

## **The Transnational Killing: Escalating Tensions between India and Canada**

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### **Introduction**

The political drama between India and Canada has certainly been highlighted, and the words exchanged between the two countries have only made the relations more complex. The statement made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claiming the involvement of Indian Government in the murder of Canadian Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar has fueled diplomatic tensions. The Indian Government strongly denied the claims as “absurd and motivated”<sup>1</sup>. The Gol reacted to the allegations and claims made, resulting in Canada and India expelling each other’s senior diplomats in what has been characterized as a rising dispute. Canada, being a key ally in NATO, adds to the complexity of this diplomatic situation. The allegations from Canada have recently gained attention in the US, as concern around Indian intelligence activities overseas increases. Whether India and Canada can continue building relations as India attempts to make the most of the tragic yet opportunistic situation remains to be seen. Therefore, this stressed tension

between both of the countries underlines a need for a balanced approach to end this dramatic political story. This conflict and hostility between the two countries may pose difficulties to people who have family, personal, or business interests in either country. The crisis overall offers a unique chance to bridge the gap of mistrust, transforming it into a strong foundation for mutual understanding. Through thoughtful actions and measured dialogue, a harmonious relationship can once again be restored between India and Canada.

### **The Diplomatic Standoff**

While speaking on the powerful Canadian media, the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave out certain “credible allegations” that can lead to Indian involvement in the assassination of the Sikh Canadian leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar. In response, the Government of India has countered those accusations and even opposed the Canadian Government as the one that supports terrorist entities. Prime Minister Trudeau has assumed that he has evidence suggesting Indian involvement in the direct assassination of an Indian

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national in Canada.

These allegations from Trudeau's side have made this issue extremely sensitive, with both countries adopting war-like positions. Canada expelled a senior Indian diplomat to show its disapproval of Indian involvement in the assassination. On the other hand, India ordered the Canadian High Commissioner to dismiss Canada's Chief of Intelligence Bureau Station in New Delhi. It took offense to what is perceived as interference in their internal politics.<sup>2</sup>

This argument also includes other members of the Five Eyes, such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, which indicates that this dispute may affect global relations. As Canada holds accusations against India, there needs to be sensitivity towards trust within the allies, as does credibility around sensitive areas of intelligence. Such accusations of surveillance without well-defined explanations would serve as pressure to the internal relations of the alliance and may strategically coordinate a move to counterbalance or undermine initiatives.

Canada's allies from the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, find themselves in a tricky position because they need to balance showing support with Canada while at the same time ensuring not to damage their bilateral ties with India, which forms the centerpiece of

the Western anti-China strategy. It has been said that during the tenure of Justin Trudeau, Sikh appeasement has increased. Trudeau respects the Sikh community because they comprise 2% of Canada's population. It is reputed that Canada has the highest Sikh population in the world after India.<sup>3</sup> In addition, it is a known fact that the Canadian Prime Minister is particularly dependent on Sikh temples (Gurudwaras) for his election funding.<sup>4</sup>

### **Multisectoral Effect**

Furthermore, it must be understood that both of the countries are not only facing the diplomatic standoff, but this issue has a major effect on the community as well. Canada is also home to many people of Indian origin, which will increase the impact of this separation on a global scale, straining diplomatic relations and possibly people-to-people relations. Cooperation in the field of arts, culture, and tourism may be condensed, impeding the chances of Canadians and Indians meeting, sharing experiences, and fostering understanding. An escalation in social negativity or preconceived notions has the potential to disturb interpersonal relationships, social engagement, and international compassion.

The increasing tensions between India and Canada relate to the failing cross-border relations, which can put at risk the bilateral academic exchanges and



cooperation, especially considering that as of 2022, forty-one percent of international students studying in Canada are from India.<sup>5</sup> In the context of the current state of affairs, the economic impact of the standoff is tremendous. The two countries are projected to trade upwards of 9 billion dollars by 2022.<sup>6</sup> This could restrict economic growth, limit employment opportunities, and create instability for businesses operating in both nations.

The conflict between Canada and India has far-reaching consequences, whether domestic or foreign. From a domestic perspective, the matter results in disabling the electorate in the two countries. From a global perspective, this could extend conflict to countries that have close relations to one or the other state and so further strain international relations. Other nations may exercise caution in engaging with one side of the conflict due to concerns about potential backlash, as alignment with either party could risk straining diplomatic relations. The fallout between these nations will also seriously dent the Western desire to contain China's rising geopolitical importance. Canada and India play critical roles in the Indo-Pacific region's geopolitical maneuvering and balance of power. The strained relations between these two countries could lead to divergent approaches or weakened coordination in dealing with everyday challenges, including China's assertive

actions.

## **Conclusion**

This situation emphasizes the need for decisive action, providing an opportunity to redefine their course with a commitment to truth. Rather than disclosing differences in public, both governments should engage in contemplation to recognize each other's significance in achieving a sustainable future. Though both governments have used this diplomatic gap to their advantage, it has affected the citizens of both countries. The Indian government had temporarily suspended VISA services for Canadian citizens for almost one month. Further, it has advised both its citizens and diplomats in Canada to be on "high alert".<sup>7</sup>

India has also accused that the Canadian allegations are seeking to shift the focus away from Khalistani terrorists and extremists in Canada and continue to threaten India's sovereignty and integrity.<sup>8</sup> The support of Khalistan by Sikhs in Canada is often rooted in a desire for a separate homeland for Sikhs, fueled by historical and identity concerns. On November 2023, selected terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Canadian and American citizen and the founder of the banned Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), released a video asking Sikhs not to fly on Air India aircraft after 19 November 2023, as their lives could be under threat.<sup>9</sup> Later, in December 2023, he

released another video in which he said he would attack the Indian Parliament on or before December 13 following an alleged foiled plot to kill him.<sup>10</sup>

It is also important to note that the values of human rights, freedom of expression, and individual rights continue

to be emphasized by the West in the context of the India-Canada diplomatic standoff because these principles are fundamental to democratic societies, and the West sees their promotion and protection as essential in fostering global stability, justice, and adherence to shared democratic values.

### Notes and References

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