

The effect of military operations on justice

Effect: None (securitisation was not an effective strategy for resolving the Punjab crisis. While it may have achieved some short-term gains, it ultimately failed to address the underlying causes of the conflict and may have even exacerbated tensions)

Confidence in study findings: Low (one study, low confidence)

Short Summary

The Sikh community suffered significant injustice during the Punjab crisis. State violence, communal riots, and a compromised legal system exacerbated their grievances. The government's heavy-handed security approach, exemplified by Operation Bluestar, failed to address the root causes of the conflict. Instead, it fueled resentment, securitised Sikh identity, and hindered the pursuit of justice. This approach proved ineffective in resolving the crisis and ultimately exacerbated tensions

Long summary

The intervention

The Indian government's response to the Punjab ethnic crisis, which involved a combination of legal measures, military operations, and increased security presence, can be considered a multifaceted intervention. While political engagement was attempted, it was largely eclipsed by the dominant security approach

How is the intervention expected to work

This was characterised by heavy-handed security measures and limited political engagement, suppressed militancy but also securitised Sikh identity and failed to address underlying grievances. This approach undermined democratic principles, led to human rights abuses, and hindered the pursuit of justice for all affected parties

The evidence base

There is one qualitative study assessing the effect of **military operations on achieving justice as an outcome in Punjab, India**. This study is by SM. Roychoudhury. *State Securitization and Internal Ethnic Conflicts in India: Re-examining the Punjab Crisis*. *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 2 (2014): 155-173. All references are from that study.

The evidence

The evidence while discussing the securitisation approach employed in the Punjab crisis, does not explicitly detail how the intervention was expected to deliver justice as an outcome. The primary focus of the intervention is on restoring order and maintaining national unity, with less emphasis on addressing the underlying injustices that fueled the conflict.

- 1) **Human Rights Abuses and Lack of Redressal:** The author, while acknowledging the government's justification for Operation Bluestar as a necessary action to combat terrorism, criticises the operation for its intensity and brutality. This suggests that the operation resulted in human rights violations and casualties that went beyond what was necessary, implying a denial of justice to those affected. Furthermore, the author mentions the lack of judicial redressal for the victims of the anti-Sikh riots that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The failure to hold those responsible for the riots

accountable further underscores the lack of justice experienced by the Sikh community. (p.163-164)

- 2) **Securitisation and Marginalization of Sikhs:** The author argues that this approach targeted not just the militants but also the Sikh identity itself (p.160). The perception of Sikh demands for autonomy and their religious symbols as threats led to their marginalisation and the creation of an environment of fear and suspicion denied the Sikh community equal treatment and recognition within the Indian state. The failure to engage with the communities' grievances in a meaningful and timely manner is presented as a key factor contributing to the escalation of the conflict. This neglect of grievances can be interpreted as a denial of justice, as it ignores the root causes of the conflict and perpetuates the conditions that led to Sikh dissatisfaction and the rise of militancy. (p.161)
- 3) **Military operations:** The Indian government's use of emergency laws and military force in Punjab, is argued as undermining democratic principles that restricted civil liberties.⁶⁷⁸ The author gives an example of the lack of judicial investigation into the killing of a family by the police, highlighting how the justice system may have been compromised during this period. The weakening of democratic processes and institutions is presented as a factor that further hindered the pursuit of justice in Punjab. (p.168-169)

The intervention may have achieved some short-term security gains, they failed to deliver justice as an outcome for the Sikh community.

Confidence assessment

Overall confidence: Low Confidence Qualitative Study (Established small n approach is not used/Unclear, no description of the data collection method, No explanation and justification for sample/case selection strategy, no triangulation done, no discussion of bias)