencies. Also, an alliance with the central government forced them to stay away from racial identity politics causing a rift between the Sikh leadership in the state.

Sikh political institutions consist of three main “branches” holding power over their respective spheres of influence: the organization wing, the temple wing, and the legislative wing. In 1978, the organizational wing was headed by Jagdev Singh Talwandi, the temple wing was led by Gurcharan Singh Tohra as the SGPC president, and Prakash Singh Badal was the Chief Minister (CM) of Punjab and head of legislative/ministerial wing.<sup>164</sup> As Punjab’s CM, Badal had to perform under Punjab’s secular politics as he had a substantial Hindu electorate, and therefore adopted a moderate approach. Talwandi and Tohra—not having to cater to the Hindu population—were “more radical and ethnically-oriented than Badal.”<sup>165</sup> At this time, the Sikh militancy, due to previously mentioned disparities, had become apparent and often targeted the central authorities as well as other Sikhs not amiable to their cause.

For the Akali Dal, being part of the central government, presented an opportunity to present their grievances. The ASR was reformulated into new economic, social, and political demands. Even though the Janata government supported decentralization demands laid out in the ASR, in sync with other parties, they saw the militancy as a threat of separatism and rejected Sikh demands.<sup>166</sup> This happened even though the resolution demanded “an autonomous region in the north of India” where Sikh interests would be protected and a matter of official policy, but stated that this region would still belong to the Indian Union.<sup>167</sup> The Akali Dal, in order to maintain its alliance with the Janata coalition, did not push the agenda laid out in the ASR. The secularization of the political wing then presented an opportunity for other Sikh groups to mobilize using religious symbols.

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 45–46.

The deterioration of the Janata central government in July 1979 brought fissures in the Akali Dal. After the government collapsed in 1979, and INC, led by Indira Gandhi came back to power, she played an active role in supporting Sikh extremist elements as a counter to the Akali Dal. The violence escalated as both the INC and the Akali Dal used militants to achieve their political objectives.<sup>168</sup>

As the militancy expanded, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale rose through the ranks to become the leader of a Damdami Taksal, a small Sikh seminary near Amritsar, “aspiring to promote himself as a leader in the community.”<sup>169</sup> He was dissatisfied with the broad acceptance of who was considered a Sikh, and thus narrowed the definition limiting it to the *amritdhari* Sikhs only; he further wanted Sikhs to return to orthodox ways of practicing the religion and austere living.<sup>170</sup> He viewed the Akali Dal as mainly representing their wealthy Jat supporters rather than the Sikh *panth* (Sikh community). Indeed, the Akalis pursued a “secular and pragmatic strategy” when they were in power, and conveniently leveraged Sikh identity issues when they felt their support was waning.<sup>171</sup>

The issue that brought Bhindranwale to the forefront and that sparked divisions (in what at the time was seen as a lasting Hindu-Sikh political solution) was a religious controversy between the Sikhs and Nirankaris, a Hindu-Sikh sect viewed by many orthodox Sikhs as heretical. For Bhindranwale, Nirankaris proved to be the “enemy” he could use to spread his extremist ideology. As INC supported Nirankari leaders, he was able to further his cause by pointing to this as a collusion of the “others.” The Akal Takht issued a *hukamnama* (religious edict) on 10 June 1978 criticizing the support INC central government provided to the Nirankaris.<sup>172</sup> A series of intensifying clashes between the two sides led to CM Badal taking a mediating approach to appeal to his electorate, while others adopted the more radical approach to prevent the Nirankaris “from grow[ing] and

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<sup>168</sup> Kohli, “Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?,” 337.

<sup>169</sup> Telford, “The Political Economy of Punjab,” 975.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Gates and Roy, “Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Punjab,” 165.

flourish[ing]in society.”<sup>173</sup> The party split into different factions and the environment facilitated various other extremist Sikh groups willing to use violence.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, these political divisions slowly evolved into demands for autonomy as the Sikh population perceived themselves being discriminated against, which often faced a confrontational center, particularly the INC who had initially used militant against the Akali Dal.

Eventually, Bhindranwale turned against the INC and compelled others to join him in his demands for Khalistan. Once the militant forces seemed to have the upper hand, the moderate Akali Dal also supported secession as not to look weak in the eyes of the Sikh population.<sup>175</sup> Even though the party wanted to take a secular approach to resolve the insurgency, stuck in an ultimatum, it accepted the terms set out by the militants to ensure political survival.

The Khalistan movement was not a religious fight at its core, but a political one. Religion served to unite certain segments of the population against a common, artificially created enemy that sought to divide them. The battle against the common enemy became a common identity symbol.

### **3. Prolonged Insurgency and Central Government’s Response**

The central government’s actions over the initial phases of the insurgency period served to alienate moderate Sikhs. Furthermore, the central government used heavy-handed tactics, carried out extrajudicial killings of *amritdhari* (baptized) Sikhs, and humiliated moderate Sikhs. According to Gurharpal Singh, around 25,000 people were killed, between 20,000 to 45,000 were illegally detained, and the number of disappearances remains unknown.<sup>176</sup> The center also made several deals during this time with the Akalis and reneged on them, which was seen as a betrayal by the moderate Sikh

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<sup>173</sup> Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*, 43.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Gurharpal Singh, “Punjab since 1984: Disorder, Order, and Legitimacy,” *Asian Survey* 36, no. 4 (1996): 411.

population seeking to calm down the insurgency.<sup>177</sup> Instead, these actions by the government increased support for the extremists.

Several incidents point to Sikhs being isolated by the center at this time, which led to support for the insurgency. In an effort to contain planned mass demonstration by Sikhs in New Delhi during the Asian Games in 1982, the center set up security checkpoints and deliberately searched and humiliated Sikhs trying to enter the games.<sup>178</sup> Those searched included senior retired defense personnel and Sikh members of parliament (MP), while Hindus were allowed to pass through without any searches.<sup>179</sup> This humiliation turned those against the planned demonstration and those who opposed Bhindranwale to join the extremist cause. Shabeg Singh, a major general in the Indian Army who later advised Bhindranwale's forces said that "it was the humiliation meted out to him at the Asian Games that prompted him to join forces with Bhindranwale."<sup>180</sup>

To help sustain his insurgency, Bhindranwale received both financial and diplomatic support from the Sikh diaspora mainly established in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada.<sup>181</sup> Following Operation Blue Star in 1984 that destroyed parts of the Golden Temple and killed Bhindranwale, certain diaspora groups "declared themselves to be the Khalistan government in exile."<sup>182</sup> Besides the direct financial support, the diaspora pushed for and was successful in gaining Pakistani support. Pakistan's financial and military assistance enabled militants to prolong the insurgency.<sup>183</sup> Punjab's shared border with Pakistan facilitated the transfer of arms into the state with relative ease.

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<sup>177</sup> For more information on the three rounds of talks see, Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Mahmood, *Fighting for Faith and Nation*, 81.

<sup>181</sup> Fair, "Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights From the Khalistan and Tamil EELAM Movements," 126.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 128–129.

<sup>183</sup> Shale Horowitz and Deepti Sharma, "Democracies Fighting Ethnic Insurgencies: Evidence from India," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 8 (2008): 758.

Indira Gandhi's use of overwhelming force to repress the militancy "out of existence," combined with a tired population's willingness to end the violence allowed a level of normalcy to return to Punjab.<sup>184</sup> Because of its defeat, the insurgency failed to achieve its objective of an independent Khalistan, and was unsuccessful in squeezing concessions out of the central government; it left thousands dead with survivors left seeking justice. However, the Sikhs showed their displeasure with the INC by voting for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Akali Dal for the next two decades.

At the surface, the Sikh separatist insurgency seems to have been caused by tensions between minority Sikhs and Hindu-dominated Center, but at its core, it was a movement propelled by political competition between the INC and various Akali Dal factions using economic grievances and religious divisions for their own gains.<sup>185</sup> The lack of economic outlook—combined with existing communal divisions—resulted in a strong support base for the extremists in the 1980s. Legacies of the Sikh separatist insurgency continue to have implications for present day politics in Punjab. Memories of atrocities committed against the Sikhs by the central government are still tender and have become part of Sikh identity and collective memory of the community. Government actions offended moderate Sikhs at home and abroad who did not initially support the extremist cause. Furthermore, resources that could have been spent on the state's development were wasted in trying to suppress the militancy.

#### **4. Post-insurgency and Politics of Punjab**

The Akali Dal party holds the reigns of political and religious power in Punjab based on the support it receives for its heavy campaign against federal interference in Sikh affairs; it has little direct influence elsewhere in Indian politics.<sup>186</sup> The end of the insurgency saw the Akali Dal party aligning with an unlikely ally—the right wing Hindu-nationalist party.

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<sup>184</sup> Kohli, "Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism?," 338.

<sup>185</sup> For a detailed analysis of the evolving political landscape, see Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas Lansford, ed., *India* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2015), [http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2015\\_India&type=hitlist&num=0#](http://library.cqpress.com/phw/document.php?id=phw2015_India&type=hitlist&num=0#).



Until June 1984, just prior to the Indian Army's operation Blue Star, "leadership of the Sikh agitation had effectively passed from the Akali Dal to the more extremist followers of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale."<sup>187</sup> A year after Bhindranwale's death in July 1985, Harchand Singh Longowal, a moderate Akali Dal leader, agreed on a peace accord with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.<sup>188</sup> In order for the agreement to be upheld, Longowal had to appeal to and gain the support of his opposing colleagues. Thukral explains that after much negotiation, Longowal was finally able to win "over his two dissenting colleagues, SGPC President G. S. Tohra and former chief minister P.S. Badal" so that they could stand as one and run for elections together; unfortunately, political stability and compromise did not last because Longowal was assassinated on August 20, 1985 at a rally in Punjab by a Sikh militant.<sup>189</sup>

In 1986, the Akali Dal party witnessed withdrawal of number of its leaders to form a separate party, but the party reunited under the leadership of a former police official, Simranjit Singh Mann. However, factions continued to exist and they keep Punjab politics divided and, the same time, focused on Sikh community symbols rather than other non-secular issues.<sup>190</sup> Manjit Singh, point man for the Sikh religious leadership, led and failed in his attempts to unify the party with its various non-secular factions, which did not include Badal's group; Mann formed a separate party (SAD[Mann]) stating other party leaders' inability to abide by the agreed upon "Amritsar declaration."<sup>191</sup> Internal feud during 1998–1999 resulted in a faction led by Gurcharan Singh Tohra to "criticize the BJP-led central government and President Badal's Punjab administration."<sup>192</sup> Tohra started the All India Shiromani Akali Dal (AISAD) in mid-1999, which "may have contributed to the SAD's losing six of its eight *Lok Sabha* seats

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Gobind Thukral, "The Assassination: Unwinding Threads," *India Today*, July 6, 2014, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/sant-harchand-singh-longowal-assassination-suspected-to-be-politically-motivated/1/354495.html>.

<sup>190</sup> Lansford, *India*.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

in the 1999 election”; three years later, the party lost the state poll.<sup>193</sup> Tohra and Badal eventually put aside their differences and reconciled in 2003, but Tohra died in March 2004, and Jaswant Singh Mann organized a new anti-Badal party within a month of Tohra’s passing.<sup>194</sup>

The Akali Dal won eight seats in the 2004 general election as a part of the National Democratic Alliance.<sup>195</sup> Shortly after the results, Prem Singh Chandumajra, a dissident SAD party leader, formed another anti-Badal party, the Shiromani Akali Dal (Longowal), “but he rejoined the parent party in January 2007.”<sup>196</sup> A month later, the party, aligned with the BJP, beat out its traditional rival, the INC, in a closely contested election to win the state enabling Badal to reclaim his position as Chief Minister.<sup>197</sup> For many observers this was a victory for India as it brought Akali Dal, representative of Sikh Jats and BJP, represented of Hindu urban constituency together. Some elements of the radical groups remain, however. In May 2007, Wassan Singh Zaffarwal, a former leader of the Khalistan Commando Force, formed the Shiromani Akali Dal (Zaffarwal) in his quest for an independent Sikh Khalistan.<sup>198</sup>

The SAD party has been a key ally for the ruling BJP since 1997.<sup>199</sup> Although the alliance has been around for almost twenty years, its formation, and more importantly its long tenure, is surprising given opposing ideals of the two parties. The SAD party is rooted in strong advocacy for the Punjabi language and for the Sikh population in

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Election Commission of India, “Statistical Report on General Elections, 2004 to the 14th Lok Sabha, Volume I,” n.d., [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main/StatisticalReports/LS\\_2004/Vol\\_I\\_LS\\_2004.pdf](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/StatisticalReports/LS_2004/Vol_I_LS_2004.pdf).

<sup>196</sup> Lansford, *India*.

<sup>197</sup> Ashutosh Kumar, “Punjab Elections: Exploring the Verdict,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 22 (2007): 2043–47.

<sup>198</sup> Australian Government, “Country Advice India,” Australian Government: Refugee Review Tribunal, (December 17, 2009), 3, <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2013/06/11/Australia%20RRT%2012.17.09.pdf>.

<sup>199</sup> Man Aman Singh Chhina, “Arun Jaitley, Amit Shah Meet Punjab BJP, Discuss Alliance with Akalis,” *The Indian Express*, February 7, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/arun-jaitley-amit-shah-meet-punjab-bjp-discuss-alliance-with-akalis/>.

Punjab.<sup>200</sup> The SAD party, much like the BJP, is forced to operate in “secular and democratic political systems of Punjab and India,” and therefore, has to “moderate its purely ethnic message” to appeal to a substantial Hindu population in the state.<sup>201</sup> The BJP was created on the ideals of strong Hindu nationalism and their advocacy for Hindi to be India’s official and mainstream language; their position remains unchanged in contemporary Indian politics. Despite these opposing views, the SAD and the BJP have forged an alliance to defeat their common enemy and opponent, respectively, the INC.

Historical mistrust of the INC shapes Akali political alliances; Indira Gandhi’s order to storm the Golden Temple, violence against the Sikhs in Delhi after her assassination, and repeated let-downs by Rajiv Gandhi all prevented a political solution in Punjab. The current BJP-SAD alliance is interesting because the BJP advocates for the rights of Hindus and believes Sikhism to be a part of Hinduism.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Punjab, as discussed previously, is critically important to India in several ways. First, as the breadbasket of India, it provides food security for the nation. Second, the state is a testament to India’s secular identity, where a minority religion in the country has thrived. Third, as a border state with Pakistan, its security and prosperity are crucial for India’s stability. Finally, having gone through a period of prolonged separatist insurgency—with resentment against the government’s harsh response still alive—the Indian government cannot ignore the rising drug problem in the state which could foster a sense of deprivation from the same segment of the population. The negative impacts of the Green Revolution are still being felt in the state. Today, large numbers of rural Punjabi youth are rejecting manual labor and moving away from agriculture, but are having difficulty finding employment elsewhere and turning to drugs. The lack of job opportunities has led to several agitations recently for reservation demands in other states. A rising number of drug users in the state is compounding the conditions created by the state’s already declining economy and threaten its stability. This is especially true

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<sup>200</sup> D’Souza, “Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD): Political Party, India.”

<sup>201</sup> Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India*, 26–26.

because there is growing discontent in the state against the Akali Dal party, which has evolved into a party mostly controlled by a single family—the Badals.<sup>202</sup> The frustrations from a lack of government response to this problem can turn grievances into uprisings, which the Indian government is ill-equipped to face. The relevance of pro-Khalistan militant organizations provides an opportunity for these elements to take advantage of any grievances in the state. The next chapter details how the growing drug use and trade in the state has impacted its economy and society. With the presence of on-going historical grievances, along with the memory of a violent insurgency, which is blamed on the center, the drug epidemic becomes another grievance that is yet to be addressed by the Hindu-dominated central authorities.

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<sup>202</sup> Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, “Punjab Angry with Drug Abuse, Corruption, Lack of Governance and Misplaced Agricultural Policies,” *The Economic Times*, November 1, 2015, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/punjab-angry-with-drug-abuse-corruption-lack-of-governance-and-misplaced-agricultural-policies/articleshow/49611906.cms>.

### **III. PUNJAB'S VULNERABILITIES: NARCO-TERRORISM AND DECLINING ECONOMY**

The rise of drug economy is no doubt a threat to societal stability in any given state. As illustrated in the previous chapter, what makes the rise of drugs in Punjab unique and requires urgent attention is its proximity to Pakistan, its history of instability due to the partition, and as well as a violent insurgency that rocked the state in the 1980s. This chapter provides the details of the rise of the drug trade and economic conditions in Punjab in order to argue that this new threat may once again produce conditions for instability in a vulnerable and strategically important state. The economic decline provides criminal syndicates with an opportunity to destabilize the region. The negative effects on the state's economy, lack of employment, mounting medical costs, and the strain placed on the judicial system can cause unrest among the population that has a history of linking lack of resources with center's discrimination against its Sikh minority. This is a critical threat given the state's strategic location and the importance of its economy for the nation's food security.

#### **A. INDIA'S GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THE DRUG CIRCUIT**

Punjab's geographic layout centered between the Golden Crescent and The Golden Triangle makes it prone to the illicit drug trade. The Golden Crescent consists of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and lies at India's western border, while Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand comprise the Golden Triangle sharing India's eastern border.<sup>203</sup>

In a 2014 memorandum to the Secretary of State, President Barack Obama's administration produced a list of 22 major drug transit or major illicit drug-producing countries that included India.<sup>204</sup> These countries were listed due to a combination of

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<sup>203</sup> In the subsequent discussion, the term drugs not only encompasses illicit narcotics such as heroin, opium, cocaine, and marijuana, but also includes illegal pharmaceutical drugs such as ephedrine, acetic anhydride, and popular variants of the sedative drug Methaqualone. Additionally, the terms drugs and narcotics are used interchangeably.

<sup>204</sup> White House, "Presidential Determination - Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for Fiscal Year 2015," September 15, 2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/15/presidential-determination-major-drug-transit-or-major-illicit-drug-prod>.

factors that allowed drugs to transit or be produced, even if the “government has carried out the most assiduous narcotics control law enforcement measures.”<sup>205</sup> The list was not a reflection of India’s or any other country’s counter-narcotics efforts or level of cooperation with the United States.<sup>206</sup> Furthermore, the memorandum illustrated the importance of addressing the drug problem in India to secure U.S. national interests. Any instability in the region is not only troublesome for India, but also a concern to the United States, which is increasingly strengthening its relationship with India to advance its own national security objectives in the region.

### **1. The Expansion of Drug Routes and Trade in India**

Drug trade is not new to the region. However, the India-Pakistan border became an alternative for smugglers after Iran closed the traditional Balkan route through its borders after the revolution and Iran-Iraq war from 1980–1988.<sup>207</sup> Afghanistan became a major drug producer due to a vacuum left in the market and India and Pakistan began to serve as significant routes. Previously existing drug routes into the Indian market also served as routes for exporting drugs to other countries.<sup>208</sup> Even though drug trafficking trends seem to have stabilized over the years, India continues to serve as “a hub for the transshipment of heroin originating from the Afghanistan-Pakistan region to the rest of the world.”<sup>209</sup> Due to their proximity to Pakistan, states of Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, and Gujarat provide easy access into India for heroin and hashish produced in the Golden Crescent.<sup>210</sup>

India’s position as the only licit producer and supplier of opium to the world market also makes it vulnerable to illicit drug trade, as it has become a hub from trafficking in the past two decades. India accounts for 98% of world’s legal opium

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Das, “Drug Trafficking in India: A Case for Border Security,” 8.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 12.

supplies.<sup>211</sup> This is crucial because with the legal means of production available, there exists the capability to manufacture additional opium for illicit purposes due to the corruption and political influence.

Increased number of drug seizures, and drug related cases registered by the Indian authorities highlights the expansion of the drug trade in India. The total quantity of all drugs seized in India increased an astounding 455 percent between 2011 and 2014, while the number of drug cases increased by 41 percent.<sup>212</sup> In 2014 alone, various Indian agencies seized 1,766.37 kg of opium, 1,370.78 kg of heroin, 108,300 kg of ganja, 2,280.48 kg of hashish, 14.68 kg of cocaine, 1,330 kg of ephedrine, 54 kg of acetic anhydride, and 53.99 kg of Methaqualone and related drugs.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, authorities destroyed 2,732 acres of illicit opium poppy cultivation and 3,198 acres of illicit cannabis cultivation.<sup>214</sup> The only bright spot in India's drug trends was a slight decrease from 2013 to 2014 in the number of seizures and the quantity of heroin seized: the seizures went down from 4,609 to 4,467, and the quantity decreased from 1,450 kg to 1,371 kg,<sup>215</sup> which may reflect a decrease in the drug trade. Yet, drug smuggling remains highly profitable as prices can increase up to fifty times from the time drugs cross into Punjab to the time they reach the international market.<sup>216</sup>

With India becoming an important market and hub for routing illicit drugs, Punjab is its first line of defense and at the same time an important route for opium from Afghanistan. However, Punjab appears to be losing the battle to save its youth from falling victim to addiction, which then has an impact on Punjab's economic aspirations.

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<sup>211</sup> United Nations, *Narcotic Drugs 2015: Estimated World Requirements for 2016*, 23.

<sup>212</sup> Kunal Sehgal and Maria Thomas, "India's Cocaine Addiction Is Worsening—and South American Drug Cartels Are Lining up," *Quartz*, June 30, 2015, <http://qz.com/439324/indias-cocaine-addiction-is-worsening-and-south-american-drug-cartels-are-lining-up/>.

<sup>213</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, "Narcotics Control Bureau India 2014 Annual Report" (New Delhi, India, 2014), 3, [http://narcoticsindia.nic.in/upload/download/document\\_idfa385fb5a8e79b41a0d37b12c9f95996.pdf](http://narcoticsindia.nic.in/upload/download/document_idfa385fb5a8e79b41a0d37b12c9f95996.pdf).

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–4.

<sup>215</sup> United Nations, *International Narcotics Control Board Annual Report 2015*, 74, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www.incb.org/incb/en/publications/annual-reports/annual-report-2015.html>.

<sup>216</sup> Sanjeev Verma, "Drug Pangs of Punjab: Punjabi NRIs Part of Well-Knit Narcotics Circuit," *Hindustan Times*, October 1, 2014, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/drug-pangs-of-punjab-punjabi-nris-part-of-well-knit-narcotics-circuit/story-0jMfw5jzLHOrEySFa3g67M.html>.

In addition, these drug routes are dangerous for India's stability as they serve a dual purpose for militants seeking to destabilize the region. Narcotics are an important funding source for militants. Additionally, the same drug routes allow them to smuggle arms into India.<sup>217</sup> India's experience with narco-terrorism is not new; the growing interdependencies between drugs and terror maybe facilitating a recurrence of such networks in the region.

## **2. Drug-Crime Nexus in India**

The nexus between narcotics and terrorism, also known as narco-terrorism, is a reliable source of funding for terrorist organizations worldwide.<sup>218</sup> As Pushpita Das and Saroj Rath have shown, an intricate cycle of interdependencies allows criminal and terrorist groups to work together.<sup>219</sup> Terrorist groups provide criminal outposts with the access to sophisticated weapons they need to maintain control over illegal activities, and in return, they gain access to their resources such as funding, routes, and travel documents.<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, narcotic and terrorist organizations can both use weapons and drugs for "military and economic purposes," facilitating a common goal and cooperation between the two groups.<sup>221</sup>

India witnessed the devastating impacts of the nexus of narco-terrorism during Punjab's Khalistan insurgency described in the previous chapter and continues to deal with it in the ongoing conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. The militants' need for funding helped propel drug trafficking to the forefront in these two states in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>222</sup> In Punjab, the rise of Sikh extremism associated with the Khalistan movement

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<sup>217</sup> Ryan Clarke, "D-Company: A Study of the Crime-Terror Nexus in South Asia," *International Journal of Business and Globalisation* 4, no. 3 (2010): 273.

<sup>218</sup> Jamwal, "Terrorist Financing and Support Structures in Jammu and Kashmir," 145.

<sup>219</sup> Das, "Drug Trafficking in India: A Case for Border Security," 5; Rath, "Why Narcotics in India Should Be Treated as a Threat to National Security," 97.

<sup>220</sup> Rath, "Why Narcotics in India Should Be Treated as a Threat to National Security," 96. Also see Emma Björnehed, "Narco-Terrorism: The Merger of the War on Drugs and the War on Terror," *Global Crime* 6, no. 3–4 (August 19, 2006): 309, doi:10.1080/17440570500273440.

<sup>221</sup> Björnehed, "Narco-Terrorism," 310.

<sup>222</sup> Das, "Drug Trafficking in India: A Case for Border Security," 8.



facilitated the smuggling of weapons and narcotics into the state in the 1980s.<sup>223</sup> According to Rajen Harshe, Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) used drug smuggling to launder "money to meet expenditures on the war" front in Punjab in the 1980s; a special cell created within the ISI also focused on using heroin to "facilitate covert actions" in the Indian state.<sup>224</sup>

Indian sources also suggest that ISI was known to have linked the militants in Punjab "with Mumbai-based narcotics-traffic mafia groups" to leverage commonalities of narco-terrorism.<sup>225</sup> According to Ryan Clarke, D-Company, a criminal syndicate originally based out of Mumbai, played a key role in facilitating transfer of militants and arms between the Punjab-Pakistan borders.<sup>226</sup> The syndicate is associated with Dawood Ibrahim, who currently resides in Karachi and is wanted by the Indian government.<sup>227</sup> Dawood's group solidified smuggling routes for gold and other commodities, which they subsequently used for arms and narcotics trafficking once India liberalized its economy starting in the 1980s and thereby rendering black market items unprofitable.<sup>228</sup> These routes played an important role in transferring ISI supplied weapons into Punjab.<sup>229</sup> Some reports indicate that Sikh militants were receiving training in Afghanistan "at least before 1985," which was arranged by Pakistan, and that arms deals took place between Sikh insurgents and dealers in Pakistan, both of which were facilitated by criminal syndicates.<sup>230</sup> The association between D-Company, intelligence of a rival state, and radical elements in a country provide an example of how narco-terrorism can destabilize a region by aiding extremist elements.

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<sup>223</sup> Clarke, "D-Company," 265.

<sup>224</sup> Rajen Harshe, "Cross-Border Terrorism: Road-Block to Peace Initiatives," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 35 (2003): 3622.

<sup>225</sup> Praveen Swami, "Failed Threats and Flawed Fences: India's Military Responses to Pakistan's Proxy War," *India Review* 3, no. 2 (April 2004): 157, doi:10.1080/14736480490465045.

<sup>226</sup> Clarke, "D-Company," 264.

<sup>227</sup> Sagnik Chowdhury, "Dawood Ibrahim's New Residence in Karachi near Bilawal's Residence," *The Indian Express*, August 23, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/india-has-evidence-of-dawood-ibrahim-living-in-pakistan-report/>.

<sup>228</sup> Clarke, "D-Company," 264.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>230</sup> Kartha, "Terror Roll Back: Militancy in Punjab," 184–185.

Although not situated in Punjab, news reports suggest that D-company may be asserting some influence and establishing drug-routes in the state.<sup>231</sup> Recent drug-related arrests indicate D-Company's nexus in the state as it has been linked with local drug-barons in Punjab.<sup>232</sup> According to some sources, the alarming part is that the group has a wide sphere of influence and is "accused of fostering relationships with politicians, high-ranking government and police officials," and business leaders.<sup>233</sup> This then allows the drug-syndicates associated with an external intelligence agency access to people's representatives in local governments. Punjab is particularly vulnerable to this system as its political leaders have historically accused the national government of discrimination. Such associations may lead to radicalization, as was the case in the 1980s insurgency.

The use of drug trafficking routes for anti-India activities became apparent in an attack on an Indian Air Force Base in Punjab in January 2016. The gunmen who stormed the airbase in Pathankot (less than 20 miles from the India-Pakistan border) were able to use existing smuggling networks to gain entry into India from Pakistan. The case of Pathankot is especially concerning because, according to some journalists, "nexus of law enforcing agencies and the smugglers who operate under the patronage of politicians" strengthened the narco-terror relationship in making it easier for the perpetrators to carry out the attack on Indian soil.<sup>234</sup>

The link between the external players such as Pakistan's ISI, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), and drug traffickers such as D-Company also became apparent in 2008 when

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<sup>231</sup> Nick Meo, "All Eyes on India's Most Wanted; He Hides out in Pakistan, but the Luck of Crimelord and Terrorist Dawood Ibrahim Is Running Out.," *The Sunday Herald*, January 27, 2002, <http://www.lexisnexis.com.libproxy.nps.edu/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=451K-XT30-015N-V01C&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411,172807,402532&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>.

<sup>232</sup> Express News Service, "Synthetic Drug Racket: Delhi Businessman Was in 'D' Company, Says Punjab Police," *The Indian Express*, January 19, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/synthetic-drug-racket-delhi-businessman-was-in-d-company-says-punjab-police/>; "Delhi Police Catches D-Big Fish," *The Pioneer (India)*, March 26, 2015, <http://www.lexisnexis.com.libproxy.nps.edu/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=5FKN-1B11-F12F-F19G&csi=332051&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>.

<sup>233</sup> Clarke, "D-Company," 265.

<sup>234</sup> Rajeev Khanna, "Toxic Trail: How Punjab's Drug Trade May Have Enabled #PathankotAttack," *Catch News*, January 11, 2016, <http://www.catchnews.com/india-news/toxic-trail-how-punjab-s-drug-trade-may-have-enabled-pathankotattack-1452483571.html>.

Mumbai, India's financial capital, came under attack for about 60 hours and left 168 people dead. The attack was immediately linked to and claimed by Lashkar-e-Taiba, a group that is associated by some scholars to Pakistan's ISI<sup>235</sup>; a claim that Pakistan denies. According to Divya Sharma, the ISI aided LeT by securing strategic, financial, and logistical support from D-Company.<sup>236</sup> Although there is no strong evidence linking LeT to the drug trade in the region, Clarke believes that given LeT's geographic location, the group "is likely involved in the [drug] trade."<sup>237</sup> Income from the drug trade provides a reliable income stream thereby allowing groups like LeT to adhere to its own agenda rather than the one set by their sponsors.<sup>238</sup> According to Kambere et al., in 2002, agencies in Pakistan were able to net approximately \$2.5 billion from about 5000 tons of opium, which was used to support organizations like the Taliban and terrorism activities in India.<sup>239</sup>

In 9/11's aftermath, many terrorist organizations had their assets frozen through efforts led by the United States to clamp down on terrorist financing. Yet, this denial of access to their resources advanced a relationship between terrorist groups and organized crime; witnessing a demand for their services, groups like D-Company entered into partnerships with terrorist groups in various countries.<sup>240</sup> Strong links and dependencies between organized crime groups and drug traffickers further enable terrorist acts to be carried out on India's soil. The drug trafficking routes allow for other illegal activity such as human and weapons trafficking—the profits of which further help to fund terrorism. The drug consumers in Punjab are unknowingly funding organizations that seek to

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<sup>235</sup> Divya Sharma, "Growing Overlap between Terrorism and Organized Crime in India: A Case Study," *Security Journal* 26, no. 1 (2013): 61.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ryan Clarke, "Lashkar-I-Taiba: The Fallacy of Subservient Proxies and the Future of Islamist Terrorism in India" (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, March 2010), 28, <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA516621>.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Geoffrey Kambere et al., "The Financing of Lashkar-E-Taiba," *Combating Terrorism Exchange* 1, no. 1 (2011): 13.

<sup>240</sup> Sharma, "Growing Overlap between Terrorism and Organized Crime in India," 61–62.

destabilize the state. The drug trade therefore, poses a significant threat to Punjab and India's stability.

Punjab's alarming statistics point to a rapid growth of drug use, abuse, and addiction among the male population, especially the youth. These individuals are not only from poor, rural households but also from affluent and middle-class families who are educated but turn to drugs absent any career opportunities outside of the traditional agricultural sector. The landscape in Punjab is quickly evolving: not only are drugs creating an environment where terrorist and extremist elements can flourish, they are also hampering economic development of the state that has implications for overall stability.

### **3. Drug Trade's Implications for Punjab's Economic Growth**

Punjab accounts for approximately 60 percent of all illegal drug seizures in India due to the fact that it is a main transport route for drugs coming from Afghanistan through Pakistan.<sup>241</sup> However, substantial amount of the heroin ends up in the hands of Punjabi youth. Opium can also be readily found in Punjab, sometimes processed into various illegal substances such as heroin.<sup>242</sup> Aarish Chhabra estimates that Punjab's drug addiction rate of 1.2 percent is almost twice the national rate of 0.7 percent and nearly six times more than the 0.2 percent world figures estimated by the United Nations.<sup>243</sup> According to another study, the drug addiction problem has especially engulfed the Punjabi youth, estimating that majority of the addicts in the state are between the ages of 15 and 35.<sup>244</sup> A large number of youth addicted to drugs has negative implications for the state's economic aspirations. The drug addiction problem cannot be blamed entirely on external sources because Punjab's politicians have been known to use drugs to win votes. India's Election Commission found that during the 2012 State Elections in Punjab,

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<sup>241</sup> Yardley, "Indian State Finds Itself in Tight Grip of Addiction."

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Aarish Chhabra, "Sukhbir Wrong: Punjab Indeed Has a Drug Problem, Worse than India, World," *Hindustan Times*, February 19, 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/drug-abuse-in-punjab-deputy-cm-misreads-aiims-study/story-VEmJYQjIH2JWfLl42iHp2N.html>.

<sup>244</sup> Yardley, "Indian State Finds Itself in Tight Grip of Addiction."

“political workers were actually giving away drugs to try to buy votes.”<sup>245</sup> Alcohol has historically been distributed during elections to secure votes in other parts of India. Yet, S. Y. Quaraishi, India’s chief election commissioner, points out the problem of drug distribution during elections as “unique only to Punjab” and of real concern.<sup>246</sup>

Although the extent of the drug problem in Punjab is up for debate, as some politicians are known to deny the existence of a drug problem for political reasons, it is clear that the state faces a drug epidemic and an uphill battle to address it. Complicating efforts to address the problem are comments by the state’s ruling party’s prominent leader, Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal. He deflected the negative attention on the state by misinterpreting a survey to estimate that only 16,000 adults were drug addicts, and as a result, claimed that Punjab does not have a drug problem.<sup>247</sup>

## **B. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COSTS: IMPACT TO DEVELOPMENT IN PUNJAB**

Several researchers point to the illicit drug trade as having a negative impact on economic growth globally, but Mesquita notes that developing nations are especially prone to the effects of the drug trade.<sup>248</sup> Drugs can impede economic development and endanger government stability by helping to maintain social inequalities.<sup>249</sup> Drugs also pose various costs to governments, which reduce the funds needed for economic development. Costs to treat significant health problems associated with abuse and addiction, additional burden placed on the criminal justice system, and various drug demand reduction and social programs all consume precious resources. For example, the Colombian government spent an estimated \$12 billion in 2011 in its fight against drug

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ravinder Vasudeva, “Only 16,000 Drug Addicts in Punjab, AAP-Ruled Delhi Worse off: Sukhbir,” *Hindustan Times*, February 18, 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/only-0-06-of-punjab-using-drugs-sukhbir-cites-new-study/story-oeYzSadOwnquo6t13r2pdO.html>.

<sup>248</sup> Thematic Debate of the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Drugs and Crime as a Threat to Development; Mesquita, “The Health and Social Impacts of Drugs in Brazil and Indonesia: What It Means for Development,” 66.

<sup>249</sup> Giacomelli, “World Drug Report 1997”; Singer, “Drugs and Development,” 476.

traffickers<sup>250</sup>; the drug trade cost the United States' economy about \$193 billion in 2013.<sup>251</sup> Already contending with myriad of development issues (environment, poverty, human capital, etc.) developing nations like India face an uphill battle in their quest to reach developed nation status. Drug addiction forms another impediment to success in one of its most economically important states.

Limited data is available to determine the costs incurred by Punjab's government to fight the drug epidemic, but results of two surveys provide some insight into the government's response and the impact of drugs on families in Punjab. Punjab Opioid Dependence Survey conducted in 2015 estimated that approximately Rs. 7575 crores (~\$1.1 billion) are spent per year by drugs users to purchase their choice of drugs.<sup>252</sup> For perspective, this amounts to about 2.5 percent of Punjab's GDP (~\$46.6 billion) for 2014–2015. Punjab's gross domestic product per capita in 2014–15 was Rs. 99,578 (about \$4/day)<sup>253</sup>; this number suggests that households with drug addicts face extreme hardship in making ends meet because they are using their income on drugs rather than basic necessities at home. At an individual level, a person spends on average Rs. 1400/day (\$21) on heroin, while the numbers are smaller for opium users (Rs 340/day, \$5) and illegal pharmaceutical-opioid users spend the same amount as an average person's daily income (Rs. 265/day, \$4).<sup>254</sup> These numbers also highlight that it is not just the poor who are being impacted by the influx of drugs into the state. Additionally, money that could be infused into Punjab's struggling economy instead goes to fund criminal organizations that benefit from drug profits and are playing an active role in destabilizing society. Furthermore, the survey warns that despite significant demand, there exists a "huge gap

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<sup>250</sup> "Cocaine Seen Harming Economy of Colombia"; Badkar, "11 Shocking Facts About Colombia's \$10 Billion Drug Industry."

<sup>251</sup> White House, "How Illicit Drug Use Affects Business and the Economy."

<sup>252</sup> Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, "Punjab Opioid Dependence Survey (PODS): Brief Report," 2015, 11–12, <http://pbhealth.gov.in/scan0003%20%282%29.pdf>.

<sup>253</sup> Statistics Times, "GDP per Capita of Indian States 2015," accessed February 3, 2017, <http://statisticstimes.com/economy/gdp-capita-of-indian-states.php>.

<sup>254</sup> Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, "Punjab Opioid Dependence Survey (PODS): Brief Report," 9.

in the availability of treatment services for opioid dependent individuals.”<sup>255</sup> The state is unable to meet the demand for the most effective drug treatment, Opioid Substitute Therapy, with only 10 percent of patients receiving the treatment.<sup>256</sup>

Another survey conducted by the BJP’s youth wing, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), in conjunction with a non-governmental association concluded that drug addiction was a significant factor in reducing Punjab’s Army recruits from 17 percent to an astounding 0.75 percent.<sup>257</sup> This finding is especially consequential for Punjab because many families in the state depend on military employment for their sons and husbands as means to provide for their entire family. This reduced representation in the armed forces may further provide the perception that the central government is purposely discriminating against the Sikhs.

The surveys discussed above provide insight into families that are worse-off with increasing number of people getting addicted to drugs. Collusion between politicians and police for their own benefits is worsening the situation. An unwillingness to address the drug addiction problem may lead to further discontent and resentment among the Sikh population against the ruling establishment that is seen as neglecting many issues; extremist elements are well situated to take advantage of such conditions.

### **1. Punjab’s Declining Economy since the 1980s**

Punjab’s economy predominantly depends on agriculture, but it is slowly diversifying its industries, as evident by the emergence of the state as a textile-based industry hub in India, and claiming a smaller footprint in producing manufacturing scientific instruments and machine tools.<sup>258</sup> The resultant riches from the Green Revolution enabled Punjab to build “weather-proof roads” and “bring electricity to all

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Raghav Ohri, “Drugs Have Made Punjab Youth Unfit for Army, Recruitment Plunges from 17% to 0.75%: ABVP,” *The Economic Times*, January 13, 2015, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/drugs-have-made-punjab-youth-unfit-for-army-recruitment-plunges-from-17-to-0-75-abvp/articleshow/45861925.cms>.

<sup>258</sup> India Brand Equity Foundation, “Industrial Development & Economic Growth in Punjab,” 3; Government of Punjab, India, “Know Punjab.”

villages.”<sup>259</sup> The positive effects of the increased production also brought an end to India’s reliance on foreign food aid and widespread starvation; more crucially, it poised Punjab to stake its claim as one of the wealthiest states in India.<sup>260</sup> Punjab is highly rated for its infrastructure facilities as its “road, rail and air transport network, connectivity, construction of bridges” are one of the best in India.<sup>261</sup> At 8.26 percent, Punjab ranks among the top five states in India for the lowest percentage of the population living below the established poverty line.<sup>262</sup> Even with such developments, poor fiscal policies and government oversight have failed to capitalize on Punjab’s historical agricultural success.

Punjab has slowly relinquished its economic prominence since the 1980s to other states. The state’s Finance Minister in 2011 addressed this issue and said, “I must mention that on the basis of per capital income, Punjab which was at one time the top State in the country has slipped to number four among the bigger states and to number eight if all the states and union territories are reckoned. Punjab cannot be satisfied with anything but the first place in this regard.”<sup>263</sup> Vikram Chadha warns that the “mounting unemployment rate...is bound to manifest in social tension,” and that “Punjab is sitting atop a powder keg, with frustrations growing amongst the youth.”<sup>264</sup> The situation was bad enough that it prompted the Indian government to sign an agreement with the Asia Development Bank in 2014 for a \$200 million loan to help Punjab strengthen its finances so that the state could spur economic growth.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Aiyar, “Why Punjab Has Suffered Long, Steady Decline,” 33.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> India Brand Equity Foundation, “Industrial Development & Economic Growth in Punjab,” 3; Government of Punjab, India, “Know Punjab.”

<sup>262</sup> Reserve Bank of India, “Table 162 : Number and Percentage of Population Below Poverty Line,” September 16, 2016, <https://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/PublicationsView.aspx?id=17295>.

<sup>263</sup> Aiyar, “Why Punjab Has Suffered Long, Steady Decline.”

<sup>264</sup> Chadha, “Unemployed Educated Rural Workforce in Punjab, Making a Show.”

<sup>265</sup> Asian Development Bank, “ADB \$200 Million Loan to Help India’s Punjab State Strengthen Finances,” December 2, 2014, <https://www.adb.org/news/adb-200-million-loan-help-india-s-punjab-state-strengthen-finances>.



The state also lags behind in developing its human capital: it ranks 21st in literacy among the states and union territories at 76.68 percent; the state made double digit gains in literacy rates from 1991 (58 percent) to 2001 (70 percent), but only increased by 6 percent to 76 percent from 2001 to 2011.<sup>266</sup> Additionally, a large number of its population is suffering from diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, and heart disease, and other health issues resulting from lack of clean drinking water.<sup>267</sup> Furthermore, Punjab's place as the number one state in terms of per capita income has slipped to fifth since economic liberalization in India.<sup>268</sup> The economic problems Punjab is facing are, according to Dr. Jaspal Singh, Vice Chancellor at Punjabi University in Patiala, India, "turning out to be a sign of concern and anxiety for all sections of the society in terms of prosperity that has been its very hallmark."<sup>269</sup>

Even with the historical distinction of being a wealthy state, since the 1990s, its gross domestic product (GDP) has failed to keep up with the national average.<sup>270</sup> From 1994–2002 the state's GDP growth was 4.32 percent per year, while the national average was 6.16 percent per year; maintaining that trend, national average of 7.95 percent was almost 20 percent higher than Punjab's 6.61 percent from the years 2002–2011.<sup>271</sup> Punjab also had the highest fiscal deficit among the major states at 3.4 percent in 2011–2012. This high fiscal deficit caused Punjab to seek a bail-out from the central government so it could provide payments to contractors (Rs. 588 crore, ~\$90.5 million) in 2014.<sup>272</sup> The fiscal deficit also had implications for civil sector employees who resorted to illegal means to make money when the government failed to pay salaries on

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<sup>266</sup> "Census 2011, Chapter 6 (State of Literacy)" (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2011), [http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data\\_files/india/Final\\_PPT\\_2011\\_chapter6.pdf](http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Final_PPT_2011_chapter6.pdf).

<sup>267</sup> "Rejuvenation of Punjab Economy: A Policy Document," Policy Paper, Centre for Development Economics and Innovation Studies (CDEIS) Series (Patiala, India: Punjabi University, July 2012), 6–7, <http://ihr.ucsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CDEIS-Policy-Paper.pdf>.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., i.

<sup>270</sup> Aiyar, "Why Punjab Has Suffered Long, Steady Decline," 33.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 33–34.

<sup>272</sup> Manjeet Sehgal, "Punjab Government: Rs 588 Crore Unpaid," *Daily Mail*, November 22, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2845605/Punjab-government-Rs-588-crore-unpaid.html>.

time, further contributing to a culture of corruption.<sup>273</sup> The government's inability to foster economic growth, address the mounting unemployment caused by lack of investment in new industries, and continuing the practice to heavily subsidize the agriculture industry is leading to social tensions and possibly creating an environment similar to the one caused by the Green Revolution (discussed in Chapter II) that fueled the Khalistan insurgency.

## **2. Connecting Failed Policies and Religious Mobilization**

Punjab government's ineffective policies have directly contributed to the state's economic decline over the last two decades.<sup>274</sup> The government's reliance on agriculture as a continued avenue for economic prosperity has failed to pay off, and is threatening the state's stability with rising unemployment. According to a report published by the Punjabi University, Patiala, one of the major problems facing the state is a shortage of investment in capital formation over the last three decades.<sup>275</sup> The ratio of investment to State Domestic Product (SDP) was below 20 percent, the lowest ranking among the fourteen major states in India, needing at least \$1.5 billion to reach the national average.<sup>276</sup> To exacerbate the situation, the investment-agriculture SDP ratio of nine percent in the state's predominantly agrarian economy has reached an all-time low.<sup>277</sup> Additionally, while the ruling SAD party has made it its goal to build better relations with the center, it has failed to "establish a decentralized system of transferring resources and power from the State to Panchayati Raj Institutions."<sup>278</sup> These institutions are traditional village-level councils heavily relied upon throughout India to govern at the local level. The lack of a true federal system within the state further impedes the state from using its resources efficiently. Poor governance, heavy emphasis on agriculture, failure to industrialize, and scant investments in the social sector has contributed to the slowdown

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<sup>273</sup> Aiyar, "Why Punjab Has Suffered Long, Steady Decline," 34.

<sup>274</sup> "Rejuvenation of Punjab Economy: A Policy Document," 1.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid. Conversion assumes exchange rate of \$1US = 65 INR.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 2.

of the state's economy and the resultant structural imbalance.<sup>279</sup> A lack of investment in quality and rural education and the health sector has also diminished manpower generation.<sup>280</sup>

Such ineffective policies tremendously affect the lives of the average farmers. Currently, Punjab is dealing with a high degree of agrarian distress; 449 farmers and farm laborers committed suicide in the in 2015 due to debts.<sup>281</sup> Rural farmer grievances are mounting against the state's "anti-farmer" policies.<sup>282</sup> A combination of crop failure, unemployment, and indebtedness has pushed this segment of the population to the edge, and the negative effects of drug addiction may further fuel the sense of discrimination.<sup>283</sup> A large section of this population is the same segment that did not realize benefits from the prosperity of the Green Revolution and subsequently supported the insurgency in Punjab. Politicians are failing to take note of the mounting grievances and a split between the states' poor Sikhs and a minority rich Sikh and urban Hindus that benefit from the overall consumer sector growth. These new conditions mirror the ones leading up the Khalistan insurgency.

A number of reasons explain why the state and central governments are failing to take serious action against the threat posed by drug addiction in Punjab. The primary factor is the political culture of the state that is historically inclined towards ethnic and religious platforms rather than taking an issue-based approach.

Punjab's political history has largely focused on religion and caste as keys to mobilization although the foundations for such divisions are economic as shown in the previous chapter. This narrative of discrimination against Sikhs emerged repeatedly. The Khalistan insurgency in the 1980s was an example of this narrative. While the state is

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<sup>279</sup> Sukhpal Singh, "Economic Development in Punjab," 1.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>281</sup> Press Trust of India, "Agri Crisis: Punjab Saw 449 Farmer Suicides in 2015," *Hindustan Times*, March 1, 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/agri-crisis-punjab-saw-449-farmer-suicides-in-2015/story-Qyu5NP4nYcdZketsqrVRWM.html>.

<sup>282</sup> Press Trust of India, "Farmers' Unions Hold Protest in Punjab," *The Indian Express*, September 5, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/farmers-unions-hold-protest-in-punjab/>.

<sup>283</sup> Sucha S. Gill, "Economic Distress and Farmer Suicides in Rural Punjab," *Journal of Punjab Studies* 12, no. 2 (2007): 219.

facing economic and drug concerns, political mobilization in Punjab, whether it involves Jat Sikhs or lower caste Sikhs, remains centered on religious and caste divisions. Complicating the landscape is that the affiliation between the Punjab's media and its politicians, which shapes the coverage of the issues facing the state. The current head of the Akali Dal for instance denies that Punjab is facing a serious drug issue. The danger this reality suggests lies in the fact that with increased disaffection at a social level, mobilization will occur along religious lines as it did in the 1980s.

The current political landscape in Punjab continues to lend itself towards divisions along religion and caste, especially with the rise of *deras*, religious centers headed by living gurus. Some *deras* in Punjab are as old as Sikhism itself while the more popular *deras* gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>284</sup> Sikh lower castes, who did not have any representation in SGPC and administration of holy shrines, created these *deras* to establish their own community leadership.<sup>285</sup> In 2016, such patterns continued among the Sikhs, as the Akalis introduced legislation to prevent Sahajdhari Sikhs, most of whom follow *deras*, from voting in the SPGC elections.<sup>286</sup> This exclusion prompted Hindu right-wing groups to initiate programs to “enlighten” and interact at a village level with Sahajdhari Sikhs to “return” to Hinduism.<sup>287</sup> These efforts from the right-wing Hindu groups adds to the tension in the Sikh community, which some orthodox Sikhs view as an attack on their community and a deliberate attempt to reduce their numbers.

The political machinations to gain votes further results in cementing caste and religious divides in the state. *Deras* have emerged as a competition institution against the SAD party and are increasingly gaining political influence in Punjab; six of the major

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<sup>284</sup> Amrita Chaudhry, “Over 9,000 Deras in Punjab, Some as Old as Sikh Religion Itself,” *The Indian Express*, January 28, 2012, <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/over-9-000-deras-in-punjab-some-as-old-as-sikh-religion-itself/>.

<sup>285</sup> Ravi Kaushal, “Punjab Assembly Elections 2017: Why Deras May Decide the Fate of Assembly Elections in Punjab,” *India.com*, January 27, 2017, <http://www.india.com/news/india/punjab-assembly-elections-2017-why-deras-could-turn-elections-in-punjab-1787700/>.

<sup>286</sup> Divya Goyal, “Punjab ‘ghar Wapsi’: Hindu Groups Woo Sehajdhari Sikhs,” *The Indian Express*, March 28, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/punjab-ghar-wapsi-hindu-groups-woo-sehajdhari-sikhs/>.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

deras have influence in approximately 57 of the 117 constituencies in the state.<sup>288</sup> The Akali Dal's attempt to garner support from these centers is causing a debate among orthodox Sikh supporters, who view the deras as a threat to their religion and distinct identity. They also continue to discriminate against lower caste Sikhs who patronage these deras. The SAD party's decreasing support among the orthodox Sikhs is compelling the party to diversify its support base, which is surprising because some of these deras were at the heart of conflict between orthodox Sikhs and lower caste Sikh communities in the 1980s. Majority of the orthodox Sikhs were infuriated when the Akal Takht, whose chief is appointed and controlled by the Akalis, pardoned a dera leader in 2015 accused of blasphemy; caving to immense public pressure, the Akal Takht annulled the pardon a month later.<sup>289</sup> Sikhs view this relationship between the Akalis and the deras as compromising the Sikh identity for political gains.

Meanwhile, the Congress party and the Aam Aadami Party, competing political parties, are also wooing these deras for votes.<sup>290</sup> The deras demonstrated their political influence in Punjab's 2007 elections when Congress was able to win majority of the votes in the agricultural belt of Punjab by winning the support of Dera Sacha Sauda in Malwa typically controlled by the Akali Dal.<sup>291</sup> Political parties of all affiliations, in their attempts to gain political favor in the deras, are attempting to elevate the status of the lower caste Sikhs. This process further creates religious and caste divisions between orthodox Sikhs and dera followers, which is a condition that emerged prior to the Khalistan insurgency. Yet, it is the Akali's political approach that is sidelining real grievances that may provide the opportunity for more radical organizations to gain support in the state.

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<sup>288</sup> Pramod Kumar, "Punjab Polls: Doles, Deras and Drugs," *Tribune India News Service*, January 28, 2017, <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/punjab-polls-doles-deras-and-drugs/355714.html>.

<sup>289</sup> Press Trust of India, "Sikh Leaders Hail Revocation of Pardon to Dera Sacha Sauda Chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim," *The Economic Times*, October 16, 2015, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/sikh-leaders-hail-revocation-of-pardon-to-dera-sacha-sauda-chief-gurmeet-ram-rahim/articleshow/49415335.cms>.

<sup>290</sup> Kaushal, "Punjab Assembly Elections 2017."

<sup>291</sup> Ajoy Ashirwad Mahaprashasta, "Dalit Issues Take Centre Stage in Punjab, But Jat Sikhs Continue to Dominate Political Dialogue," *The Wire*, January 31, 2017, <https://thewire.in/104404/dalit-issues-take-centre-stage-in-punjab-but-jat-sikhs-continue-to-dominate-political-dialogue/>.

The SAD leadership's inadequate response to address the drug menace, widespread corruption, and the party's massive control and influence over Punjab's governance is causing problems among the Sikhs. Punjab's Deputy Chief Minister, Sukhbir Badal has downplayed the number of drug users in the state, and instead blamed the Congress Party for "engineering a conspiracy to defame brave Punjabis" and tarnishing Punjab's image.<sup>292</sup> This approach allowed the Aam Aadami Party, representing the average citizen, to gain a following in the state by promising to rid the state of drugs during the 2014 elections in state where, as a newcomer, the party won "four out of the state's 13 Lok Sabha [Indian Parliament] seats."<sup>293</sup> The party's entry also compelled the Congress Party to use drug addiction as a major issue, which promised to rid the state of the drug menace in just four weeks.<sup>294</sup> Conversely, the SAD party, in power since 2007, deflected attention and responsibility, and has denied reports of widespread drug addiction in Punjab. Instead, it blames the media for trying to malign the state's reputation. The party's leadership went so far as to request the censor of a movie aiming to depict the drug menace in Punjab.<sup>295</sup> Furthermore, the Akali Dal's apathy towards the problem is cemented by the fact that it has failed to commission a single survey to determine the extent of the drug problem in the state. This attitude only strengthens the public's opinion that the state government, with the support of its alliance with the Hindu BJP party, is purposely neglecting the Sikh rural population that is affected by the drug epidemic.

Under mounting public pressure to address the drug trade leading up to 2017 elections, and as a public relations tactic, the SAD-BJP government placed a heavy

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<sup>292</sup> Sarwan Singh, "Attention, Dy CM Badal: The Drug Epidemic in Punjab Is Not a Rahul Gandhi Conspiracy," *Firstpost*, January 6, 2015, <http://www.firstpost.com/india/attention-dy-cm-badal-drug-epidemic-punjab-rahul-gandhi-conspiracy-2031725.html>.

<sup>293</sup> Ashutosh Kumar, "Politics As Unusual," *The Indian Express*, January 30, 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/punjab-elections-amarinder-singh-sidhu-aap-parkash-singh-badal-akali-dal-4497982/>.

<sup>294</sup> "Drugs on Agenda: Manmohan Releases Congress' Punjab Manifesto," *The Quint*, January 9, 2017, <https://www.thequint.com/politics/2017/01/09/former-pm-manmohan-singh-punjab-congress-manifesto-release-for-elections-2017-assembly-polls-amarinder-singh>.

<sup>295</sup> Aarish Chhabra, "Udta Punjab: Facts, Figures and Falsehoods of State's Drug Problem," *Hindustan Times*, June 8, 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/punjab-s-drug-problem-in-5-steps-facts-figures-falsehoods-and-worse/story-59GM9OuUwkB6RgdOxYiCHM.html>.

emphasis on numbers. They wanted to increase the number of drug seizures and arrests to show “they were doing something without disturbing the drug economy.”<sup>296</sup> These efforts focused on low-level peddlers and drug addicts rather than the high-level officials involved in the drug business. The SAD government also blames the Border Security Force (BSF) for allowing the drug trade to occur easily between the borders.<sup>297</sup> Since the BSF is under central control, it is easy to blame the center’s inability to thwart the drug trade. Furthermore, the state and center governments also blame Pakistan for purposely using drugs to destabilize Punjab, which is a weak strategy, as Pakistan denies any such charges and also to some extent faces a drug epidemic of its own.<sup>298</sup>

Another reason for the lack of attention to the drug problem is due to some evidence that suggests that some politicians benefit from it. In 2013, an arrest of a former police officer illustrated the politician-drug nexus, and its influence on curtailing the fight against the drug menace in Punjab. In an article published by Rajeev Khanna, he highlights the important factors of the case.

In 2013, former DSP [Deputy Superintendent of Police] Jagdish Singh Bhola, accused of running a major synthetic drug racket, had confessed to funding politicians during the last assembly election. He had named the minister Bikram Singh Majithia as a “key mastermind” of the state’s drug trade. Majithia is the brother of Harsimrat Kaur Badal, the daughter-in-law of Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal and union minister for food processing. Majithia had dismissed the allegations as an attempt to malign him. The same year, Maninder Singh Aulakh alias Bittu, a leader of the ruling Akali Dal leader, and Jagjit Singh Chahal, a businessman, were arrested for drug smuggling. Aulakh reportedly told his interrogators that he would use government vehicles for transporting drugs. But the most

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<sup>296</sup> Mansi Choksi, “Heroin Trafficking from Pakistan Into India Is Crippling an Entire Generation,” *VICE News*, accessed February 12, 2017, <https://news.vice.com/article/heroin-trafficking-from-pakistan-into-india-is-crippling-an-entire-generation>.

<sup>297</sup> Abishek Bhalla, “How Pakistan’s Dealers Drugged Punjab: BSF Report Says Smugglers in Border Villages Are Paid to ‘Conceal and Clear’ Heroin Consignments,” January 8, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2902530/How-Pakistan-drugged-Punjab-BSF-report-says-smugglers-border-villages-paid-conceal-clear-heroin-consignments.html>.

<sup>298</sup> See for example, Yudhvira Rana, “Pakistani Smugglers Try Innovative Ways to Push Narcotics into India [India],” *The Times of India (Online)*, February 15, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/1655745142/citation/26DA00C0BA494DFFPQ/39>; Choksi, “Heroin Trafficking from Pakistan Into India Is Crippling an Entire Generation”; Bhalla, “How Pakistan’s Dealers Drugged Punjab: BSF Report Says Smugglers in Border Villages Are Paid to ‘Conceal and Clear’ Heroin Consignments.”

astonishing is the practice of border pickets being “sold.” The smugglers allegedly pay hefty amounts to police and BSF personnel manning the pickets to look the other way while they move drugs across the border.<sup>299</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Akalis rejected these allegations. Even though the extent of a politician’s involvement is difficult to establish, according to Dr. Pramod Kumar, Director of the Institute of Development and Communication (IDC), it is happening “across parties and at all levels.”<sup>300</sup> Kumar’s colleague, Dr. P.S. Verma agrees that the drug trade would not flourish without political patronage.<sup>301</sup> An IDC report in 2008 connected drug trade-politician nexus to the police as well. According to the report, the relationship was so strong that police officers’ posts were “routed through some big names in the drug business.”<sup>302</sup> The report also referred to a Punjab minister and several high-ranking Punjab Police officers as personnel “who are more aggressive drug dealers than the conventional traders.”<sup>303</sup> With a close relationship with drug smugglers and politicians, it is no surprise that the drug menace is being down played by both the SAD party and the BJP. Public’s perception that the ruling SAD party is supported by the center’s BJP party in destroying Punjab’s Sikh youth combined with historical memories of discrimination is a dangerous combination for this critical state.

The state and center governments’ inaction to curb the growing drug addiction is a threat to Punjab’s stability. Religious and caste narratives in Punjab politics are a dangerous current and historical variable that overshadow the declining economy, unemployment, and the growing drug problem. Sikhs have a history of viewing such issues as discrimination against them. The state and central authorities’ negligence in this matter is detrimental. Sociologist Ranvinder Singh Sandhu, argues that the reason drugs keep “coming back at the state government is because of its refusal to address the

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<sup>299</sup> Khanna, “Toxic Trail.”

<sup>300</sup> Varinder Bhatia, Man Aman Singh Chhina, and Sanjeev Verma, “Why Every Political Party in Punjab Loves a Drug Addict,” *The Indian Express*, July 1, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/why-every-political-party-in-punjab-loves-a-drug-addict-2846568/>.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.



prevalence continuing instead to treat it as a political issue.”<sup>304</sup> For their own benefits, politicians across party lines refuse to focus on drug demand reduction, or addressing underlying economic conditions leading to drug use. Furthermore, instead of addressing the problem, the blame game between the state, center, and Pakistan over the drug epidemic has become the central issue among politicians and the one primarily reported by the media. The media is the one avenue used to educate and inform the public. However, in India and especially in Punjab, the media, much like most other government functions, is controlled by politicians. For instance, *Ajit*, Punjab’s main newspaper is affiliated with the Akali Dal and *Punjab Kesari* is associated with the Hindu Punjabis.<sup>305</sup> Such links deprive the public of the facts they need to hold officials accountable as the media becomes a representation of particular political segment.

### **C. PUNJAB’S RISING DRUG ADDICTION AND DECLINING ECONOMY: IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL STABILITY**

Punjab currently faces economic and social issues that underlie the drug menace facing the state. These underlying conditions are similar to the ones faced by the state in the 1970s, which then led to an insurgency in the 1980s. Unequal distribution of the Green Revolution leading to cleavages in different classes of Jat Sikhs enabled Bhindranwale to place political pressures on the Akali Dal in an agitation against the central government.<sup>306</sup> Bhindranwale attracted support mainly from woman and children who witnessed the males in the household succumb to alcohol and drug addiction.<sup>307</sup> Furthermore, rural Sikhs supported the cause because they wanted to counter the impacts of “degenerative forms of capitalist modernization,” which they viewed as affecting the Sikh way of life and an attack on their distinct identity.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Anshu N. Chatterjee, “Inequalities in the Public Sphere: Emergence of Community Television in India,” *Asian Ethnicity* 13, no. 3 (2012): 247.

<sup>306</sup> Telford, “The Political Economy of Punjab,” 970.

<sup>307</sup> Singh and Purewal, “The Resurgence of Bhindranwale’s Image in Contemporary Punjab,” 136.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 135.

For Punjab, a number of other factors and recent events threaten to come together to fan similar embers of discontent. The Akali Dal party has slowly transformed into a family-run business absent any political opposition.<sup>309</sup> The Akali Dal's dismal agricultural policies have resulted in large number rural Jat farmers committing suicide, and a majority suffocating under large amounts of debt. The farmer associations have portrayed the SAD party, which claims to be the champion for farmers, as an anti-farmer party. The party's inability to provide demanded compensation to farmers when a pest destroyed their genetically modified crops resulted in widespread agitations targeted at the government.<sup>310</sup> Furthermore, recent events highlighting the inability of the police to hold accountable individuals responsible for several deaths, allegedly resulting from accidents involving buses owned by the Badals' transportation companies, has left a majority of the population angry and frustrated.<sup>311</sup>

The collective perception is that not only the Badals but their minions are also above the law.<sup>312</sup> Relating to sectarian politics, the Akali Dal failed to bring to justice individuals accused of desecrating the Guru Granth Sahib at several places, instead, they deflected the blame at Pakistan for trying to cause communal tensions in the state.<sup>313</sup> The administration further angered Sikhs by pardoning Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, leader of the Dera Sacha Sauda, charged with blasphemy in 2007.<sup>314</sup> Sikhs viewed the pardoning as a political ploy by the Akali Dal to gain votes in the upcoming elections at the expense of Sikh identity. These two events—pardoning of Gurmeet Singh and the desecration of Granth Sahib—were fused together in the public eye, and serve to further divide the Sikh population in the state. For the first time, temporal control also became an issue between

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<sup>309</sup> Mukhopadhyay, "Punjab Angry with Drug Abuse, Corruption, Lack of Governance and Misplaced Agricultural Policies."

<sup>310</sup> Hindustan Times Correspondents, "Punjab Farmers Continue 'rail Roko' Agitation on Third Day," *Hindustan Times*, October 9, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/punjab-farmers-continue-rail-roko-agitation-on-third-day/story-iJHURXI5Tbw7wiFgg0ZaIP.html>.

<sup>311</sup> Arun Sharma, "Villagers Allege Inaction, Hit out at Badals," *The Tribune*, July 10, 2015, <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/villagers-allege-inaction-hit-out-at-badals/104713.html>.

<sup>312</sup> Mukhopadhyay, "Punjab Angry with Drug Abuse, Corruption, Lack of Governance and Misplaced Agricultural Policies."

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

the *Panj Pyare*, “the chosen five who initiate Sikhs into the Khalsa Panth,” and SGPC, the temporal authority controlled by the Akali Dal and historically used to garner Sikh votes.<sup>315</sup> The SGPC executive committee suspended four of the five members for “outstepping their jurisdiction” when the Panj Pyare disagreed with the decision to pardon Gurmeet Singh.<sup>316</sup> These tensions are adding to Sikh grievances against the ruling party in the state. To rally supporters, Bhindranwale successfully highlighted injustices, perceived or otherwise, against the Sikhs by the ruling Congress party. The Akali approach to politics in Punjab may soon allow the entry of another charismatic leader promising to secure not only the Sikh identity, but also to bring prosperity back to Punjab. Drug epidemic and its routes from Pakistan add to the vulnerabilities the state currently faces. In fact, the current setting in which the public is increasingly aware of the issue without resolution adds to the problem as it seeks control of the setting.

Sikhs have not forgotten the Operation Blue Star and the aftermath in Delhi during the anti-Sikh riots, justice for which many Sikhs are still awaiting today. These sentiments together with unresolved demands laid out in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, current plight of rural farmers in Punjab, the main engine powering its economy, lack of economic development, a fear of losing the Sikh identity, compounded by drug addiction and a real possibility of losing an entire generation to drugs are the perfect storm Punjab has seen before. With the right trigger, perhaps from external actors or through sustained negligence on the part of state or central governments, the current environment in Punjab is set to pose a real threat to stability in the region.

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Sikh Siyasat Bureau, “Akali Takhat Panj Pyare Dismissed by SGPC Executive,” *Sikh Siyasat News*, January 1, 2016, <http://sikhsiyasat.net/2016/01/01/akal-takhat-panj-pyare-sacked-by-sgpc-executive/>.

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## **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This thesis examined the current social and political landscape in the Indian state of Punjab and the role drug trafficking and addiction are playing in shaping the state's environment. The main objective was to uncover the critical role drugs are playing in creating an environment that facilitates an opening for external elements or domestic extremists to take advantage of current economic grievances by conflating them with religious discrimination to destabilize the region. To determine this link, the thesis analyzed the conditions leading up to the Khalistan insurgency of the 1980s in order to illustrate the similarities between that period and the current socio-economic conditions in Punjab. Is the environment conducive for another insurgency or mass mobilization? The findings are summarized in subsequent sections that show 1) the role Punjab plays in ensuring India's security, 2) the conditions that led to the Khalistan insurgency and how the Indian government responded, 3) the current socio-economic conditions that are similar to the setting that led up to the Khalistan insurgency, 4) a case study illustrating Mexico's drug problems and lessons it provides for Punjab to address the drug epidemic, 5) driving factors of instability in Punjab and finally, 6) policy recommendations for the state and central governments.

### **A. WHY PUNJAB MATTERS FOR INDIA'S SECURITY**

Punjab is a crucially important state in the Indian union and potential unrest in the state has tremendous implications not only for India, but also for regional stability in South Asia. Punjab is a strategically located state sharing its borders with Pakistan and the state of Jammu and Kashmir. India and Pakistan have fought four wars since their independence, while in Kashmir, tensions between a robust separatist movement and the central government are at an all-time high. The Green Revolution helped Punjab gain its title as India's breadbasket as it provides India with food reserves the nation relies on for its food security. Furthermore, Punjab has historically provided more than its share of recruits to the Indian military, thereby providing military security for the nation. These factors combined with Punjab's violent and prolonged period of insurgency that lasted from the late 1970s to

the early 1990s, highlight the importance of Punjab's stability to India and the surrounding region.

During the insurgency, the state became the setting for a protracted battle between the central government and a strong Khalistan separatist movement led by Sikh extremists, covertly supported by Pakistan. With a history of tense relations between the two nations, elements in Pakistan, with the aid of Indian-based criminal syndicates, were able to support and sustain the insurgency in Punjab, also highlighting its strategic location.<sup>317</sup> Punjab slowly recovered from the insurgency's aftermath, but a feeling of resentment against the central government's heavy-handed tactics used to end the insurgency is still alive among the Sikh population at home and the large Sikh diaspora.

Punjab's political institutions also continue to harbor a political setting in which political campaigns appeal to pre-existing religious and ethnic divides no matter what the real concerns are. In this setting, the alarming increase in drug use and addiction rates during an economic declining period is a threat to regional stability in this important region, enhancing an environment conducive to another insurgency or anti-center mass mobilization. The inadequate, if at all visible, response from the state and central governments is only adding to the resentment and perceived discrimination that Sikhs feel is targeted at destroying their minority religion and distinct identity. Punjab's strategic location, relative economic decline, a historical insurgency, and the growing drug problem create a security intensive environment which has implications for rest of India and surrounding regions. Punjab's vulnerability to external influence increases the chances of instability and highlights the urgency for government action to address current grievances in the state. A review of conditions that led to the Khalistan insurgency in the 1970s is useful to compare with the current landscape in Punjab, and to highlight similarities suggesting a possibility of renewed tensions in the state.

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<sup>317</sup> Clarke, "D-Company," 267.

## **B. THE KHALISTAN INSURGENCY AND THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE**

The Khalistan insurgency, starting in the late 1970s and ending in the early 1990s, was a drawn out battle between the Indian government and Sikh separatist who aimed to turn Punjab into an independent Sikh nation. At its core, the insurgency's rise was facilitated by the changing economic and political landscape in Punjab. India's quest to address its food security issues in the 1950s led it to invest in new agricultural technologies targeting fertile regions in the country. Punjab's access to a reliable water supply through its five rivers enabled the state to thrive from the agricultural revolution. The tremendous increase in wheat and rice production allowed Punjab to play a crucial role in meeting India's food requirements and stake its claim as the country's breadbasket.

The structural changes that accompanied the Green Revolution expanded wealth in already well-off Jat communities and urban Hindu populations, but also increased disparities between them and poorer rural Jat Sikhs as shown in Chapter II. These changes directed attention to the central government's unfair policies, resulting in the reaffirmation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR) in 1973. The newfound wealth also made education accessible to rural Sikhs, but the failure of the state government to create industries capable of providing jobs to the youth seeking to advance their socio-economic status disenfranchised a substantial segment of the population. Finally, the Green Revolution ushered in social changes affecting especially the rural male population who were the primary breadwinners of many households. They became addicted to drugs, increased alcohol consumption, and took enjoyment in lewd music and even led to increased domestic violence against women. These negative outcomes were in direct contrast to the tenets of Sikhism, and consequently, the religion provided a source of corrective values. Bhindranwale, the insurgency's charismatic leader, was able to use his crusade against these degenerative forces to gain support and place pressure on the ruling political party to join him in his cause. Additionally, Sikh extremists successfully merged religious and linguistic grievances with political and economic grievances to gain Sikh support. The central government's harsh response to crush the insurgency further served to

disenfranchise moderate Sikhs and made it possible for the insurgency to become part of the Sikh identity and collective memory of the community.

The central government used overwhelming force in order to put an end to the violent Khalistan insurgency and restore law and order in Punjab. These tactics targeted Sikhs, and in the process, thousands of Sikhs were killed, many more illegally detained, and an unknown number disappeared without cause. The insurgency's defining moment came when the Indian Army entered the Golden Temple to flush out Sikh extremists. In the operation, the most sacred Sikh place of worship was severely damaged and hundreds of innocent pilgrims died in the crossfire between the army and the militants entrenched in the temple. This single action cemented Sikhs' belief that the government was out to destroy their religion and distinct identity. The communal violence targeting Sikhs following Indira Gandhi's assassination and the inadequate response by the central government to hold accountable those responsible for instigating the violence further focused the spotlight onto the Sikhs' minority status in India. However, the central government's win over the insurgency left core grievances, as outlined in the ASR, unaddressed. More critically, rather than a reconciliatory approach, the modern Sikh identity and collective memory of the community is shaped by a sense of being beneficiaries of discriminatory practices implemented by the central government and memories of atrocities committed against their minority population. This perspective is prescient given the similarities between Punjab's current landscape and the one leading up to the Khalistan insurgency. Many Sikhs continue to feel that neglect by the center regarding their concerns lies in religious differences.

### **C. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN INSURGENCY AND PUNJAB'S CURRENT LANDSCAPE**

As illustrated in Chapter III, Punjab's current political economy is in a state of disarray and mirrors conditions leading up to the separatist insurgency. The drug epidemic adds to the economic decline by impacting the youth who are the state's future workers and entrepreneurs. At the same time, drug trafficking provides networks for potential radicals, especially given its borders with Pakistan, which has harbored Sikh radicals the past. The tense relationship between India and Pakistan maintains that potential.



The state's aggregate economic indicators during the 1980s insurgency period placed Punjab towards the top or at least in the same category as other rich states in India, but vast differences in income generation were present between rural and urban populations. Currently, the state's declining economy compared to other Indian states and an absence of hope for a brighter future has divided the population once again. The small rural farmer is once again the most impacted by the state's over-reliance on agriculture and its government's dismal record of investing in developing other industries. The rising drug use and addiction among the youth contributes to the declining economy and discontent among the Sikh population. Instead of this segment becoming productive contributors to the economy, they turn to drugs absent any employment opportunities.

The drug problem also threatens destabilizing social changes that Punjab has witnessed before. Rural families are heavily impacted by the drugs as the primary wage earners yield to addiction, significantly decreasing a household's ability to make ends meet. Drug addiction is also negatively impacting cultural and Sikh ethical values through its degenerative forces, a trend that Sikh extremist leader Bhindranwale used to mobilize his support. Furthermore, politicians continue to mobilize similar identity based techniques that led to the insurgency in Punjab.

Currently, the Sikh political institutions in Punjab are controlled by a single family, the Badals, viewed by majority of the population in the state as self-serving, skillful in disregarding grievances, and a puppet government for the center, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). There are also reports of high-ranking government officials involved in the drug trade, which is viewed by Sikhs in Punjab as a threat to their community that is difficult to resolve as the ruling Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) party is backed by the center, led by the BJP.<sup>318</sup> This perception is reinforced by several incidences including the SAD party pardoning Gurmeet Ram Rahim, accused of blasphemy, the party's reluctance to bring to justice people responsible for desecrating the Guru Granth Sahib,

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<sup>318</sup> Punjab Legislative Elections were held on 4 February 2017 and votes were counted on 11 March 2017. The INC replaced the ruling BJP-SAD alliance by winning 77 of the 117 legislative seats; the incumbent came in third with 18 total seats. The AAM party took second place with 20 seats. For more information, see, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/elections/assembly-elections/punjab/news/punjab-assembly-elections-2017-results-day-all-you-need-to-know/articleshow/57585944.cms>

and asserting the party's temporal authority to undercut religious figures within the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC).

To further create wedges between the population in Punjab, during the current state elections, politicians from the three main contending parties have invoked the time-honored tradition of mobilizing people along religious and ethnic lines. Sikhs especially view the SAD party's pursuit for political gains of sects considered as being heretical by orthodox Sikhs as betraying their pledge to protect the Sikh faith. The sidelining of Sikh grievances by the SAD party was partly the platform that enabled Bhindranwale to rise to power, and could facilitate another such leader or extremist elements to, once again, gain popular support to destabilize the state. The similarities between the current situation in Punjab and the insurgency period with the added danger of mounting drug trafficking and addiction suggests consequences for stability in the region.

The striking similarity between the current landscape in Punjab and the one leading up the Khalistan insurgency cannot be overlooked. In a setting that continues to rely on political mobilization through identity symbols, economic and social instability is easily connected to charges of discrimination. The rural Sikh population views the lack of effort, both on behalf of the state and the central governments, to curb the drug problem as continued discrimination against their community in India. Although the population's underlying reasons for eradicating the drug epidemic are economic, turning these grievances into a case for religious discrimination may not be too difficult for elements willing to once again demand a separate Sikh nation. For these reasons, the government's inability or disinterest in curbing the drug trade may lead to instability in Punjab, and consequently have regional implication for stability in South Asia. The case of Mexico provides some insight into how the drug trade, if left unaddressed, can flourish and develop to pose a significant threat to governments and economic aspirations for developing nations.

#### **D. THE CASE OF MEXICO: DRUG NETWORK CHALLENGES AND LESSONS FOR PUNJAB**

Mexico's war on drugs is a prime example of how things can spiral out of control if the drug trade is not addressed using a suitable approach in a timely fashion. Mexico's experience with fighting the drug trade also highlights facilitating factors for the drug trade, such as corruption, which Punjab also faces. Lessons from Mexico suggest that a "war on drugs" should entail a concerted effort of reducing drug demand, fighting corruption, and holding politicians accountable, rather than a focus on prosecuting low-level peddlers and users.

The Mexican government is entrenched in a long and bloody war against drugs and drug cartels, which resulted in hundreds of thousands deaths and numerous disappearances. The Mexican government estimates that between 2007–2014 "more than 164,000 people were victims of homicide," and some 26,000 people remain missing since 2007<sup>319</sup>; estimates by national newspapers, *Reforma* and *Milenio*, attribute between 34 and 42 percent of these deaths to the drug war.<sup>320</sup> Both government and criminal forces are accused of committing atrocities against innocent persons and committing human rights violations in the country.<sup>321</sup> The war on drugs diverts precious resources from developing industries and creating employment opportunities, which impacts Mexico's economy. The Institute for Economics and Peace estimates that "the economic cost of violence, including the opportunity cost" at \$134 billion, constituting about 13 percent of Mexico's GDP; this translates to roughly "two months of wages for the average Mexican worker."<sup>322</sup> Meanwhile, governmental spending to contain the violence since 2007 has risen to a staggering twelve percent per year, much higher than spending on education at

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<sup>319</sup> Jason M. Breslow, "The Staggering Death Toll of Mexico's Drug War," *Frontline (PBS)*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-staggering-death-toll-of-mexicos-drug-war/>.

<sup>320</sup> Kimberly Heinle, Cory Molzahn, and David A. Shirk, "2015 Drug Violence in Mexico," Justice in Mexico Project (San Diego: University of San Diego, April 2015), <https://justiceinmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2015-Drug-Violence-in-Mexico-final.pdf>.

<sup>321</sup> Helen Redmond, "The Political Economy of Mexico's Drug War," *International Socialist Review*, no. 90 (July 2013), <http://isreview.org/issue/90/political-economy-mexicos-drug-war>.

<sup>322</sup> "Mexico Peace Index 2016: Mapping the Evolution of Peace and Its Drivers" (Mexico City: Institute for Economic and Peace), 3, accessed February 27, 2017, [http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Mexico-Peace-Index-2016\\_English.pdf](http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Mexico-Peace-Index-2016_English.pdf).

seven percent and average government spending increase of nine percent per year.<sup>323</sup> Furthermore, a declining conviction rate for homicide rates since 2007 and overcrowded prisons also point to “an overstretched judicial system” unable to keep up with the overwhelming violence.<sup>324</sup> Maria Celio Toro, a Mexican scholar, noted that the “Mexican attorney general’s office has basically become an antidrug law enforcement agency,” leaving little time to address everyday judicial needs of the people.<sup>325</sup> A number of factors molded Mexico’s response to the growing drug trade in the country, but none is more crucial than the involvement in the drug trade by those entrusted to protect the public from the menace; similar allegations are also made against police and politicians in Punjab.

The drug trade in Mexico occurs because authorities there allow it, and because the supply from Mexico meets the growing demand for drugs in the United States. Helen Redmond points to the “entrenched layer of federal, state, and local government and law enforcement officials” who facilitate the drug trade because they profit from and depend on “cartel cash bribes, known as the ‘corruption tax.’”<sup>326</sup> Bribes of \$1 billion per year account for the corruption tax paid to the municipal police alone, while cocaine traffickers pay about \$500 million per year in bribes to keep their business running.<sup>327</sup> With such sheer amounts of money that circulates in the drug trade, even well-intentioned personnel can get caught up in corruption rings to facilitate the drug trade.<sup>328</sup> There are numerous examples of involvement in the drug trade of senior politicians, police officers, judges, military personnel, and even Customs and Border Patrol officers responsible for protecting the US-Mexico border.<sup>329</sup> Corruption’s criticality in permitting the drug trade to function is echoed by Drug Enforcement Administration’s top fifty informants when

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>325</sup> María Celia Toro, *Mexico’s “War” on Drugs: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 58, quoted in Peter Andreas, “The Political Economy of Narco-Corruption in Mexico,” *Current History* 97 (April 1, 1998): 161.

<sup>326</sup> Redmond, “The Political Economy of Mexico’s Drug War.”

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> For illustrative examples, see, Andreas, “The Political Economy of Narco-Corruption in Mexico.”

<sup>329</sup> For illustrative examples, see, Ibid.

they said that “the most important factor for running a drug business” was corruption.<sup>330</sup> Consequently, Mexican “states with the highest levels of violence also have the highest levels of perceptions of corruption, particularly among the police.”<sup>331</sup> Furthermore, with increasing drug-demand in the US, routes through Mexico provide a viable method to meet the demand. Drug cartels will meet this demand one way or another, it just so happens that widespread corruption in Mexico provides the cartels with an easy mechanism to meet the demand. While corruption certainly facilitates the drug trade, a declining economy and lack of development also pushes people into the drug trade. Again, along with corruption, Punjab also confronts a declining economy and lack of industrial development.

The combined effects of a declining economy and the presence of drug trafficking organizations is a dangerous combination that limits a government’s efforts to improve the economic situation of its people. Drug trafficking organizations make the government’s task more difficult by creating employment opportunities for people in rural areas and through this process, compel them to become dependent on the drug trade for their livelihood. International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) dismisses the notion that “income generated from the illicit drug industry automatically fosters economic development” due to lack of proof.<sup>332</sup> However, there is evidence that drug trade has some positive impacts in developing “small and less diversified rural communities” where drug money is sometimes the only source of income, employment, and investment.<sup>333</sup> Absent other employment opportunities, drug cartels can provide incomes for rural populations and therefore, undermine efforts for legitimate and safe economic growth. The drug business in Mexico directly employs between 200,000-300,000 people who earn a living by growing drug crops, while the number increases considerably when jobs such as “transportation, security, banking, and communication” supported by the

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<sup>330</sup> Redmond, “The Political Economy of Mexico’s Drug War.”

<sup>331</sup> “Mexico Peace Index 2016: Mapping the Evolution of Peace and Its Drivers,” 5.

<sup>332</sup> United Nations, *International Narcotics Control Board Annual Report - 2002*, 4.

<sup>333</sup> Viridiana Rios, “Evaluating the Economic Impact of Mexico’s Drug Trafficking Industry (Working Paper),” 2008, 1, <http://scholar.harvard.edu/vrios/publications/evaluating-economic-impact-mexicos-drug-trafficking-industry>.

drug trade are factored in.<sup>334</sup> The drug economy is especially pronounced when the formal economy fails to provide adequate wages and employment to help make ends meet.<sup>335</sup> However, the drug trade also results in drug addiction and destruction of social structures. This dynamic suggests the imperative for governments to provide economic opportunities for its people or else risk contributing to the drug trade by diverting human capital to benefit organized crime. To prevent this reliance on drug cartels for employment, the Mexican government started a war on drugs in 2006, but the surprising part is that Mexico's war on drugs has actually been, as Redmond describes it, "a grisly failure."<sup>336</sup> A look at how this war on drugs has backfired has implications for Punjab's approach towards the drug problem.

The drug war in Mexico focused entirely on defeating organized crime and the drug traffickers rather than addressing "pervasive poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality" that allow the drug trade to survive.<sup>337</sup> Andreas asserts that the drug trade has actually thrived since Mexico intensified its efforts to control the drug trade.<sup>338</sup> This transpired because the level of corruption "often depend[s] on the intensity of the drug enforcement effort[s]."<sup>339</sup> The requirement for corrupt government officials or those charged with enforcing laws increases with increased pressure on drug cartels.<sup>340</sup> Gianluca Fiorentini and Sam Peltzman generalized this notion by stating that increased enforcement creates "incentives to invest in corruption and manipulation of the deterrence agencies themselves."<sup>341</sup> This trend also creates fissures and results in violence between those genuinely trying to go after the criminals and those in the

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<sup>334</sup> Andreas, "The Political Economy of Narco-Corruption in Mexico," 160.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Redmond, "The Political Economy of Mexico's Drug War."

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Andreas, "The Political Economy of Narco-Corruption in Mexico," 161.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Gianluca Fiorentini and Sam Peltzman, *The Economics of Organised Crime* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 27, quoted in Ibid.

government benefiting from the drug trade through bribes.<sup>342</sup> Those who try to expose politicians or other powerful people involved in the drug trade can be assassinated.<sup>343</sup> Despite good intentions, the war on drugs has essentially encouraged corruption, which facilitates the drug trade. Mexico provides a prime example of why a war on drugs as implemented in Mexico may not be the correct approach in Punjab because the state faces similar issues to ones in Mexico. A similar approach to address the drug menace in Punjab may also lead to increased corruption within law enforcement and political organizations that can bolster the drug trade and facilitate external elements' entry into Punjab.

#### **E. DRIVING FACTORS OF INSTABILITY IN PUNJAB**

Punjab's setting is unique, therefore, lessons from Mexico need to be understood in the context of Punjab's history. A rising drug trade and its impacts to an already declining economy, high levels of corruption, and a history of an insurgency supported by Pakistan all pose a unique threat to Punjab's stability. Punjab has a declining economy, especially in rural areas, with little investment for development, and the state also faces high levels of corruption. There are accusations of politician involvement in the drug trade; the Border Security Force (BSF) and Punjab police are also implicated in facilitating the drug trade, and little is being done to reduce drug demand. Unlike Mexico, who has a friendly neighbor, for India, elements seeking to destabilize Punjab reside within Pakistan. The presence of extremist elements close to its border magnifies the drug-crime nexus for Punjab and further increases chances of instability in the state. If left unaddressed, the drug problem in Punjab may facilitate conditions prime for external sources or extremist elements within the state to appeal to grievances to gain support and through this process, present a genuine challenge for the state and central governments. The Indian and Punjab governments can undertake initiatives now to prevent such challenges from arising in the first place. The recent election of Indian National Congress party in Punjab may provide the opportunity for it to deliver on its campaign promise to

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<sup>342</sup> Redmond, "The Political Economy of Mexico's Drug War."

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

rid the state of the drug menace, but it is unclear whether the party will be able to bypass identity politics. If the Congress party fails to address the drug problem then the people may not look for a political solution, but perhaps be more than willing to support extremist ideology. This new development further highlights the need for immediate action to address the core grievances in Punjab.

## **F. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

This thesis illustrated Punjab's importance to India and its role in maintaining regional stability in a number of ways. To maintain this stability, the central and state governments need to understand the devastating impacts the growing drug problem may pose in the region. Bhindranwale's rise to power was facilitated by the state government's lack of effort to address growing grievances in the state, and through the process, Punjab's politicians were forced to join his cause. If the current politicians want to stay in power, they need to put forth a genuine effort to address the growing drug problem rather than to deflect responsibility. In a quest to hold onto power, the SAD party continued to forgo opportunities to appease its constituency through concerted efforts to grow the economy and address the drug epidemic, and the people held them accountable by voting for INC.

The political elite need to take seriously the allegations of the politician-drug nexus and dedicate energy and resources to thwart corruption that is destroying the state's youth. Learning from Mexico, the state should concentrate on reducing drug demand and fighting corruption, rather than getting entangled in a war on drugs and focusing on conviction rates for drug users. The state government must realize that addressing core economic grievances and providing employment to the educated youth will reduce drug demand and at the same time provide a boost to the economy. To meet this goal, the government needs to shift away from focusing its energy on the traditional agriculture sector towards developing non-agricultural industries.

Some economists suggest that universal subsidies be replaced in favor of targeted ones with the aim of building capabilities in deprived sections of society.<sup>344</sup> Lakhwinder

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<sup>344</sup> "Rejuvenation of Punjab Economy: A Policy Document," 1–2.



Singh points to the need to transition to agro-processing and high value crops “with a focus on skilled labour-intensive and knowledge-based industries” as catalysts for positive change.<sup>345</sup> Additionally, due to the negative impacts associated with agriculture, mainly “deteriorating groundwater quality, depleting soil fertility, growing incidents of pests and pesticide residues in various food products and environment pollution,” G.S. Romana makes a case for organic farming as a substitute for traditional methods.<sup>346</sup> To help propel Punjab from an agriculture-based economy to an industrial economy, the state should increase research and development investment to one percent of the SDP with the goal of increasing it to 2.5% by 2020.<sup>347</sup> These recommendations do not suggest that Punjab shift away from agriculture because India continues to rely on Punjab for food security. Currently, the state experiences significant crop losses “during the process of harvesting, threshing, transportation and storage of foodgrains.”<sup>348</sup> This is especially concerning given that demands placed on Punjab will certainly increase with India’s growing population. To become more efficient, accommodate the state’s agriculture output, and help distressed farmers, the state needs to focus on developing better infrastructure, such as storage facilities and transportation mediums.<sup>349</sup> This new infrastructure will reduce the percentage of precious foodgrains from rotting before reaching the consumer. The state government cannot address this food security issue alone as it is already lacking investment funding. Therefore, the central government also has a role to play in ensuring stability in the region through deliberate investment in research and development to make Punjab’s agriculture output more productive, and by creating employment opportunities by developing the industrial sector.

The Indian government needs to view the growing drug problem in Punjab as a serious threat to regional stability. The Mumbai and Pathankot Air Force Base attacks underscore the close relationship between criminal syndicates involved in the drug trade

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<sup>345</sup> Sukhpal Singh, “Economic Development in Punjab,” 2.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> “Rejuvenation of Punjab Economy: A Policy Document,” 3.

<sup>348</sup> D. K. Grover and J. M. Singh, “Post-Harvest Losses in Wheat Crop in Punjab: Past and Present,” *Agricultural Economics Research Review* 26, no. 2 (July 2013): 293.

<sup>349</sup> “Rejuvenation of Punjab Economy: A Policy Document,” 4–5.

and terrorist organizations as illustrated in Chapter III. This relationship in Punjab may certainly deepen as more of the state's population becomes dependent on drugs and even some on the drug trade for generating income to provide food for their families absent legal employment opportunities. There are close interdependencies between either side of the India-Pakistan border that enable the drug trade. The center needs to make a concerted effort to reduce corruption in the Border Security Force (BSF) as it serves as the first line of defense against traffickers. It is also the center's responsibility to equip the state with the resources necessary to reduce drug demand, and to invest in the health care sector to treat addiction. Furthermore, the center needs to devise a plan to include Punjab into the nation's economic prosperity run. This can only be accomplished if the center helps the state government move away from an agriculture-focused business model that India relies on for food security. Two additional factors necessitate that the Indian government address the drug problem in Punjab with urgency.

Growing Chinese investment in Punjab, Pakistan and India's foreign policy approach towards Balochistan, Pakistan also influence instability in Punjab, India. First, the \$51 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will aid Pakistan's economic aspirations,<sup>350</sup> but more importantly, is likely to bring new industry and economic prosperity to Punjab, Pakistan. As of September 2016, of the planned 330 projects, 176 CPEC projects were assigned to Punjab, Pakistan and its government is creating a welcoming environment to attract internal and external investment.<sup>351</sup> This reality is important because as with Punjab, India, agriculture is also the largest sector in Punjab, Pakistan, making it the breadbasket of Pakistan. As the economic benefits of CPEC trickle into its agrarian neighbor, population in Punjab, India may certainly feel a lack of investment and economic development in their own state as further discrimination. This perception is already present as Punjab envies the relative economic prosperity in other

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<sup>350</sup> Khaleeq Kiani, "With a New Chinese Loan, CPEC Is Now Worth \$51.5bn," *Dawn*, September 30, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1287040>.

<sup>351</sup> Qadeer Tanoli, "Punjab Gets Lion's Share in Chinese Projects," *The Express Tribune*, September 3, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1175160/economic-corridor-punjab-gets-lions-share-cpec-projects/>; Staff Report, "Upcoming International Investment Seminar Vital to CPEC Success: Shehbaz," *Pakistan Today*, accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/02/06/upcoming-international-investment-seminar-vital-to-cpec-success-shehbaz/>.

Indian states like Gujarat. Second, Pakistan has accused India of using its intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), to support the Balochistan insurgency in Pakistan; India denies this claim, but Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has openly shared his concern for the plight of the Balochi people.<sup>352</sup> Dissatisfaction in Punjab, India presents Pakistan with another opportunity besides Kashmir to counter India's involvement in Balochistan. Pakistan may not face much difficulty in encouraging anti-India sentiment in Punjab, India because a large section of the population there is already displeased with the inaction of both the center and state governments. The drug networks, meanwhile, provide the routes and resources for aiding the discontent. Furthermore, the previous Khalistan insurgency's aftermath is still a part of the collective Sikh memory that plays into the hands of external actors. These developments highlight the urgency in addressing the growing drug epidemic and declining economy in Punjab as they form the setting that led to the previous insurgency.

Ultimately, a thriving economy in Punjab is in the best interest of the nation because of its contributions to India's food security and its strategic location in ensuring national security. The inability of the central and state governments to address the drug menace and the economic crisis in the state can have dire consequences for both aspects of Indian security. Getting deeply involved in resolving these critical concerns now will prevent a situation in which the Indian government finds itself involved in another prolonged battle to restore law and order in Punjab. The Indian government is already fighting an intense separatist insurgency in Kashmir, adding Punjab to this list once again may have serious consequences for Indian and regional stability.

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<sup>352</sup> Shamil Shams, "Indian PM Modi's Balochistan Comments Upset Pakistan," *Deutsche Welle (DW)*, August 15, 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/indian-pm-modis-balochistan-comments-upset-pakistan/a-19475682>; Manu Balachandran, "Balochistan Is Now Officially an Arrow in India's Quiver against Pakistan," *Quartz India*, September 16, 2016, <https://qz.com/782147/narendra-modis-message-to-the-un-balochistan-is-now-officially-an-arrow-in-indias-quiver-against-pakistan/>.

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