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Title: Racialization, 'religious violence' and radicalisation: The persistence of narratives of 'Sikh extremism'

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Abstract: Recent years have seen concerns raised in media and by policymakers about rising levels of 'Sikh extremism' and 'Sikh radicalisation' in Western Sikh diasporas. In this article I analyse why these concerns persist, particularly given the general nonviolent nature of 'Sikh militancy' (Wallace [2011]. "Sikh Militancy and Non-Violence." In Sikhism In Global Context, edited by Pashaura Singh, 122–144. Oxford University Press) and the relatively few incidents of terrorism beyond those which took place during the height of Sikh militancy in the 1980s. I argue that these concerns are a consequence of an underlying 'anxiety about anti-assimilationist religious others' impacted by (a) the racialisation of religious minorities which began in the colonial period, (b) a specific type of 'Indian secularism' which frames Indian legislation and media reporting and (c) the post 9/11 securitisation and increased surveillance of Sikh bodies as part of the 'War on Terror' with its concerns about 'religious violence' and the necessity of the secular nation state to ensure that any such violence is suitably policed. This article will be of interest to those examining the racialisation and representations of religious minorities in Western liberal democracies and the impact of securitisation policies on these communities.

Keywords: religion, violence, radicalisation, racialisation, extremism, Sikh

Racialization, "religious violence" and radicalisation: The persistence of narratives of "Sikh extremism"

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Introduction

In the lead up to the November 2015 visit of the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to the UK, Indian media widely reported that a dossier would be presented by Mr Modi to the then British Prime Minister, David Cameron, raising concerns about "Sikh radicalisation in Britain" (Singh V, 2015). According to Indian newspaper (e.g. HT Correspondent, 2015) and television reports (e.g. TimesX, 2015) the dossier would include allegations that Sikh groups in the UK were organising "classes for the radicalisation of Sikh youths in at least three gurdwaras across the UK" funded by the ISI (Inter-Service Intelligence, the Pakistan secret services) (HT Correspondent, 2015). The dossier would also raise concerns that Sikh groups were trying to revive the Khalistan movement to create a separate state called Khalistān (lit. "Land of the Pure") in the Punjab, that Sikh radio stations and television channels based in Britain were "controlled by pro-Khalistani forces that are known for anti-India tirade" (Bhalla, 2015),[1] and that funds were being collected in the Sikh diaspora by members of the BKI (Babbar Khalsa International), the International Sikh Youth Federation, Khalistan Commando Force and Khalistan Zindabad Force and being sent to intermediaries in Punjab and Pakistan (Bhalla 2015).

[1] The owner of the Sikh Channel, D.S. Bal complained to the UK media regulator, OFCOM, about PTC for repeating allegations that the Sikh Channel was being run by secessionist groups. In response, PTC stated that they had made "serious attempts" to check the accuracy of the information but that as it was not possible to access the dossier, the production team had checked the reports with other news agencies (BizAsia, 2016).

In response to these allegations in Indian media, the British government twice denied receiving such a dossier.[2] Representatives of Sikh organisations in Britain also condemned the reports and the use of the term "Sikh radicalisation" with Gurmel Singh, the then Secretary General of the Sikh Council UK stating that "this idea of radicalisation is a myth." (Lapido Media, 2016). Additional concerns about the risk of "radicalisation in the Sikh community" were raised by the UK media regulator OFCOM in 2015, in a report about the broadcast of a "Shaheedi Smagam" ("martyrs commemoration event") on the Sikh Channel on 15th November 2015 (Ofcom, 2016: 65). Recent years have also seen those commentating on Sikh issues raising fears about resurgent "Sikh fundamentalism" (Dhaliwal, 2016) and "Sikh extremism" (Hundal, 2015) a term also used by the UK Crown Prosecution Service reporting on the 2012 attack on General K.S. Brar, the Indian army general who led Operation Bluestar, the June 1984 attack on the *Harmandir Sahib,* (popularly known as the Golden Temple) (CPS, 2013).

Recent media and policy reports in Canada, have also highlighted concerns about "Sikh extremism". The first visit of the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, to India in February 2018 was overshadowed by reports in both Indian and Canadian media (e.g. Toronto Sun, 2018) about the "Canadian government's perceived soft approach to Sikh extremists demanding Khalistan" (Nair 2018) and about growing "Sikh extremism" in Canada, the UK and Italy (Majumdar 2018). These headlines led Trudeau to assert "that his country believed in a united India and … that it would not support any separatist movement in India"

[2] On 9th February 2016, Fabian Hamilton MP asked the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs "whether he received a document on UK Sikhs from the Indian delegation during the Indian Prime Minister's recent visit to the UK" (Parliament, 2016a) with Mr Hugo Swire replying that he "did not receive a document on UK Sikhs from the Indian delegation during Prime Minister Modi's visit" (Parliament, 2016a). Following up on this question on 29th February 2016, Mr Jim Cunningham, the MP for Coventry South asked the Secretary of State "whether her Department has received a document from the Indian government on Sikh radicalisation in the UK" (Parliament, 2016b). The response from Mr John Hayes was that "the department has not received any documents on Sikh radicalisation in the UK from the Indian government" (Parliament, 2016b).

(Vasudeva, 2018). In December 2018, Public Safety Canada for the first time, included a section on "Sikh (Khalistani) extremism" in their annual report on terrorist threats to Canada (Quan, 2018), although following significant pressure from Sikh organisations in Canada, this section was removed in April 2019 (Robson 2019).[3]

In this article I analyse why, given the general non-violent nature of "Sikh militancy" (Wallace 2011) and the few incidents of terrorism involving Sikhs beyond those which took place during the height of Sikh militancy in the 1980s, concerns about "Sikh extremism" persist in media and policy, particularly in the UK and Canada. Data was gathered from English language policy documents, historic and contemporary media sources (newspapers, radio, television), academic literature, social media and internet discussion forums for a wider research project analysing the context and realities of "Sikh radicalisation in Britain" (Singh J, 2017). The media analysis used a series of relevant search terms[4] to examine historical and contemporary newspapers, television reports and radio programmes using online archives and video hosting websites.

The UK government currently define "extremism" as "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs" (HM Government, 2015: 3) and "radicalisation" as "the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist

[3] Sikh organisations in Canada had argued that the new inclusion of "Sikh (Khalistani) extremism" in the December 2018 report was a consequence of Indian officials bringing up the issue of Sikh extremism with "great regularity" during bilateral talks throughout 2017 and 2018 (Quan, 2018) as evidenced in a heavily redacted federal report on Trudeau's trip published in December 2018 (National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, 2018: 4). Following the outcry from Sikh organisations in Canada, the report was amended in April 2019 removing the section on "Sikh (Khalistani) extremism" and instead referring to "extremists who support violent means to establish an independent state within India" (Robson, 2019)

[4] Online websites included Box of Broadcasts (https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand), the ITN archive (http://www.itnsource.com/en/) the CBC archive (http://www.cbc.ca/archives/). Search terms used in the media analysis included "Sikh extremist(s), Sikh extremism", "Sikh fanatic(s), Sikh fanaticism", "Sikh radical(s), Sikh radicalism, Sikh radicalisation", "Sikh fundamentalist(s), Sikh fundamentalism", "Sikh terrorist(s), Sikh terrorism", "Sikh militant(s), Sikh militancy", "Sikh separatist(s), Sikh separatism", "Sikh protester(s), Sikh protests" and "Sikh activist(s), Sikh activism".

ideologies associated with terrorist groups" (HM Government, 2015: 12). In Canada, extremist activity is defined as "any activity undertaken on behalf of, or in support of, a terrorist entity. It can include, but is not limited to: participation in armed combat, financing, radicalizing, recruiting, media production, and other activity" (Public Safety Canada, 2018).

In both cases therefore, "extremism" is clearly linked with support of terrorist groups and entities. As Silke (2008: 116) notes however, applying the label "terrorist" (and accordingly "extremist", "fundamentalist", and "radical") "is often a value judgement (and a negative one)". Sedgwick (2010: 483) for instance, observes that "most researchers using the terms 'radical' and 'radicalisation' do not define these terms, either relying on their relative meaning or assuming that their absolute meaning is understood". This article examines the persistence of narratives of Sikh "extremism", "fundamentalism" and "radicalisation" while recognising the contested nature of these terms (see also Jakobsh 2014, 167).

The Racialization of Sikhs

The concepts of "racialization" and "cultural racism" are particularly useful in understanding the relationship between religion and political conflict, community identity, stereotyping and socio-economic location (Meer and Modood 2009). For Barot and Bird (2001), "racialization" allows scholars to move beyond questions of the validity of racial theories, when examining issues to do with race. Using "racialization" to refer to "a process of categorisation, a representational process of defining an Other" (Miles 1989: 75) which entails "ascribing sets of characteristics viewed as inherent to members of a group because of their physical or cultural traits … such as language, clothing, and religious practices" (Garner and Selod 2015: 12), I now examine how processes of racialization have impacted on Sikhs and on the continued presence of narratives of "Sikh extremism" in societies "where

Christianity and whiteness generate social norms against which other religions and races are measured" (Joshi 2006a: 212).

The Colonial encounter: From fanatics to a "martial race"

For Banton (1977), processes of racialization have their roots in European colonisers ascribing characteristics to those they encountered during colonization. As the armies of the East India Company fought with the Sikhs during and following the first (1845-46) and second (1848-49) Anglo Sikh Wars leading to the annexation of Punjab, colonial accounts about Sikhs began to emphasise the "fanatic" nature of those wearing outward symbols of religiosity. For instance, writing in 1845, Leech described the Akali Nihang Sikhs as "the fanatics of the Sikh religion literally covering themselves with iron, generally wearing, besides 2 swords at their side, from 1 to 7 quoits on their turbans" (Leech, 1845). Doyle notes that British colonial commentators often viewed those who were "turning to tradition to resist colonial modernity" (2016: 86) as "fanatics" as their wearing of religious symbols was regarded as an "encroachment of religion into a supposedly secularized public sphere" (Toscano 2010: xiii), representing "a resistant anti-assimilationist stance … which can never become civilized" (Puar 2008: 54).

Cavanaugh links the invention of fanaticism with the "myth of religious violence", "a type of Orientalism that opposes Western reason against the irrational, benighted, non-Western world" (2011: 228). Analysing the construction of the concept of religion during the colonial period, Cavanaugh (2011: 228) argues that the religious/secular distinction is a modern invention, created to aid in the transfer of loyalty of the citizen from Christendom to the nation-state. The "myth of religious violence" which emerged at this time "continues to help facilitate this process by making the secular nation-state appear as necessary to tame the inherently volatile effects of religion in public life" (Cavanaugh 2011: 228).

As the British recruited Sikhs into the British Indian Army following the annexation of the Punjab, Sikhs were codified as a "martial race" as "part of a concerted strategy to limit military service to the select few who could be trusted to remain undyingly loyal to the Raj" (Streets 2004: 173). Sikhs had earlier "proven" their loyalty during the Indian Mutiny of 1857 as the British turned to the recently disbanded Sikh armies to counter the mutineers, securing for the Sikhs "an enduring favour amongst the imperial military establishment" (Rand 2006: 4). Kalra (2009: 121) explains that the portrayal of the Sikhs by the British at this time "was like that of a "buffalo", stolid masculinity, rather than something of equivalence to the European norm" with General Sir Arthur Power Palmer for example, stating that the Sikhs "possess one of the finest of soldierly characteristics - namely, that they prefer death to surrender" (Times London, 1902).

As Sikhs became active in anti-colonial agitation in the early part of the twentieth century, including in the Ghadar movement (Kaur, L 2014), their position "as staunch loyalists, and martial recruit par excellence, became increasingly untenable in the face of revolutionary conspiracies in India and abroad from 1907 onwards" (Rand and Wagner 2012: 252). Following the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 13th April 1919 when a crowd of non-violent, mainly Sikh, protesters were fired upon by the British Indian Army, Sikhs led *morchas* (campaigns) as part of a non-co-operation movement (Sayer 1991) to liberate their *gurdwaras* from *mahants* (proprietors) who had been placed in charge of these institutions by the British. Those Sikhs participating in these anti- colonial activities were regularly referred to as "fanatics", "extremists" and "militants" in media and by policy makers (Times London, 1922) with a distinction being made between these anti-colonial Sikhs and "moderate" Sikhs who were "anxious to see an end to the conflict between the Sikhs and the Government" (Times London, 1924). For Loveleen Kaur, this "discursive usage of the anti-colonial resister

as a 'terrorist'… served as a means of maintaining the colonial order by depoliticizing the revolutionaries and their goals" (2014: 70).

Following the independence of India in 1947, Sikhs agitating against the Indian Government for greater autonomy for Punjab throughout the 1950s and 1960s during the *Punjabi Suba* movement were reported in Indian media as Sikh "militants", "extremists" and "fanatics" with Master Tara Singh, the main Sikh negotiator described as an "extremist Sikh leader" (Times London, 1949) representing 'extremist Sikh opinion' (Times of India, 1939). As Gupta (2007) notes however, as most farmers in Punjab are Sikhs, any agricultural related demand tends to be viewed as a "Sikh problem", and therefore, "even non-religious issues appear to be inspired by religious considerations" (Gupta 2007: 30).

Post-Independence and Migration: Sikh Extremism and Fundamentalism

As Sikhs migrated to Britain throughout the 1960s, 1970s and beyond, they "campaigned tenaciously for the right to observe the Sikh dress code" (Singh and Tatla 2006 :2). Reporting on the intention of Sohan Singh Jolly to immolate himself in response to the turban ban in Wolverhampton in 1969, the Times simply reported 'Sikh plans to burn in protest' (Times London, 1969). Similarly, reports about the turban campaigns in Britain in the 1980s saw no references to Sikh extremists, militants, fundamentalists or radicals (Times London, 1980) presumably as these campaigns were not regarded as a direct threat to the nation state.

Contemporary concerns about "Sikh extremism" are primarily a consequence of a series of tumultuous events which occurred in India in the late twentieth century, including an insurgency in Punjab, the 1984 Operation Bluestar attack on *Harmandir Sahib*, the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and the subsequent anti-Sikh violence across India. The earlier distinction made between "moderates" and "extremists"

again manifested itself in media reports from the 1970s onwards, with those challenging the Indian state being described as "extremists" who had "always hankered after a separate Sikh homeland, but they have been kept under control by the Sikh moderates" (The Economist, 1978). The *Dharam Yudh Morcha* (or "campaign for a righteous war") of the late 1970s and early 1980s saw a number of terrorist incidents taking place in India involving Sikh militants, including the hijacking of an Indian Jetliner in September 1981 (Kaufman, 1981) the murder of a Punjab policeman in April 1983 (Thukral, 1983) and the shooting of six bus passengers and bombing of a festival in October 1983 (Stevens, 1983). Hardgrave and Kochanek (2008: 175) report that 298 individuals were murdered in the Punjab from January 1st to June 3rd 1984, leading to further references to Sikh extremists, radicals and terrorists in national and international media (Fishlock, 1982).

The early 1980s also saw "fundamentalism" being used in relation to Sikhs, particularly relating to Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the symbol of the Sikh insurgency of the 1980s who was the then leader of the Sikh seminary, the Damdami Taksal (Hamlyn 1983). Media reports compared Bhindranwale with Ayatollah Khomeini, as both were "turbaned, and have long, flowing beards ... and both share a fiery fundamentalism in religion, and implacable political views" (CSM 1983). However, scholars examining "Sikh fundamentalism" have challenged the use of the term (McLeod 1998) arguing that the fundamentalism of the Sikhs "is certainly of a different sort than other fundamentalisms we have become familiar with; it implies no missionization and fully respects the possibility of other paths to religious truth" (Mahmood, 2002: 34).

For McLeod "Sikh fundamentalism" came to be used "because journalists and other people in search of meaningful equivalents adopted this particular word as a loose equivalent of "fanatical"" (1998: 15). He further argues that "fundamentalism" "was transferred from its Western context to the Islamic movements associated in particular with Iran, and from there

… conveniently appropriated to describe the Sikh movement for Khalistan" (McLeod, 1998: 15) highlighting both the conflation of "other" religious traditions and a continuation of the idea of the "dangerous other" religious fanatic. As Nayar (2008) explains, the media's linking of "Sikh fundamentalism" with the visible marks of uncut hair and the turban at this time, had a number of repercussions for turbaned Sikhs in the diaspora as many came to be viewed with suspicion.

The Indian army's attack on *Harmandir Sahib* in June 1984 during Operation Bluestar "constituted one of the most traumatic experiences for the Sikh community worldwide. The destruction of the Akal Takht and extensive damage to the whole complex of sacred buildings was felt by most Sikhs at the time as nothing less than a declaration of war on the community itself" (Tatla, 2006:57). The reaction to Operation Bluestar saw increased support for Khalistan across the Sikh diaspora, with Tatla (2012: 71) noting that until June 1984, "the theme of a Sikh homeland attracted no more than a fringe audience and only the Indian state's blunder in ordering armies into the Golden Temple forced the issue into ordinary Sikhs" homes and minds".

In addition to Operation Bluestar, the violence that took place against Sikhs across India in November 1984 following the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, by her Sikh bodyguards also impacted Sikhs worldwide. Despite an extensive body of academic literature and numerous reports that have examined the November 1984 violence against Sikhs including Grewal (2007) and Mitta and Phoolka (2007), for Ahluwalia (2011: 108) "there remains a deep scepticism amongst Sikhs in both India and the diaspora about real justice and adequate reparations."

The late 1980s to the mid-1990s saw numerous reports of terrorist attacks by Sikh militants in India (see Hazarika 1987, Crossette 1991) as "Punjab was virtually handed over

to the security forces with extraordinary discretionary powers" (Tatla 1999: 18). The assassination of Chief Minister Beant Singh by the Babbar Khalsa (Juergensmeyer, 2000: 84) following his crackdown on Sikh militancy, signalled the end of the insurgency in 1995 (Tatla 1999: 18).

Although Sikhs had settled in the United Kingdom in large numbers since the 1960s, for Berry (1988: 16) their image and relationship with both the Indian and British governments changed radically after 1984 as many felt that their situation had not received a fair hearing by either state. The post 1984 period saw some Sikhs in Britain being accused of plotting against Indian officials visiting the UK[5] while individuals speaking out against Khalistan or aligning themselves closely with India, became fatal victims of Khalistan related violence, including businessman and IOC activist Tarsem Singh Toor in 1986 (Singh and Tatla 2006: 113) and the leader of Sachkhand Nanak Dham, Darshan Das in 1987 with two members of the ISYF convicted for his murder (Singh & Tatla, 2006: 239). Indeed, the Times of 20th March 1989 reported that "at least seven Sikhs living in Britain, all moderates opposed to the violence of the Khalistan separatist movement, have been shot in past three years, four fatally" (Sapsted, 1989).

Canadian authorities were also clearly unprepared for the emotional impact of the storming of Harmandir Sahib on Sikhs in Canada. Bob Burgoyne, who worked for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) at the time, noted how "it was our lack of understanding of Sikhs and how very emotional (they were) and how this single issue is what

[5] In October 1985, four members of the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) were arrested for plotting to murder Rajeev Gandhi, the then Indian Prime Minister (Tatla 1999: 123) with two individuals being jailed for 16 years and 14 years respectively (The Times, 1986). In 1998, Jagroop Batth, 45, a shopworker from West London was jailed for four years for plotting to assassinate Sumedh Saini, a senior Indian policeman involved in quelling the Sikh insurgency movement in the early 1990s, who was visiting Britain at the time (Times London, 1998). A further targeted attack on 30th September 2012 on General K.S. Brar, remains the only incident involving Sikhs in Britain during which violence has actually taken place against an individual involved in Operation Bluestar (CPS, 2013).

propelled us into what was a very tumultuous year" (Brennan, R., 2007). As in Britain, the immediate aftermath of Operation Bluestar saw peaceful protests across Canada against India (Toronto Sun, 1984) alongside violence relating to Khalistan issues, including the 1985 attack on former B.C. premier Ujjal Dosanjh (CBC, 1985) and the murder of Canadian journalist Tara Singh Hayer (Matas, 2012). Canada also saw plots and protests against Indian officials including the 1986 assassination attempt on Malkiat Singh Sidhu (Kilpatrick, 2012) and a plot in 2010 against Kamal Nath, a visiting minister from India (Aulakh, R., 2010) indicted by the Nanavati Commission on allegations that he was involved in the 1984 anti-Sikh violence (Jolly 2014).

The bombing of the Air India flight 182 on 23rd June 1985 which claimed a total of 329 innocent lives is arguably the key incident to contribute to contemporary concerns about "Sikh extremism" (Kaur 2014: 76). Although condemned by Sikh leaders at the time,[6] as the only large-scale act of terrorism to take place outside India to lead to the conviction of a Sikh, Inderjit Singh Reyat (Bassey 2012), the bombing is often cited in reports relating to the activities of Khalistani Sikhs.[7] Though it is beyond the scope of this article to examine the Air India bombing in depth, a wealth of literature about the bombing and subsequent trial is readily available (e.g. Blaise and Mukherjee 1987, Bolan 2005).[8]

[6] Dr Jagjit Singh Chohan, head of the Khalistan National Council stated that "this is very heinous crime and to kill innocent people in the air, I think this is the most cold blooded and no Sikh will ever do it" (ITN Source, 1985)

[7] For example, the now redacted entry in the Public Safety Canada 2018 relating to "Sikh (Khalistani) Extremism", stated "Some individuals in Canada continue to support Sikh (Khalistani) extremist ideologies and movements. This political movement aims to create an independent homeland for Sikhs called Khalistan, in India. Violent activities in support of an independent Sikh homeland have fallen since their height during the 1982-1993 period when individuals and groups conducted numerous terrorist attacks. The 1985 Air India bombing by Khalistani terrorists, which killed 331 people, remains the deadliest terrorist plot ever launched in Canada. While attacks around the world in support of this movement have declined, support for the extreme ideologies of such groups remains. For example, in Canada, two key Sikh organizations, Babbar Khalsa International and the International Sikh Youth Federation, have been identified as being associated with terrorism and remain listed terrorist entities under the Criminal Code." (Barfi Culture, 2018)

[8] The 1991/92 Canadian Security Intelligence Review Committee Annual Report found that "the publication of the book, "Soft Target" in 1989 … accused the Government of India (GOI) in general and its foreign intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of complicity in the crash. The conspiracy theories became

Having examined how Sikhs were historically racialized as loyal members of a "martial race" or as "anti-colonial" extremists and fanatics, I have demonstrated how the events of the 1980s have significantly impacted on the perception of Sikhs as "extremists" in Western diasporas. Although Joshi notes that racialization has caused Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in Western democracies to be "a problematically situated "other"—brown-skinned, non-Christians who are therefore multiply foreign" (2006a: 214), I am arguing that this "perpetual foreigner" status (Murjani 2014) is compounded further for Sikhs highlighting 'homeland' issues relating to the events of 1984 (Kaur, L 2014: 74) and by the framing of Sikhs raising these issues in Indian policy and media.

Indian policy and media

Avinash Singh highlights how the events of 1984 permanently changed the presentation of Sikhs in Indian media as "the turbaned, bearded Sikh youth was fashioned by state propaganda into the stereotypical religious fanatic who threatened the integrity of the union with his seditious demands for a separate homeland" (2012: 48). Sikhs were repeatedly projected as rebellious and treasonous (Singh A 2012: 49) and reported as a terrorist threat in India during the 1980s, demonstrated by the claim by Mr Warren Anderson, the chairman of Union Carbide that sabotage by Sikh extremists had caused the Bhopal disaster of 1984, a claim proven to be fabricated (Broughton, E., 2005).

In his investigation into the "othering" of Sikhs in The Times of India during the 1980s, Mann (2016) explains how headlines in Indian media are often impacted by the notion of secularism in India which, rather than implying the separation of religion and state, asserts

widely known and still endure years after the tragedy" (Security Intelligence Review Committee, 1992: 13). The 'Soft Target' book mentioned refers to Kashmeri and McAndrew (1989). Responding to these theories, the RCMP publicly denied allegations that the Government of India was involved in the Air India bombing. The Indian Prime Minister and High Commissioner to Canada also denied the allegations (Commission of Inquiry, 2007: 25). In 2015, the RCMP stated that the Air India investigation is still ongoing (Bronskill, J. 2015).

that all religions should be treated equally (Smith 1963). As Shani observes, "the fact that a Hindu Code Act established a uniform civil code for all "Hindus" in the country (including Sikhs), while leaving Muslims with their own personal law, furthermore, compromises the state's claim to be secular … paving the way for the equation of "Hindu" with "Indian" in the popular imagination" (2008: 42). Mann argues that Indian "secularism" is best understood as "secular Hinduism" where media present "Hindus as normative citizens of the state who escape the label of inserting religion into public life because public and political life are inherently "Hindu"" (2016: 5) and as a consequence, minority groups are required to accept their inherent "Indianness", with those that do not being regarded as a threat to the nation.

Mann (2016: 4) also notes that "there is general agreement by scholars and reporters who have examined the relationship between the media and the central government in India that the government tends to control the agenda of the press". Indeed, Major (1987: 43) found Indian journalists employing labels to describe Sikh individuals as extremists and/or terrorists "for dramatic effect, labels whose validity in specific instances remains unproven". Furthermore, in her examination of the emergence of the Khalistan movement, Weiss (2002) describes how Indira Gandhi used her access to national and international media "to consistently describe the opposition as religious fanatics who advocated secession and separatism motivated by 'communalism' and 'regionalism'."

The reporting in Indian media of Sikh secessionists as "extremists" is therefore a consequence of Indian media agendas and of the framing of "terrorism" in India. Fears around the activities of Sikhs in the 1980s led the Indian state to pass the Terrorist Affected Areas Act of 1984 (TAAA), which contained the first legislative definition of a "terrorist" in Indian policy as:

> "a person who indulges in wanton killing of persons or in violence or in the disruption of services or means of communications essential to the community or in damaging property with a view to … ii) affecting adversely the harmony between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities [or] … (iv) *endangering the sovereignty and integrity of India*." (Legislative.gov.in, 1984: 1, italics mine)

Following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in November 1984, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, or TADA was introduced, building on the TAAA. According to TADA, a terrorist is an individual carrying out an activity which "questions, disrupts or is intended to disrupt, whether directly or indirectly, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India; or (ii) which is intended to bring about or supports any claim, whether directly or indirectly, for the cession of any part of India or the secession of any part of India from the Union" (Ghosh 1995: 522). TADA was replaced in 2000 with the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) (Krishnan 2004: 275) and then, following the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, by the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), under which "any organisation could be declared illegal and any individual imprisoned for questioning India's sovereignty over any part of its territory" (Singh U 2007: 65). These associations continue to have an impact on contemporary concerns about "Sikh extremism" as individuals and groups campaigning for a separate state, Khalistan, are viewed as terrorists by the Indian state.

Though Khalistani organisations have claimed responsibility for terrorist incidents in India since the 1980s (e.g. see Press Trust of India, 2006) a number of incidents remain unresolved.[9] While it is beyond the scope of this article to examine the eventual outcomes of

[9] For example although the Police initially blamed "Muslim militants allied with Punjab separatists" and held four members of Babbar Khalsa for the 2007 bomb blast at the Shingaar cinema hall, Ludhiana (TNN, 2007) three of these individuals were acquitted in December 2014 as one had died in jail (HT Correspondent, 2014). Similarly, although the July 2009 assassination of Rulda Singh in India led to the arrest of four members of

these various incidents and arrests, a key point remains that the reports in Indian media about "Sikh radicals", "terrorists" and "extremists" based on the policy definitions of these terms in India, are regularly used by media organisations and policy makers outside India in reports about Sikh issues, including refugee review tribunals in Australia (RRT Research Response, 2008), Canada (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1996) and operational guidance notes in the UK (Home Office, 2008). The framing of Sikh issues in Indian media and legislation has therefore, become increasingly significant for Sikhs in diaspora in the post 9/11 "securitization" context.

Sikhs and securitization

The reporting of terrorist activities of Sikhs in India has had a significant impact on perceptions of Sikhs in the West (Ashford,1986). In 1993, the then British foreign secretary Douglas Hurd signed an extradition treaty with India, primarily to curb the activities of Sikh terrorists in Britain (Thomas, 1993) which saw some Sikhs detained in British prisons awaiting deportation including Karamjit Singh Chahal incarcerated for five years without charge (Ford, 1995) and Raghbir Singh also detained without charge.[10]

Following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in Oct 1984, British newspapers reported on how certain gurdwaras had been taken over by "Sikh militants" and "Sikh extremists":

> The divisions in the British Sikh community will re-emerge this month in a High Court battle between moderates and extremists for control of one of the biggest

Babbar Khalsa in June 2010 (TNN, 2010) in February 2015, all those charged were acquitted due to a lack of evidence (Teja, Gagan K, 2015). More recently, on 4th November 2017, Jagtar Singh Johal, a British citizen was arrested by the Punjab Police, and at the time of writing remains in police custody without charge (UK News, 2018), with concerns raised about his treatment by the Indian police (Safi, 2016).

[10] During a parliamentary discussion of Raghbir Singh's case (Hansard, 1997), David Winnick the then MP for Walsall, North noted how: "Mr. Singh was detained as a threat to national security … there was no question about his active political concern with events in India and he has frankly admitted, as the editor of a Sikh newspaper, that he wants a separate Sikh state there; but he insists that he never wanted to use terrorism to achieve that … for all I know there may be some exceptions, but I believe that the large majority of Sikhs in this country who are actively involved in such matters have no desire to see the use of terrorism."

> temples in Britain … There are about 2000 temples serving the Sikh community in Britain but only 60 of those are large enough to be politically significant. Thirty-two of those are said to be in the hands of the "extremists", that is militantly supporting an independent Khalistan (Dowden, 1986)

Indeed, there have been numerous internal Sikh issues across the Sikh diaspora, relating to a) 1984 related "political" violence around viewpoints on Khalistan, b) gurdwara governance issues, c) disagreements around Sikh practices and doctrine and d) factional disputes between Sikhs following particular groups or individuals (Singh J, 2017: 22). In a number of these cases, conflicts have involved one group attempting to delegitimise another by labelling the other group as "extremist".[11] As Sedgwick (2010: 488) notes, religious and community organisations often emphasise how "moderate" they are in comparison to other more "radical" groups, especially when government funding is made available to "moderate" religious and community organisations.

The passing of the Terrorism acts of 2000 and 2001 in the UK, led to the proscription of the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) and Babbar Khalsa (BKI) in March 2001 as terrorist organisations (Parliament, 2012) although there was concern about the inclusion of the ISYF in the list of proscribed groups, with Lord Tomlinson stating that although he had "frequently disagreed with some of the political aspirations of the International Sikh Youth Federation … it does not make its members terrorists" (Hansard, 2001).

Although the ISYF was de-listed in the UK in March 2016 as "the Home Secretary concluded that there was not sufficient evidence to support a reasonable belief that the ISYF was currently concerned in terrorism" (Hansard 2016) and also in the EU (Official Journal of

[11] For instance, an issue at a Coventry Gurdwara in 2017 which saw claims of a takeover by 'Sikh extremists' was explained as being a consequence of "a dispute between the committee in charge of the temple and other members of the Sikh community who attend as part of the congregation." (Gilbert, 2017)

the European Union, 2016) the BKI remains proscribed in the United Kingdom (Gov.uk, 2017) and the EU (Official Journal of the European Union, 2017). Both the ISYF and BKI remain listed as terrorist organisations in Canada (Public Safety Canada, 2018), India (Ministry of Home Affairs, n,d), Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2002) and the United States (US Department of State, n, d). These proscriptions remain despite a recent UK House of Commons briefing paper stating that both the ISYF and BKI had "never targeted Western interests" (Godec and Lipscombe, 2017: 19-20).

The post 9/11 environment has seen an increase in the level and type of securitization faced by religious and ethnic minorities in Western democracies (Cesari 2009) with Bramadat et al. noting that in Canada, securitization is "far more commonly experienced by Muslims and Sikhs than by Christians" (2014: 12). In her examination of the impact of surveillance on Sikh bodies as a consequence of the "War on Terror", Sian (2017) argues that Sikhs have been racialized in three ways; as a "martial race" where Sikhs are "celebrated by the British as exemplary soldiers whose "martial" characteristics were both cultivated and regulated by the logics of empire" (Sian 2017:41); as a "model minority" where Sikhs are seen to be "upwardly mobile, law-abiding, and integrated into the host society's culture and values" and as "crypto-Muslims" through which Sikhs represent "one of the most prominent examples of, "Muslim looking" people … demonstrated most clearly by the phenomenon of "mistaken identity" in which mainly turbaned Sikhs have been "mistaken" for being Muslim (and through a reductive extension "terrorist")" (Sian 2017: 43).

The racialization of Sikhs as "Muslim-looking" people (Sian 2017: 43) also results "in the conflation of that racial group's diverse religions with each other … [so that] the diversity of belief within each religion is erased" (Joshi 2006a: 219-220). In addition to the previously discussed labelling of Bhindranwale as a "fundamentalist" in the same mould as Ayatollah Khomeni, another example of the conflation of terms from South Asian religious traditions

relates to the concept of “martyrdom”. Although most frequently discussed in relation to Islam, Mahmood makes an important distinction between Islamic and Sikh notions of martyrdom, explaining that “though the concept of the righteous martyr (shaheed) is related to Islam, death in a holy war for Sikhs is not conceptualized as some kind of entry ticket to paradise” (2002: 32). Martyrdom in the Sikh tradition is primarily an act of resistance where “resistance to injustice is an existential stance, as something one does as a mode of worship with no other necessary aim than the fact of resistance itself” (Mahmood, 2002:48). As a consequence of the racialization of Sikhs as “crypto-Muslims”, concepts from the Sikh tradition and Islam are often treated as homogenous in media discourse, recently demonstrated in an article in the Toronto Star on the 16th March 2018, which stated that “a Shaheed is an Islamic or Sikh martyr who died fulfilling a religious commandment and is promised a place in paradise” (Mall, 2018). This article was subsequently reported as being inaccurate to the National NewsMedia Council of Canada, who upheld the complaint (National NewsMedia Council 2018).

Conclusion

By situating contemporary concerns about "Sikh extremism" and "Sikh radicalisation" in an historical and contemporary context, I have demonstrated that despite the general non-violent nature of "Sikh militancy" (Wallace 2011) beyond incidents of terrorism involving Sikh militants in the 1980s, these narratives persist in Western Sikh diasporas due to an underlying "anxiety about anti-assimilationist religious others" based on a combination of the racialization of Sikhs, representations of Sikhs in Indian legislation and media and the post 9/11 securitization of "Muslim looking" religious minorities.

For Joshi, the racialization of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the West has led to members of these traditions being "rendered invisible, illegitimate, and unworthy of attention beyond the level of novelty or stereotype ... [which] is acted out in ignorance of, contempt for, and mischaracterization of Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism by the mass media, the government, and individuals" (2006a: 216). This results in the diversity of these traditions being erased (Sian 2017) leading to crude conflations of concepts, including martyrdom, between these traditions (Singh J, 2017: 37). As shown, the use of the term "fundamentalists" in reference to Sikhs, despite there being no equivalent concept of "fundamentalism" in the Sikh tradition, is an example of the "Christian Norm" (Joshi 2006b) where terms relevant to Christianity are used to describe phenomena across a variety of religious traditions. Similarly, the distinction between "extremists" and "moderates" which emerged in the colonial period continues to play a role in contemporary representations of Sikhs, despite Major's (1987:43) observation that:

> "anyone who has followed the Punjab crisis from its inception in the late 1970s will be familiar with such labels as "moderates," "extremists" (sometimes "radicals"), "fundamentalists" (sometimes "fanatics"), "terrorists," and "secessionists," all of which are generally prefixed by the word, "Sikh." Yet it is my impression that many

people-both Indian and non-Indian, both Sikh and non-Sikh-have little more than a hazy idea of what these labels mean, and to whom the labels are meant to apply."

Indeed, as Loveleen Kaur (2014: 70) argues, "the idea of the extremist, terrorist, anarchist or any other framing of racialized bodies as dangerous were used, and are still used, to pacify intellectually dangerous ideas of people who stepped out of the boundaries defined for them." Furthermore, the racialization of Islam in the West as a "terrorist threat" has led to the situation where brown skin has become a proxy for "Muslim" leading to numerous hate crimes against Sikh individuals (Roberts, 2015) and institutions (Newton, 2018, BBC News 2018a) including the 2012 attack in the US on the Gurdwara in Oak Creek by white supremacist Wade Michael Page who killed six members of the Gurdwara congregation (CNN, 2012). This racialization has meant that Sikhs have come to be regarded as possible terrorist threats, "not because of what they do or who they are, but because they are caught in the gaze of the war on terror securocrats who construct Sikhs as essentially racialized bodies" (Sian 2017: 48). In this regard, Sikhs are victims of being "Apparently Muslim" (Singh J 2013, 122-23) in two ways, firstly as victims of "mistaken identity" hate crimes by white supremacists targeting Muslims, and secondly by being victims of suspicion by the nation states in which they live.

I have demonstrated how concerns about "Sikh extremism" are also influenced by the framing of "religious violence" as being inherently irrational and which therefore presents "the secular nation-state … as necessary to tame the inherently volatile effects of religion in public life" (Cavanaugh 2011: 228). In this context, "religious others" are constructed as individuals who are prone to fanaticism "in contrast with the rational, peace-making, secular subject" (Cavanaugh 2009: 4) based on a framing established in the colonial period. As "religious others" wearing traditional dress were seen to be "turning to tradition to resist colonial modernity" (Doyle 2016: 86) and therefore calling "into question the very premise of

Britain's civilizing mission" (Doyle 2016: 40) this raised questions about the authenticity and longevity of their loyalty to the British. Indeed, following their support of the British in the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the colonial commentator Frederich Engels (1858) raised concerns about how long it would be before Sikhs would eventually turn on their masters.

For Amin (2010), this suspicion of those wearing religious markers of visible difference in Western societies continues, governing and regulating racialized populations, leading for example to the interrogation of "suspicious" turbaned brown men (Singh J 2013, 128). In a racialized political discourse built on these views, "religious others" turning to tradition, appear to be viewed as being prone to "reverting to fanaticism" unless they clearly demonstrate their loyalty to the secular nation-state. As summarised by Jasmine K. Singh, "the racialization of Sikhs has been a process marked by essentialism, denial of identity, and mistaken identity" (2008, 85).

Although as discussed, terrorist incidents were perpetuated by Sikh militants in the 1980s, Wallace (2011: 97-98) argues that in general the Sikh militancy movement was non-violent. Indeed, Major highlights how "many of the victims of Sikh "terrorist" attacks would appear to have been selectively, rather than randomly, chosen … [and most Sikh "terrorist" organizations] have resorted to violence only intermittently and sporadically" (1987: 55). The distinct place of and concerns raised by "religious violence" carried out by "religious others" becomes clearer as other movements carrying out terrorist incidents in the West during the twentieth century, including for example the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ – see D'Arcy 2018) and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) are rarely referenced in contemporary discussions about terrorism.

In addition, the term "Sikh extremism" is problematic, as it presumes a link between Sikh ideology and terrorism. Although some scholarly examinations of "religious extremism"

have focused on links between violence and ideology (e.g. Leibman 1983), Iannaccone et al argue that much of the violence committed by "religious extremists" is not "religious" in nature at all and in fact should be "attributed to the religious-political environment than the religion itself" (2006: 125-126).

I have also demonstrated how different definitions of terrorism have impacted on Sikhs, in particular legislation in India where participating in "disruptive acts" or discussing secession are regarded as acts of terrorism. This legislation impacts on representations of Sikhs in Indian media in which "figures like Sant Bhindranwale are presented as irrational figures of a pre-modern era who incite "mad" violence in Sikh youth with an ultimate agenda of separating the Indian nation. Hence, we are led to believe that the violence of the state against Sikhs and Sikh places of worship is not only legitimate, but the only rational response one could have to religiously inspired fanatics" (Mann 2016: 20-21). The paranoia in the West around brown bodies and terrorism (Sian 2017), combined with accusations about the Sikh diaspora funding terror activities in India (Bhalla 2015) and the continued inclusion of the ISYF and BKI on terror lists, has meant that this historical and contemporary labelling of Sikhs is taken note of by policy makers worldwide.

Following the events of the 1980s and the "War on Terror", Sikhs are caught between representations in the West and those in India, constantly required to prove their legitimacy, for example by highlighting their past loyalties in the form of the "loyal Sikh soldier" archetype, which emphasises the role played by Sikh soldiers fighting for the British Indian Army in the first and second World Wars (BBC News, 2018b). As 'religious others' whose normative image supports anti-assimilationist dress, Sikhs are prone to state and media anxieties about a return to fanatic "religious violence" fuelled by contemporary reports of "Sikh extremism" in Indian media. Existing in the Western imaginary as a "loyal" martial race with members who are at risk of becoming "extreme" at any time, concerns in Western

media and policy about “Sikh extremism” and “Sikh radicalisation” are therefore a consequence of this underlying “anxiety about anti-assimilationist religious others”. Having been settled in and having made significant contributions to various Western liberal democracies for over one hundred years, the question remains as to when these anxieties will cease.

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