



## **Encountering Hidden Transcripts: Behind the Antagonism of the India-Pakistan Narrative**

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### **Introduction**

This article reflects on the imaginary of Pakistan within contemporary Indian society. It is based factually on a personal experience of events and encounters during my study visit at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi 2018.

Being a scholar with Pakistani heritage, this is a perspective that is not commonly found in social sciences because not many scholars of Pakistani heritage are allowed to study in India. The geopolitical hostilities between India and Pakistan go along with mutually restrictive visa policies which extend to citizens of third countries whose parents had been born in either country. Both my parents, though living in London as British citizens since the 1970s, had been born in Pakistan. In fact, even in India, I was made aware of my rather novel positionality by other academic actors from all contexts and status. It is these conversations that laid the ground for establishing the potential to derive a new understanding about the Pakistani imaginary in contemporary India and interrogate the India-Pakistan narrative presented itself.



I feel at liberty to admit that this research was enabled by my different identity characteristics i.e. my gender (female), ethnicity (Pakistani), nationality (British/German) and social location (Germany). In my case, I had considered these characteristics, and actively worked with them as a resource to tease out further nuances on the Pakistan imaginary in contemporary India. I draw from different socio-cultural repertoires acquired in differing contexts to navigate this intersectional identity. This is performed to reveal more nuances on the India-Pakistan narrative from a different perspective that is yet to be explored in scholarship. In presenting and analysing encounters from the everyday of the university milieu, I intend to reveal more about the nature of the India-Pakistan narrative in contemporary India. More specifically, I will demonstrate how the India-Pakistan narrative is constructed, articulated, maintained and imbued by various actors.

In order to add the already existing works on the multiple and entangled narratives on India-Pakistan relations, I will employ the notion of public and hidden transcripts (Scott 1990) as a heuristic tool. The hidden transcript is not revealed to outsiders easily which means that scholars that are too easily identifiable as foreigners (due to their ethnicity or lack of Hindi/Urdu language skills) will usually be excluded from those conversations. Looking at the hidden transcript is undertaken to gauge more precisely the nature of the imaginary of Pakistan in India. I will illuminate that besides the public transcripts there exists a hidden transcript in India concerning Pakistan and the India-Pakistan relationship.

### **Theoretical lens: public vs. hidden transcript**

There are many narratives on the India-Pakistan relationship that have emerged. Narratives are usually found in the public transcript that is constructed by the dominant society members. The public transcript is defined as 'the self-portrait of the dominant elites'. It is a 'highly partisan and partial narrative [...] designed to be impressive, to affirm and naturalize the power of dominant elites, and to conceal or euphemize the dirty linen of their rule' (ibid.: 18).

In contrast to the public transcript, narratives can also be found in the hidden transcript. It is formed by discourses that take place "offstage", outside the observation of the dominant society members. The hidden transcript is produced by and for a different audience and under different rules of power than the public transcript (ibid.: 5). The hidden transcript is however still linked to the public transcript as its content relates to the



public transcript by confirming, contradicting or inflecting what appears in the public transcript (ibid.: 4-5).

The hidden transcript is however, not really hidden. It can be found in everyday life if one looks for behaviour that reveals resistance towards the public transcript. Usually, subordinate society members employ "strategies of resistance" in some shape or form. If one looks for these cues, one is able to reveal the hidden transcript. In order to reveal those, I had to look at the languages used and linguistic devices employed. Such devices can be 'rumour, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures and anonymity' (ibid.: 137).

### **Public narratives on the India-Pakistan relationship**

The complex shared history of India and Pakistan has allowed many public narratives on relationship between India and Pakistan to emerge. In this section, I will present some of these narratives, focusing on those that have framed my encounters in India. The narratives that have emerged towards me do not paint a monolithic picture but are rather entangled and build upon each other through recognition and transfer of differing components of the narratives. The nationalistic narrative emphasises conflict and hostility, which the "love jihad" narrative build upon.

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#### *Nationalistic narrative*

The dominant narrative concerning the relationship between India and Pakistan is characterised by negative sentiments. Adjectives such as tense, troubled, strained, hostile, antagonistic and conflict-ridden come to mind when describing the current state of the relationship. The formation of India and Pakistan came out of the Partition of India by the British in 1947 which was based on the two-nation theory (Ghosh 2019: 2). Thus, making sense of Partition on the Indian-subcontinent have been embroiled in 'two discordant nationalist narratives' (Fazila-Yacoobali 1999: 184).

The strained diplomatic relations between the two nations have been well-documented (Paul 2005; Cohen 2013; Hiro 2015; McLeod 2016). The narrative is nationalistic and focuses on the policies of the nation state. This type of framing leads to a narrative that is organised along geopolitical encounters resulting in the Indian-Pakistan relationship being continuously expressed through the lens of conflict. For example, the 1965 and the 1971 wars, the 1989 Kashmir insurgency, the competitive nuclear testing in the late 1990s, the Mumbai terrorist attacks as well as the on-going Kashmir



related violence become reference points. These events and the response to them from the national governments are used to assess the state of the India-Pakistan relationship. Unsurprisingly, these events and their consequences are used as examples to confirm the antagonistic nature of the India-Pakistan relationship. Such narratives have been commonly described by scholars of political science and international relations which contribute to a solidification of the dominant narrative of hostility and hate (see Commuri 2009; Michael 2018 as examples).

Moreover, Chaturvedi (2002: 149) has pointed to a process of othering that both nations engage for what he describes as 'geopolitical place-making'. He highlights that the "nation building" enterprise after partition failed to discontinue from the representation of "Hindus" and "Muslims" as two different rival political communities which the British colonial administration had introduced before. It was the British administration that used such tactics of othering to divide their subcontinental colony which had been so powerful that they still lead to a state of otherness between the two nations. As Chaturvedi highlights, this otherness gets reinforced through hegemonic, homogenising, state-centric discourses on 'national identity' and 'national (in)security', and exclusivist geopolitical imaginations of various ethnoreligious groups (ibid.).

### *Love jihad narrative*

The nationalistic narrative is constantly updated and new strains of thought are being added. One example is that of the "love jihad" narrative. The "love jihad" narrative deems that Muslim men are engaging in a *jihad* (struggle) for their faith by targeting Hindu women and insisting on their conversion to Islam. According to normative Islamic interpretations, Muslim men may take women from the other monotheistic faiths—Judaism and Christianity—as wives without demanding the wives to convert to Islam. The notion of "love jihad" recognises this Islamic norm and adds additional facets. Love jihad as purported in the RSS nationalist circles, involves targeting 'young Hindu girls outside ice-cream parlours, schools, colleges and theatres. There is an organised effort to demoralise the Hindu community.' (Verma & Johnson 2014; as found in Jaffrelot 2021: 195)

The term "love jihad" emerged in the first decade of the twenty-first century from Hindu nationalist circles in India and has begun to circulate widely in the public sphere (Biswas 2021: 228-9; Jaffrelot 2021: 196). The notion of "love jihad" has become pervasive resulting in Hindu nationalist networks collaborating with the police and judiciary to prevent the marriage



of Muslim men and Hindu women through indirect intervention (Jaffrelot 2021: 199-200) as well as through legislation (Biswas 2021: 229).<sup>1</sup> The love jihad had also been causing difficulties on the JNU campus during my 2018 time in India. I remember my co-students being shocked about the gravity of the clashes. Some of them also being in shock that such a narrative had taken hold of young students even in the liberal context of JNU. Many were spurred on to protest against actions that propagated the "love jihad" narrative, especially those of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) which frequently spread anti-Muslim propaganda. Jaffrelot (2021: 181) has identified the on-campus screening of the film *In the Name of Love – Melancholy of God’s Own Country* which depicted the phenomenon of love jihad in a scaremongering manner as the starting point. However, in my memory, the tension appeared to have a longer history.

As pointed out by Jaffrelot, the narrative of love jihad is linked to two long standing fears held by Hindu nationalists. The first fear touches on a supposed physical inferiority complex regarding Muslims, who are thought to be better built and more virile and thus more appealing. The second fear is linked to the impact of Muslim men on demographic decline. Muslim men seduce Hindu women convincing them to convert to Islam, producing Muslim offspring (ibid.: 195-6).

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In my opinion, the "love jihad" narrative taps into the history and memory of Partition and subsequent nations states under the two-nation state theory with Pakistan as the Muslim nation state and India as the Hindu nation state. The notion of love jihad serves to cause anxiety in the Hindu population, who overwhelmingly residing in India. Love jihad plays on their fear of loss and trauma as experienced in the Partition. In the "love jihad" narrative, (Hindu) women are perceived as an object that needs to be protected from religiously motivated Muslim men.

The potential loss of the women creates a fear of Muslims and links to Pakistan as it is the Muslim men of Pakistan who trick and deceive the (Hindu) women of the India with false expressions of love (Gupta 2009: 13). In my view, Hindu nationalist play with the concept of jihad. They assume that Muslims see it as their religiously motivated jihad to proselytise Indian women by offering to be their spouse which would weaken the human capital of India when such women converted to Islam or raised their children as Muslim. Similarly, to my view, Frydenlund and Leidig (2022) have pointed out the misogynistic component of such narrative as the fear of the Islamisation is projected onto the body of Hindu women. The Indian women become an object of the nation to save and protect.



Through use of Islamic concepts, the love jihad amplifies one of the motives justifying the founding of both nation states—Pakistan (as a Muslim nation) and India (as a Hindu nation). As love jihad alludes to, it is the potential conversion of the Hindu (and most likely Indian) women that is demanded by Muslim men from a normative Islamic perspective. The "love jihad" narrative adopts aspects of the founding narratives of both nations rooted in religion and instrumentalised by Hindu nationalists. This allows the love jihad narrative to be partially subsumed into the nationalistic, conflict-driven India-Pakistan narrative.

### **Hidden transcript**

The hidden transcript is not easily to be found in publicly available sources. Instead, it is found in the conversations amongst non-dominant society members. During my time in India, I was able to take part in those conversations with individuals of differing socio-economic status. However, the findings presented in this article have not emerged within a specific research context that has been pre-planned from distance and then executed in India. Instead, the reflections offered here stem from my time as a scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, from January 2018 until June 2018. The spatiality of JNU presented me with the opportunity to engage in a reflexive (and partially self-reflexive) undertaking. This self-reflexive undertaking became more heightened because of my novel positionality within the Indian university context of JNU which describes itself as a "microcosm of Indian society".

The following I will engage in a systematic (re-)examination of my personal correspondence such personal notes (written and electronic), private diaries and app-based private chat logs which all become sources of knowledge. For purposes of data protection, some information has been anonymised. During my visit in India from January to June 2018, I documented my encounters in India and analysed them aiming to discover the strategies of resistance that I employed to contest the geopolitically informed public transcript that circulates in the Indian imaginary regarding Pakistan. I was however not only an observer, but also a partaker. Due to my appearance, I was considered a natural member of Indian society and quickly identified as such (at least partly). As a consequence, I identified on myself various strategies of resistance that I employed during my encounters and that I had taken over from my Indian peers. In this section, I will discuss the various strategies of resistance that I employed to under-



stand more about the Pakistani-Indian imaginary. I will focus on the strategies that include omission and emphasis, mockery and irony as well as questioning and interrogating.

*Omission and emphasis: construction of a "suitable" biographical narrative*

The title of this article draws from an utterance made by a member of academic faculty at JNU that served a point of departure the further inquiry into the narratives concerning the India-Pakistan relationship. An advanced scholar who was aware of my existence advised me to not articulate the "P-word", should individuals should ask about my background. The "P-word" refers to Pakistan. On first encountering him, he exclaimed 'you must be Farah, the Pakistani one!' After going through some pleasantries, we returned back to my background. He inquired where I was born, when my parents migrated to the UK and whether I still have family in Pakistan. After discussing the finer details of my biographical situation, I asked him how open to be about my Pakistani heritage. He advised me to, despite being second generation Pakistani, to avoid mentioning the "P-word" as he described it, even on the campus. Jawaharlal Nehru University, given its long-standing reputation as India's most liberal and left-leaning progressive university, has become a target for Hindu nationalists (Jaffrelot 2021: 176). Incidences of violence led by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) student organisation, aligned to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) who promulgate Hindutva doctrine, had become more acute on campus since 2016 (ibid.: 176-81).

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In such circumstances on the campus, there was a necessity to find a strategy that did not cause any undue anxieties. As indicated by the advanced scholar, the main priority was ensuing that my studies could continue peacefully and I would not be bothered unduly. Thus, we undertook the decision to devise a "suitable narrative" that considered the sensitivity of the context yet remained authentic. The strategy of not uttering Pakistan in relation to my biography already provides an indication about what Pakistan could give rise to.

*Concealing Pakistan and evoking Punjabiness*

In this section, I will demonstrate how the term "Punjab" becomes a signifier for sentiments such as joy, fun and conviviality but functioned as a diversion. Through the coordinator's dissection of my biography as mentioned above, another word beginning with "P" offered a more viable framing in creating a suitable narrative. That word was "Punjab", a region



that runs over both India and Pakistan. In the everyday Indian context, I would be considered predominantly Punjabi. This is because my father was born in Lahore in the region of Punjab before partition.

The recourse to Punjab provided a suitable framing and articulation of my biography. In this context, avoiding or refusing to answer questions on one's biography could lead to suspicion in such contexts. The luxury of responding to questions about my background with statements such as 'it is irrelevant' or 'it should not even be a question you should be asking nowadays', are not quite as widespread in South Asia. Such articulations, as highlighted above, could be interpreted as nonchalant, arrogant and even suspicious. It may impose articulations of identity that stem from post-Eurocentric context which could be interpreted as Eurocentric and reasserting domination in postcolonial India.

The term "Punjab" acted as a signifier that evokes particular associations in the social imaginary of India. Associations of song, dance and music were immediately expressed by individuals from all types of socio-economic backgrounds such as scholars, bureaucrats, businessmen, rickshaw drivers, shopkeepers and ironing service personnel. From these encounters, it became apparent that the associations that Punjab signified appeared to be homogenous. This may be due to the role that Punjabis have played in the Indian film industry. Schreffler (2012: 340) has noted that some of the most influential film composers, singers and actors of the twentieth century hail from Punjab.

When Indians hear the word "Punjabi", they generally associate only positive activities such as singing, dancing and music with it but not readily the aspect that the Punjab region is composed not only of an Indian side but also of a Pakistani side. Even though, Punjab is recognised administratively as a state in both nations, the specificities concerning which Punjab—Pakistani Punjab or Indian Punjab—was rarely demanded by conversation partners. Indian Punjab was automatically assumed or complicity confirmed through gestures and speech utterances. Thus, Punjab and its positive sentiments it caused in people, acted as an inadvertent diversion concealing Punjab's obvious link to the Pakistan. Moreover, I argue that such a concealing was only able to take place because of the global edge that Punjab identity has acquired over the last two centuries. Punjabis have migrated to other parts of the globe either as subjects of the Crown under the British colonial administration or as nationals of Pakistan and India from the 1950s onwards (ibid.: 355-6).





The transformation from Pakistan to Punjab demonstrated one of the strategies of negotiation I employed whilst dealing with the India-Pakistan relationship. Such a strategy could be labelled as a type of strategic essentialisation (Spivak 1995), in which individuals of a minority group members reduce differences between each other and mobilise on the basis of shared gendered, cultural or political identity to represent themselves as a homogenous entity to achieve certain objectives (Eide 2010: 76). By emphasising my Punjabi-heritage as opposed to my Pakistani-heritage, I performed a type of strategic essentialisation reducing my perceived difference.

### *Questioning and interrogating*

Another strategy of resistance that I employed involved questioning my interlocutors' statements. It involved zooming in on particular phrases and terms, and inquiring about their feelings and perceptions. I focused on their subjective narrative whilst refuting and clarifying certain misrepresentations and false statements. On an almost daily basis, I was confronted with statements such as 'What are you doing at JNU? It is full of anti-India students that show no respect' or 'there is always trouble going on there'. With such statements, probing into what is specifically "anti-Indian" proved insightful. The conversations revealed that JNU had acquired the perception as a space that is exclusively pro-Muslim. This perception went to the extent that my conversation partners expressed the concern that JNU was pro-Pakistan and anti-India. The interlocutors conflated two distinct issues that concerned Muslims. Firstly, they interpreted the condemnation of the infringement of Indian (Muslim) citizens' rights on the JNU campus as an indication that the university and its students were pro-Pakistan and anti-Indian.

### *Mockery and irony*

In this section, I will elaborate on another strategy of resistance I undertook to gain more insights about the Pakistani imaginary amongst my conversation partners in India. Mockery has been indicated as a subtle yet powerful tool of resistance. According to Scott, subordinates when they exaggerate their compliance to the point of mockery, they openly showed their contempt for the proceedings whilst avoiding action being taken against them (Scott 1990: 139).

In my context, the other P-word "Punjab" also led to remarks about Pakistan. With my day-to-day encounters, some interlocutors were clear about their hostility towards Pakistan and the Pakistani government. Oral



history and narrative interview approaches indicate that narratives of interlocutors should remain unbroken. These techniques were employed to some extent but eventually replaced with other techniques. Another strategy of resistance emerged through active engagement with my conversation partners. This strategy can be characterised as "Pakistan-bashing". "Pakistan-bashing" involved me taking up the negative sentiments expressed by conversation partners when Pakistan came up (most likely in connection with Punjab) and relaying back similar sentiments with over-the-top irony and mocking. I would agree and repeat the unflattering statements the interlocutors made about Pakistan more melodramatically. This over-performance of exaggerated emotion ensured that I would fit the stereotype of Punjabis being lively and boisterous that had been articulated to me by many in India.

Typical articulations focused on Pakistan's economy and governance. Pakistan was described as 'not sorting itself out', 'a mess overrun by the Taliban' as well as 'underdeveloped'. Interlocutors expressed little confidence towards politics in Pakistan for example with regard to its political institutions and its economic policy. All of these statements reflected the innate comparison between Pakistan and India in key domains that were taking place. These articulations feed into the nationalistic narrative where competition between the two nations in key domains takes place. Through the everyday strategy of mockery and irony towards my interlocutors' opinions on Pakistan, my conversation partners revealed how they had imbued parts of the dominant nationalistic narrative within their imaginary of India. In the discussion, I will proceed to discuss further aspects of that are reflected into the statements and their subjective narratives.

### **Discussion**

The public transcript of Pakistan as reflected in the articulation of my conversation partners would indicate the dominant narrative of antagonism. Pakistan was described as 'being full of troublemakers' and 'making problems for every nation internationally'. These remarks indicate anger and hostility and would support the conclusion that the nature of the India-Pakistan relationship is strained and hostile. The conversation partners have imparted a negative judgement on Pakistan. However, I would like to shed light on these prima facie negative statements because I think behind the spoken words there may be hiding a deeper, more sensitive side.



### *Comparison*

The first clues for my thesis can be found in the fact that my interlocutors made comparisons to Pakistan rather often (and such comparison is not prompted by my Pakistani origin or my Muslim name because they even made such comparisons without known either of these). There is an intense comparison expressed by interlocutors with the focus on India's superiority and Pakistan's inferiority. This becomes evident through statements such as 'we have more economic growth', 'we are bigger, better, more educated', 'we are not backward and run by the Taliban'.

For me, the fact that they readily articulated a comparison between Pakistan and India points to a deeply entangled and closer relationship. The comparison highlights engagement albeit under the guise of comparing. Such an engagement points towards the interdependent construction that both nations depend upon. This interdependence, in my view, is formed by a process in which the one nation is defining it its own characteristics in relation to the other. Such a phenomenon has also been discussed in the Orientalism discourse in which scholars have argued that the Occident in the nineteenth century during the phase of nation building had constructed itself in contrast to the Orient.

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Similarly, in my opinion, India is constructing its own national identity against its perception of Pakistan. Hereby, like the Occident, such construction demands that the Other is weakened by ascribing to it characteristics of being stagnant and primitive. In contrast, India is constructed as strong, progressive and modern. If the circumstances of their founding are considered, the mutual dependence of both nations on each other becomes apparent. Both India and Pakistan need each other to construct their own images respectively. The constant comparison of India with Pakistan from the discursive articulations of the interlocutors points towards the far-reaching nature of the interdependency.

I argue that upholding the constant comparison between India and Pakistan helps to maintain the shared cultural, historical and linguistic links between both nations. In this case, the other side of act of comparison indicates feelings of loss. The constant competitive comparison enables and maintains contact over shared characteristics.

### *Care and compassion*

Besides comparisons, interlocutors expressed resignation and despair at the current plight of Pakistan. This came through statements such as



'Pakistan is finished, a lost cause' and 'there is no point in trying' or 'I don't see anything good coming in my lifetime'. The resignation also came through deflated utterances of '*inshallah*' (if god wills) from interlocutors, not only Muslim ones. The word "inshallah" is a Muslims expression as a wilful signal to Allah to make an occurrence a reality. In contexts where the Muslims speaker find a wish or desire implausible, they voice "inshallah" signaling this implausibility and (perceived) lack of will on the part of the speaker. With regards to my encounters, however, also non-Muslims interlocutors used this word, even though I assume they know of this Islamic origin. I think they used this word to express their high despair on this situation, potentially wishing to give it a derogatory meaning. However, I see it also as a sign of care as they show familiarity of Muslims expressions and customs. Furthermore, the notion of care is able to be nuanced by the complaints about that interlocutors made about Pakistan. These interlocutors would emphasise that 'Pakistan has still not sorted themselves out'. This type of complaining emphasised that Pakistan had not reached certain standards.

From such statements, I read that interlocutors had expectations for Pakistan in specific areas. The connotations of not being good enough could be understood as a put-down, supporting the narrative of rivalry and hostility. However, I argue that such connotations hint at the high hopes that Indians signal for Pakistan, given their shared history and culture. The bemoaning that Pakistan was still insufficient in many areas reminds me of a behaviour within families when family members grumble about the lack of achievement by their younger family members. The fact that Pakistan is treated like a family member symbolises their closeness. The complaining of not meeting expectation indicates sentiments of compassion behind such complaints.

The indirectly expressed care towards India have the function of keeping Pakistan in the consciousness of Indians. The resignation as well as niggling complaining about Pakistan being sub-standard highlight the ways notions of care towards Pakistan form in the Indian imaginary. Similarly to me, Kadir (2019: 212) has pointed out the familial nature of the relations between India and Pakistan due to the general notion that neighbours in the subcontinent are taken as kin.

### *Longing*

In my view, the constant comparison and caring can be interpreted as a longing to be united on a symbolic level. The fact of mentioning Pakistan



means there is contact and wanting to have something shared. In my conversations, I often sensed a feeling of loss. The feeling of loss may thus be the hidden narrative behind these expressions. Such loss had been created by the partition of the states, which involved the drawing up of arbitrary borders and meant that millions of people were uprooted and forced to flee to either side of the border (Ghosh 2019). Whereas Partition is celebrated as the birth of Pakistan, from the perspective of Indian independence, it is understood as an 'inevitable and regrettable event that allowed the nation its freedom' (Raj 2000: 30). The violent memory of partition lingers in the collective imagination of both nations. Furthermore, the memories of the traumatic events surrounding partition are transferred across generations (Roy 2019: 13).

However, the narrative of loss, is supplemented by a romanticisation of the historically shared cultural heritage. For example, Urdu which was the language that had formed in the Indo-Muslim *dabars* (courts) of the Mughal empire (Petievich 2020: 115), it is still highly regarded amongst English speaking Indian elites who view it as the language of love, beauty, politeness, *tahzeeb* (culture) and romance (Ahmad 2018).

### **Summary: constructing another narrative**

Through employing strategies of resistance as means to reveal hidden transcript, facets that different from the dominant narrative on the India-Pakistan relationship come to light. On one hand, it can be argued that the construction of a "suitable narrative" contribute to a maintenance of dominant narrative under the guise of employing strategies of resistance. This is linked to the political policy of both nations that prevent free movement of nationals between both countries. This has the consequence that the majority of individuals will not have the chance to be confronted with images that could contest the public transcript i.e. the dominant narrative that political elites charge with tension and hostility. Thus, the construction of a "suitable narrative" which involved omitting some biographical components, i.e. Pakistan and emphasising Punjabi, highlight the artificial construction of narratives. Moreover, the fact that I resorted to constructing a suitable narrative displays that Pakistan remains central to the collective imagination. If Pakistan were an "empty signifier", then an open articulation of a remote biographical connection to it, would be met with indifference. However, the construction narrative that deliberately omits Pakistan and replaces it with the shared region of Punjab indicates the persuasiveness of dominant narratives.



Due to concerns regarding my individual safety, I similarly constructed a narrative. The construction of this Pakistan to Punjabi narrative, inadvertently deprived individuals to experience something "Pakistani" or connected to Pakistan. Individuals were denied the opportunity to tangibly engage with the nationalistic, antagonistic narrative on Pakistan and India. In this way, I have de facto contributed to the maintenance of such the dominant nationalistic narrative. The mystery and speculation about Pakistan will be continued. On the other hand, strategies of resistance that might confirm the public transcript also allude to hidden transcript. The strategies of omission may support the dominance of the strained, hostile India-Pakistan relationship but it also alludes to hidden transcripts denoting care, loss and longing for Pakistan (Adib-Moghaddam 2013).

The nationalistic tense nature of the India-Pakistan relationship has been told over and over again. Through engagement with biographical research methods of autoethnography and self-reflexivity and the theoretical lens of public and hidden transcripts, I have offered more nuances on the imaginary of Pakistan in contemporary India. The encounters presented are embedded in the everyday and grounded in a lived social reality. As such, it departs from the nationalistic, geopolitical and "love jihad" narratives on the India-Pakistan relationship. Instead, hidden transcripts concerning nature of this relationship are revealed. The automatic comparison to India may represent hostility on the outset. However, its existence still denotes a sphere of in which both nations share and become symbolically joined.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The State of Uttar Pradesh promulgated a significant ordinance by the name of Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, which prohibits the conversion just for the sake of marriage and vice versa, and makes offences under it cognizable and non-bailable (Biswas 2021: 229). All internet sources have been finally checked on 11 Nov. 2022.

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