

DECODING MODI'S PARTITION HORRORS REMEMBRANCE DAY

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



Introduction

On August 14, 2021, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced for the first time to celebrate the day each year as the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day. PM Modi argued that “Partition’s pains can never be forgotten.” He added that “Millions of our sisters and brothers were displaced and many lost their lives due to mindless hate and violence.”² PM Modi indirectly referred to the partition of British India in 1947 resulting in the creation of India and Pakistan (West and East). Nonetheless, it is good to know that the Indian opposition parties, especially the Indian National Congress termed PM Modi’s move as “divisive” and could further widen the already existing rifts within the Indian polity.³ It is important to note that despite PM Modi’s politics of hatred, the sane voices still exist in India and condemn such initiatives.

1 “BJP,” *Twitter*, August 14, 2021, <https://twitter.com/bjp4india/status/1426463106813743110>.

2 “Narendra Modi,” *Twitter*, August 14, 2021, <https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1426410192258830341>.

3 “Opposition Terms ‘Partition Horrors Remembrance Day’ a Divisive Move,” *The Hindu*, August 14, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/opposition-terms-partition-horrors-remembrance-day-a-divisive-move/article35912279.ece>.

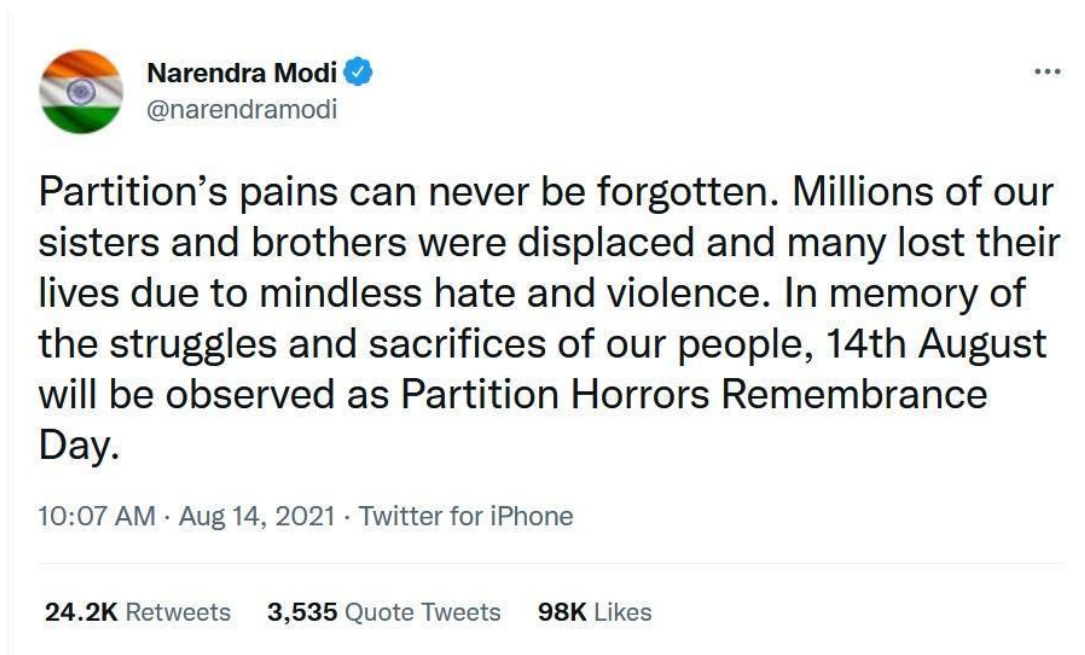


Figure 1: The tweet by Indian PM Narendra Modi on Partition Horrors Remembrance Day.⁴

The Government of India published a detailed report on Partition Horrors Remembrance Day (Figure 2); however, the report appears to be an attempt to murder history. It chose carefully selected images from newspapers which only highlighted the plight suffered by Hindus. It is interesting to note that none of the images and news pieces in the report showed the mass killings of Muslims and there was absolutely no mentioning of rape and abduction of Muslim women. The report did mention that the Government of India claimed a total of 33,000 abducted women; however, the Government of Pakistan claimed that 50,000 of its women were abducted.⁵ The Indian government did nothing to recover such women, except that its President Rajendra Prasad made few hollow statements.

⁴ "Narendra Modi."

⁵ "Partition Horrors Remembrance Day," *Ministry of Culture, Government of India*, August 2022, <https://amritmahotsav.nic.in/partition-horror-remembrance-day.htm>.

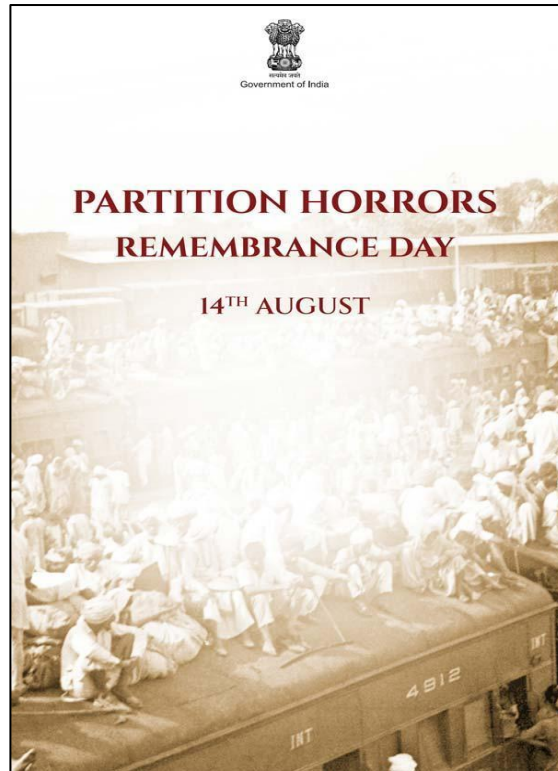


Figure 2: The title page of the report published by the Government of India.⁶

After reading the 52-pager report, it becomes clear that an attempt is being made to persuade the readers of Indo-Pak history that only Hindus were subjected to violence and hatred during the partition in 1947. The report entailed the rationale for celebrating such a day and argued that “The partition of India in its most basic form is a story of unprecedented human displacement and forced migration.”⁷ This one-sided narration of distorted history is among the many initiatives taken by the incumbent Modi government to deliberately distort history and such a use of propaganda is increasingly becoming an instrument of Indian statecraft.

Rebuttal by Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

Pakistan was quick to respond to India's propagation of false information and distorted history. Its Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri lamented Indian activities and stated that “No modern state is so much in contradiction with itself as the Indian state – the so-called ‘largest democracy’.”⁸ The Spokesperson argued and highlighted the dichotomy prevailing in Modi's India.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Press Release,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, August 14, 2021, <https://mofa.gov.pk/press-release-449/>.

Jammu and Kashmir – Partition Horrors Remembrance Day

No one has suffered and perhaps, no one could ever imagine suffering the horrors of the partition of British India – as the Kashmiri Muslims. The innocent Muslims of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) are the primary victims of the partition, as the fate of their freedom and self-determination is the unfinished agenda lying in front of the United Nations. The right-wing Indian government seems determined in reminding the people of IIOJK of the horrors of partition on a daily basis.

Analysis

Historically, with an apparent goal of impeding the partition, the Congress leader Gandhi solely initiated the Quit India Movement (1942-44) aimed at pressuring the British to leave India without partitioning it.⁹ It is to be remembered here that during that time, the British attention was fixed on Europe, as Germany started the Second World War in September 1939 and initiated the Blitz against Brits. Also, after the Fall of France in May 1940, and the military operations in Northern Africa, the war dynamics somehow diminished the strategic value of British India for the Crown's policymakers.¹⁰ However, the Quit India Movement could have resulted in a delayed or no partition of British India. Furthermore, it was a political quagmire for the British when it came to transfer of power, since there was no political entity that represented all the nations living in British India.

In retrospect, the incumbent right-wing Indian government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seems relentless in demonising the leadership of the Indian National Congress for the division of British India and the subsequent creation of the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. So much so, that the leadership of BJP seems ever busy in a desperate bid to undo the partition of 1947 to further Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) stated aim to resuscitate *Akhand Bharat*.¹¹ The RSS is the ideological as well as the parent organisation of BJP.¹² In this regard, the rehabilitation attempts of Nathuram Godse – the man that was responsible for killing the founder of

⁹ Paul R. Greenough, "Political Mobilization and the Underground Literature of the Quit India Movement, 1942–44," *Modern Asian Studies* 17, no. 3 (1983): 353–86, doi:10.1017/S0026749X00007538.

¹⁰ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1990), 720.

¹¹ Krzysztof Iwanek, "Interests before Ideas. Does Hindu Nationalism Influence India's Foreign Policy?," *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*, no. 31 (2018): 97–113.

¹² Shyamlal Yadav, "RSS and the Idea of Akhand Bharat," *The Indian Express*, January 4, 2016, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/rss-akhand-bharat/>.

India Mohandas Gandhi, is noticeable.¹³ Also, at the same time, demonisation of Gandhi and his family is the agenda of the RSS and the BJP government.

One thinks that the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day ought to be celebrated as the Humanity Resilience Day or to Commemorate the Brutalities of the British Colonizers' Day to honour those who sacrificed their lives and their cherished belongings. It is a fact that the partition of the Indian sub-continent brought unprecedented calamities for its people. However, it is equally important to highlight those elements which were instrumental in persuading or perhaps pressurising Sir Cyril Radcliffe for the inclusion of Muslim majority regions in the Indian dominion. It was noted that Radcliffe showed deliberate indifference related to the fate of Muslim majority Gurdaspur District of Punjab by giving it to India.¹⁴ By calculatedly doing the latter, the Indian leaders were the ones which unleashed unprecedented horrors on the Indian Muslims and such horrors have become a new normal in Modi's India against minorities.

What PM Modi really wants?

PM Modi intends to create a set of wrong narratives to portray that only Hindus bore the brunt of the partition of British India in August 1947 and to later use such narratives in declaring the Indian Muslims as aliens and to deny them their citizenship rights. Also, it is clear why PM Modi chose August 14 as the 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day'. The incumbent Indian leadership intends to leave no stone unturned in its desperate drive to demonise Pakistan. The very reason to choose 'August 14' is to connect Pakistan's Independence Day with that of the nascent make-believe history PM Modi is trying to write. However, such attempts would only make the Pakistani nation more cognizant of their history and culture. In this regard, the *Radio Pakistan* also held a programme to highlight such Indian attempts of faking history and the author of this paper also participated.¹⁵

Conclusions

It is not ambitious to conclude that India under PM Modi has become an epicentre of false narratives and disinformation campaigns against Pakistan and even Indian Muslims. Such instruments are calculatedly used to portray a distorted, biased, and one-sided version of history to pave the way to further invoke hatred and enmity among the Indian Hindus and peoples of the

¹³ Hannah Ellis-Petersen, "Mahatma Gandhi's Killer Rehabilitated by India's Hindu Nationalists," *The Irish Times*, January 17, 2021, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/mahatma-gandhi-s-killer-rehabilitated-by-india-s-hindu-nationalists-1.4460574>.

¹⁴ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defense Policy, 1947-58* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 25.

¹⁵ "India's Mischievous Move of Observing 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day' on August 14," *Radio Pakistan*, August 10, 2022, <https://www.radio.gov.pk/currentaffairs/10-08-2022/economy-heading-in-the-right-direction-due-to-prudent-measures-of-the-government>.

world. These activities are alarming and the ongoing demonisation of Indian Muslims could trigger communal violence and ethnic cleansing. The international community should take heed of such vengeful actions of the Indian government which could incite violence.

The 3rd United States President Thomas Jefferson once argued that “The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.”¹⁶ Today, the people of Pakistan are living in an independent state and are enjoying the most precious and regal gift – freedom. They pay utmost homage and tribute to the relentless efforts rendered by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, their followers, and members of the All-India Muslim League in securing the land called Pakistan. Such sincere efforts culminated at the creation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947. The German war theorist Carl von Clausewitz rightly argued that “blood is the price of victory.”¹⁷ The Pakistani nation is thankful to all those who sacrificed their blood in realising the seemingly impossible creation of Pakistan.

It was correctly noted that:

“All the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent were one nation. It was an accident of history that a portion of them was left behind in the Indian Union, but that portion is still in some ‘extra-political’ way an extension of the Pakistani nation: because India was divided on the basis of the two-nation theory.”¹⁸

However, on the other hand, by witnessing the inhumane living conditions of the Indian Muslims, the helpless Muslims of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, and a systematic apartheid under the Hindutva-driven extremist Indian government, the people of Pakistan have again realised that why PM Modi is so keen in celebrating and commemorating the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, especially on August 14.

¹⁶ Victor T. Le Vine, “Violence and the Paradox of Democratic Renewal: A Preliminary Assessment,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 3–4 (2000): 261, doi:10.1080/09546550008427579.

¹⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 259.

¹⁸ K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism* (London: Chatoo and Windus, 1967), 194.

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