

of Maulana (an honorific given to learned Muslim men) Abdul Khalik Madrasi, vice-chancellor of Deoband, with a group of his students. They were telling me that Christians should make an alliance with Muslims against the Jews, who were the real troublemakers. It was Zionists, they said, who had organized the plane attacks on the Twin Towers in New York a few weeks earlier. It was useless arguing.

The burly Maulana, whose beard almost reached down to his round belly, then asked if I wanted a refreshment. I said I would like a Nescafé, which is the only kind of coffee usually available in north India outside the cities. "No, no," he said sternly. "We have issued a fatwa forbidding the faithful from buying any American or British products." I tried in vain to argue that I was not one of the faithful so the fatwa should not apply to me. They laughed it off. Then I tried and failed to convince them that Nescafé is owned by Nestlé, which is a Swiss company. But they had either never heard of Switzerland or could not see the difference. In much of India the word *Angrezi*—English—simply means "foreign," or "Western." No, they said, wagging their fingers, as if they had caught me pulling a fast one, Nescafé is *Angrezi*. Then something occurred to the Maulana, who was a member of the committee that issues Deobandi fatwas. "I have thought of a legitimate loophole," the Maulana announced with a smile. "The fatwa applies only to products bought after September 11. Does anyone here possess Nescafé that is older?" A student raised his hand. The mildewed sachet of instant coffee that he fetched from his room considerably predated 9/11. It was one of the most satisfying coffees I have ever had.

Deoband was founded in the aftermath of the failed Sepoy Mutiny against the British by rebel Indian regiments in 1857. Known in India as the First War of Independence, the uprising was brutally quashed by the British. The Indian rebels were vicious in their methods, killing many of the colonial women and children they encountered. In revenge the British laid waste to much of north India, burning villages and leaving hundreds strung up from trees along

6. MANY CRESCENTS

South Asia's Divided Muslims

I have not done well to the country or to the people, and of the future there is no hope.

AURANGZEB, the last great Mughal emperor, and the most controversial, in a deathbed letter to his son in 1707¹

I had not realized it was possible. But the mullahs of Deoband, the center of Islamic orthodoxy in south Asia, had managed to circumvent a fatwa (Islamic ruling) out of courtesy to me. They did it so that I could drink a cup of coffee. I was visiting Dar-ul-Uloom—the House of Knowledge—a large Islamic school in the town of Deoband, about ninety miles north of New Delhi. It was early October 2001 and the madrasa was buzzing with anti-American sentiment. The United States was about to start its bombing of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban—deriving from *Talib*, which is Urdu for "student"—belong to the Deoband school of Islam. Although few senior Taliban had visited Deoband, they saw it as their spiritual headquarters. I was sitting on the ground in the study

the main highways. Lacking a clear strategy and credible leadership, the rebel soldiers had placed the aging and wholly titular last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, at its head. Partly as a result, the British blamed Muslims more than others for the mutiny and targeted symbols of Islam in the reprisals that followed. Parts of Mughal Delhi were destroyed or vandalized. Delhi's great Jama Masjid—the largest mosque in India—became a camping ground for one of the Sikh regiments that had helped the British defeat the rebels. Prominent Muslim nobles and rebels remained in hiding for years. For them, it was a time of despair. The suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny was an emphatic and crushing finale to the era of Islamic dynasties in India.

The response to this defeat by India's Muslim intelligentsia was deeply split. One group, led by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, saw reconciliation as the only practical option. But Sir Sayyid's decision to make an accommodation with the British was also motivated by his fear of what would happen to Muslims in an independent India with a majority Hindu population. Sir Sayyid's expectations of democracy in India were bleak. "It would be like a game of dice, in which one man had four dice and the other man one."² In 1875 Sir Sayyid founded the Aligarh Muslim University, which chose English as its medium of instruction and included modern science prominently on its syllabus. Many of Aligarh's graduates went on to join the imperial civil service. Later they would provide much of the vanguard of elite Muslims who led the movement to establish the nation of Pakistan.

The other group, led by two Islamic scholars, Hazrat Nanautavi and Rashid Ahwad Gangoli, saw the failure of the mutiny and its bloody aftermath as a sign that Muslims should return to first principles. Maulana Nanautavi's followers believed the downfall of Indian Islam had been brought about by the sybaritic habits of courtly life under the Mughals. Muslims had also been weakened over the previous two or three centuries by adopting too many customs of the Hindu idol-worshipping majority.³ The simple Arabian message of

the Prophet had been forgotten. Maulana Nanautavi established the school of Dar-ul-Uloom in Deoband in 1866 to offer despairing Muslims a "shore-less ocean for seekers of knowledge."⁴ It would retreat from the world of unbelievers into a world of certainties.

Very few Deobandis approved of the idea of Pakistan, which was first raised in the 1930s. As a separate nation-state, Pakistan was seen as a divisive prospect since it would artificially split the *Ummah*, or community of believers. Some Deobandis were persuaded to join the Congress Party-led freedom movement in 1919 by Gandhi, who grasped the opportunity presented by the British occupation of the Arabian peninsula following the British victory over the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. There was much Muslim, and particularly Deobandi Muslim, outrage over the presence of the infidel British in the holy lands. Gandhi's endorsement of the Indian Khilafat movement to restore the Muslim caliphate, which had been abolished after Turkey emerged from the Ottoman ruins, instilled in the Congress Party a habit of tactical opportunism toward Indian Muslims that still remains. Little else could explain Gandhi's decision to associate the Indian freedom struggle with a purely religious controversy about the fleeting custody of faraway Mecca and Medina. Believing it was wrong to mix religious faith with politics, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, who would become Pakistan's first head of state nearly thirty years later, resigned from the Congress Party in disgust. Few Deobandis approved of Jinnah, who drank whisky, ate pork, and was hardly ever seen in a mosque. It was only in the early 1940s that Jinnah swapped his impeccably tailored London suits for an elegant *Sherwani* (tunic) and black cap.

The school of Deoband is a mix of the ramshackle and the splendid, little changed from when it was built. The architecture of the interlocking courtyards and mosque is an unusual combination of classical Islamic and Gothic. I was put up in one of the madrasa's guest rooms and endured an unpleasant night of persecution by cockroaches and mosquitoes. The school has 3,000 students, most of

them from poor Muslim families, who are boarded and educated almost entirely for free. Some are sent to Deoband at just five years of age. The boys stay until their teens or twenties. Their day begins with the first *namaaz* at dawn and is punctuated throughout by the call to prayer. Almost the entire syllabus dates to Europe's medieval period. The only science and mathematics taught is "Islamic" and stops with the Ptolemaic system of astronomy rather than the Copernican system that replaced it several hundred years ago. Students are principally taught Arabic, Persian, and Urdu so they can read the Koran and the commentaries in their original language. Much like the regime the Taliban established in most of Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001, Deoband permits little color, music, or celebration, beyond the Islamic festivals.

Yet, unlike the Taliban, or the Deobandis of neighboring Pakistan, who have their own political party, the Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam, which runs the government of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province with puritanical zeal, India's Deobandis are scrupulously apolitical—at least when it comes to India. "We are good Indian nationalists and good citizens," said the Maulana. Who would they support if India went to war with a Muslim country, such as Pakistan? "We would prefer it not to happen, but we would not betray India," said the students, after some discussion. Were they Indians first, or Muslims first? "We are both," said the Maulana. "There is no contradiction." I mentioned some outrages committed by the Taliban including the destruction earlier that year of the ancient Buddhist statues at Bamiyan in central Afghanistan. My question created a noticeable awkwardness. The Maulana said: "These people in the Taliban are Pathans [an Afghan ethnic group from which the Taliban were principally drawn]. Pathan culture is much more fierce than Indian culture. You would be wrong to confuse the excesses of Pathan culture with Deoband. We do not have a patent on the word *Deoband*."

I related the criticisms of Deoband that I had heard from many nonpracticing Muslims living in India's cities. They said that Deoband and the hundreds of Deobandi madrasas around India, which

are often founded and staffed by graduates of Dar-ul-Uloom, produce students who are poorly equipped to cope with the modern world. Most are unable to get decent employment since the only science, math, and languages they know are confined to an Arabian golden age that has long since passed into history. In today's Indian job market you need modern technical skills, such as computing and up-to-date financial literacy. "Learning Arabic or Persian does not close the mind," they responded. "It opens up a large world of untold riches of which you know nothing." I admitted the point. And what jobs would they go on to do? There was some murmuring. Their answers were unclear. One or two wanted to become Urdu-language broadcasters or interpreters. My guess was that a large proportion would become teachers in madrasas.

But the bulk of the discussion, which alternated between heated and friendly, was about the looming war in Afghanistan, which was the cause of great excitement among the students. They assumed it would result in a Taliban victory. The Maulana, who had a certain rhetorical flair, spoke more than the others. "What do Americans believe in?" he asked. "The believe in nothing. They live for nothings, except themselves. They have no discipline over their lives. In Afghanistan, the Taliban has restored law and order. Do you know that not one graduate of Deoband has ever committed a rape?" It seemed like a bold assertion, since Dar-ul-Uloom says it has produced 60,000 graduates in the last 140 years. I asked whether he believed all women should wear the burka—the full veil. "Yes, we recommend all women should cover themselves but only for their own safety," he said. "Before the Angrezis came to India, even Hindu women wore the burka." In fact, many Hindu women still cover themselves in the villages of north India. But did this make society stronger? Did it really improve the behavior of men? "All you are taught in your schools in the West is worldly education. There are no ethics in your society. There is only self-indulgence. Do you know why the Taliban are unafraid of the American soldiers?" asked the Maulana. He paused for the punch line. "Because American soldiers

are like children. They even eat chocolate." There was much laughter. As it turned out, the United States outsourced much of the eviction of the Taliban to the Northern Alliance.*

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After independence in 1947, India's Muslim population lived under a cloud of suspicion. It has never entirely lifted. After partition, which many in India saw as a national "vivisection," the country was in a state of turmoil. India had been wracked by the violence both of partition, in which between half a million and a million people were slaughtered, and the "Great Killings" of Calcutta in August 1946 when Jinnah declared a Direct Action Day, to show the Congress Party the futility of opposing the new nation. When asked about the implicit threat of violence behind Direct Action Day, which left the streets running with blood, Jinnah said: "I am not prepared to discuss ethics."⁵ Jinnah had arguably already won Pakistan in 1939 when Lord Linlithgow, the British viceroy, effectively recognized Jinnah's Muslim League as the sole spokesman of all Muslims in British India in return for Jinnah's support for India's participation in the Second World War. The Congress Party had refused to back the war unless it was consulted before war was declared on India's behalf. Linlithgow had announced India's entry into the war without even informing the Congress Party. In retrospect—and even at the time—the viceroy appeared to have made a monumental blunder. Both Nehru and Gandhi were strongly opposed to Nazism and they were fearful of an expansionist Japan. Both would have probably supported the war, if they had been explicitly consulted before its declaration. "How can India fight for democracy if she herself does not have it?" asked Nehru.⁶

*The Northern Alliance consisted of a group of former mujahideen fighters drawn principally from the Tajik Afghan ethnic group and backed by several powers in the late 1990s including the United States, Russia, and Iran. The Taliban were overwhelmingly Pathan.

Even after Linlithgow had snubbed the Congress Party and pushed it into a stance of opposing India's participation in the war, Gandhi asked Indian soldiers to remain at their posts. Nehru, who had needed only a symbolic request from the British to secure his support for India's involvement in the struggle against fascism, said that he would still fight to defend India from the invading Japanese. He would even fight to defend India from the widely expected invasion by the Indian National Army (INA), a group of Indian soldiers who had defected to the Japanese under the leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose, a former Congress Party leader. The INA got bogged down along with its Japanese overlords in the jungles of Burma and never invaded India. Nehru made sure that no officer who had fought under the INA flag during the war was reinstated in the Indian army after independence.⁷

Some Indians trace the creation of Pakistan as far back as 1909 when Lord Minto, the viceroy, established "communal electorates"—reserved constituencies for religious groups—at the same time that he granted limited provincial democracy to propertied Indians. The move, which was presented by the British as a necessary measure to ensure India's largest minority got a fair voice in the debating chambers, helped to embed minority politics in Indian democracy at a very early stage. It ensured there would be a Muslim party that would appeal only to Muslims. That party would have little incentive to speak for, or to, anyone else. "Separate electorates . . . enabled government to work a system of political control which in large part could ignore Congress," according to Francis Robinson, a leading historian of that era.⁸ Between 1909 and 1947, the British went out of their way to detach Muslims from the Congress Party. Prominent Muslim members of the party were subjected to particularly close harassment by the authorities. In contrast, Jinnah did not spend a single night in jail. Nehru and Gandhi each spent a decade or so behind bars. I have read many accounts by British writers arguing that Britain was motivated by the noble aim of protecting Muslims from a majority Hindu culture. But over the years Britain did a great

deal to stoke the divisions from which it claimed to be protecting its supposed victims. The generous account of Britain's actions is hard to sustain in light of the facts. It is clear Britain was hoping to prolong its rule of India by exacerbating political divisions between Indians.

But even if the British had originally established the "communal awards" (separate electorates) in good faith, this effort could not disguise Britain's main purpose as the story unfolded. In 1931 Britain invited Indian groups to London for a roundtable conference on India's future. Gandhi submitted a list of the Congress Party delegates he wished to bring with him. The British struck all Muslim names off the Congress Party list.⁹ In 1936 the British held India's first full-blown provincial elections. The Congress Party won more than half the vote in the most important state, the United Provinces (later to become Uttar Pradesh). Jinnah's Muslim League won fewer than half the Muslim-reserved seats, garnering just 4.4 percent of the vote in India as a whole.¹⁰

Some historians, particularly from Pakistan, date the inevitability of the creation of Pakistan to the aftermath of the provincial elections in 1937 when a triumphant Congress Party refused to enter into coalition with the Muslim League in the United Provinces. Jinnah's party had won less than a quarter of all seats in the province and his price of entering into a coalition was that the Congress Party recognize the Muslim League as the sole spokesman of all Muslims. This was outrageous, since there were many Muslim members of the Congress Party and many more who had voted for it. In spite of this, some people argue that the Congress Party made a tactical error in spurning the Muslim League's coalition overtures. An opportunity to defang India's largest communal party was lost. Yet Nehru felt that if the Congress Party agreed to a coalition with the Muslim League, it might also have inflamed the Hindu communalists whom he saw as a growing threat to an independent (and united) India.

What Jinnah lacked in popular support was more than compensated for by the patronage of the British. In December 1939, after

Jinnah had signed on to the war effort, he got his reward. In protest at the British declaration of war on India's behalf, all the Congress Party provincial governments, including that of the United Provinces, resigned. Jinnah celebrated by declaring "Deliverance Day." In March 1940, a few months later, Jinnah proclaimed the "Pakistan Resolution" in Lahore—the first time he had openly called for a separate country. But the Muslim League continued to lack popular support. Right up until the brink of Pakistan's creation, Jinnah's party drew most of its backing from Muslim landowners and urban elites. "What is really the religious or the communal problem is really a dispute among upper-class people for a division of the spoils of office or of representation in the legislature,"¹¹ said Nehru. Many Indians would agree with M. J. Akbar, Nehru's biographer and an impressive Indian Muslim thinker, who wrote: "Pakistan was a chimera created by an artificially induced hatred."¹² Naturally, few Pakistanis would sign on to this interpretation.

But history turned out the way it did. And so India entered into independence with a large Muslim minority, many of whom went through the conundrum of watching close family members migrate to Pakistan forever. Though their decision to remain in India ought to have put Indian Muslims beyond suspicion, their loyalties were constantly called into question by Hindu communalists and others. Equally, Indian Muslims who migrated to Pakistan from provinces such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and elsewhere are still known in early twenty-first-century Pakistan as *mohajirs*, or "immigrants." Their status remains decidedly second-class. It is a terrible irony of partition that the Muslims who remained behind in India, and those who left for Pakistan, should have as good a claim as any other to being true Indians and true Pakistanis respectively, given the sacrifices they made. Yet the former are subject to more suspicion about their patriotic loyalties than is any other group in India. And the latter are largely denied access to the power centers of modern Pakistan, not least the Pakistan army. The contradictions of partition have yet to die out.

There was another British legacy that continues to bedevil relations in the subcontinent today and occasionally threatens broader regional stability: the disputed status of Kashmir. Apologists for British imperialism say the epithet of "divide and rule" was unfair. Their view was that in fact "Indians divided, Britain ruled." India, they say, was already deeply divided and the religious divide in particular was not a British invention. There is truth in both points of view. But few would dispute the view that Britain withdrew from India in great haste and with much ineptitude. This is not the book to assess the details of Britain's departure. But there are some aspects to partition that continue to haunt the subcontinent sixty years later.

Under the terms of partition, Lord Mountbatten, the last viceroy, persuaded a reluctant Nehru that the colony's several hundred princely states should decide for themselves one by one which of the two countries they would join. In most cases it was academic, since the maharajah or nizam in question belonged to the same religion as his subjects. But in three cases—those of Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Kashmir—the ruler's loyalties were contradicted by the religion of the majority of his population. In the case of Hyderabad, this divergence was particularly impractical, since the state was geographically nowhere near either East Pakistan (which had been East Bengal, and which in 1971 became Bangladesh), or West Pakistan, which consisted of Sindh, the North-West Frontier Province, Balochistan, and about half of Punjab. At one point in 1948, the Muslim nizam of Hyderabad looked to be on the verge of declaring for Pakistan. Within forty-eight hours Vallabhbhai Patel, India's home minister, had flooded the principality with Indian soldiers. Pakistan protested. But Hyderabad's absorption into India could hardly be reversed. Much the same happened in Junagadh, where a Muslim prince overrode the sympathies of his Hindu subjects and declared for Pakistan. Again the territory was absorbed into India.

The Valley of Kashmir proved more problematic for India. Not only was it a Muslim-majority province that was ruled by a Hindu prince, Maharajah Hari Singh. It also bordered the Pakistani pro-

vince of Punjab, so its absorption into Pakistan would have been feasible. However, according to the Indians, this would have left India unacceptably exposed, since the state straddles a vital Himalayan high ground of the subcontinent. Kashmir would also be India's only Muslim-majority province, a point of overriding strategic importance for a Congress Party government that wished to burnish its secular credentials. Finally, Nehru had a deep emotional attachment: his family had originally come from Kashmir and he had spent many summer holidays there.

To the growing frustration of both Jinnah and Nehru, the maharajah of Kashmir vacillated hopelessly over which country he should join. They suspected with good reason that he wanted to declare Kashmir's independence from both India and Pakistan. The maharajah finally signed the instrument of accession of Kashmir to India in October 1947 as thousands of Pakistani guerrilla fighters were streaming into the state. The Pakistan "volunteers" were rapidly approaching Srinagar, the capital, when the maharajah formally joined Kashmir to India.¹³ Nehru immediately airlifted Indian troops to Srinagar where they managed to defend the city and prevent the mostly Afridi Pakistan tribesmen from going any further. The two sides eventually agreed to a cease-fire, which was brokered by the United Nations. The cease-fire line, which divided the state of Kashmir in two, was known as the Line of Control (LOC). It remains the dividing line today between Indian-administered and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Although the line is unchanged, the world around it has changed radically. Today, in spite of the latest peace process between India and Pakistan, which began in 2003, and which some believe stands a better chance of success than earlier efforts, the LOC is often referred to as the most dangerous nuclear flashpoint in the world.

The first time I visited Kashmir was in November 2001. I had spent most of the previous two months in Pakistan, along with thousands of other foreign journalists, observing the Pakistan regime's response to the Bush administration's post-9/11 ultimatum. Bush had

reportedly told General Pervez Musharraf: "Either you are with us or you are against us." Unsurprisingly, given the power of the United States, General Musharraf quickly decided Pakistan was with the United States in its war on terrorism. He also promised Islamabad's assistance in the ejection of Afghanistan's Taliban regime, which Pakistan had helped bring to power. It was an extremely tense time in Pakistan. I watched General Musharraf's first post-9/11 broadcast to the nation with acute interest. He justified his decision to ally Pakistan with the United States on three grounds. It would protect Pakistan's nuclear assets. It would help Pakistan turn its ailing economy around. And it would assist Pakistan's long-running claim to sovereignty over all of Kashmir (again, by ensuring Pakistan maintained good relations with the world's sole superpower). The slogan General Musharraf adopted was "Pakistan First." These two words signaled something crucial: nationalism was more important than religion. Pakistan should come before Islam.

A few weeks later I was taken with a group of foreign journalists to Pakistan's portion of Kashmir, which the Pakistanis call Azad Kashmir—Free Kashmir—and which the Indians call Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. We visited a small post on the Line of Control overlooking an Indian position about a kilometer away across some green hills. We observed the Indian soldiers through binoculars and they observed us. Everyone waved at each other cheerily. The Pakistani major who was accompanying us was keen to impress on us the importance of holding a referendum in Kashmir. "India should permit a UN-administered plebiscite in Kashmir to allow the people to determine whether they want to be Pakistani or Indian," he said. "If they choose to be Indian then we will accept their choice."

Ironically, considering India's subsequent rejection of any "third party" involvement in the dispute, it was New Delhi that requested the UN-mediated cease-fire in 1948 which culminated in a Security Council resolution on Kashmir. The resolution called for Pakistan to vacate all of Kashmir before a plebiscite was held. It is inconceivable

that Pakistan would vacate Azad Kashmir. So the plebiscite remains a dead letter. In 2004, more than a year after India and Pakistan had embarked on a new peace process, which is still holding, General Musharraf unexpectedly dropped the demand for a plebiscite in Kashmir. It had formed the core of Pakistan's Kashmir policy for more than fifty years.

The week after my visit to Azad Kashmir I found myself having lunch in the officers' mess of the Rajputana Rifles, an Indian regiment stationed very close to the spot on the Pakistan side where I had stood a few days earlier. "Sometimes they shoot at us, sometimes we shoot at them," said the Indian colonel who was my host. "We don't usually hit each other." The real game was—and, to some extent, still is—the infiltration of Pakistan-backed militants (termed "freedom fighters" in Islamabad, "terrorists" in New Delhi) across the Line of Control to the Indian side. It usually happens at night, and the Pakistani army provides covering fire to assist the hazardous nocturnal dash. The Indian colonel claimed he had made many successful "interceptions" of infiltrators. The snows would come soon and, with the change in season, infiltration would decline, he said. The small force of Indian soldiers was dug into trenches overlooking the steep valley from their eagle's nest at an altitude of about 11,000 feet. Already the chill winds of an impending Himalayan winter were whining through the mess. We dined on steaming Mulligatawny soup and hot rotis. It seemed an arduous existence.

There are approximately 450,000 Indian soldiers and paramilitaries stationed in Kashmir. Many of them spend long winters along the high passes of the LOC. Others, who are often just eighteen or nineteen years old, can be seen in position at intervals of about two hundred yards along Kashmir's highways and on its streets sitting in bunkers waiting to be shot at or to shoot first. Their lives are unenviable. But the ubiquity of Indian military uniforms in Kashmir gives the province the unmistakable flavor of being occupied. With Kashmir's population of eight million, the ratio of soldiers to civilians is extremely high. The largest number of European soldiers stationed in

British India was 100,000 in the aftermath of the Sepoy Mutiny when India had a population of more than 200 million. Perhaps this was a measure of how easy it was for the imperialists to divide Indians. Or perhaps today it could be seen as a measure of how difficult it is for India to win the loyalty of Kashmiris.

There was another angle to my visit to Kashmir in November 2001. A couple of weeks earlier, a group of *fidayeen*—trained suicide bombers—had driven through the gates to the compound of the Kashmir legislative assembly in Srinagar and blown up themselves and their vehicle, killing dozens of people. It was a heavily symbolic attack. And it came just a few weeks after 9/11. The people of Kashmir were also in ferment over a campaign by Islamist radicals to change the way Muslims behaved in public. In contrast to Pakistan, where the burka is widely worn, most Kashmiri women are unveiled. The Kashmiri style of Islam draws on rich strands of Sufi mysticism, which bears little resemblance to the orthodox Deobandi, or Talibanized, Islam that is drilled into most of the militants. A number of unveiled Kashmiri women had been agonizingly disfigured in the previous weeks when militants threw acid in their faces. Almost every Kashmiri to whom I spoke disliked the Islamist radicals and blamed Pakistan for their presence. But they also bitterly resented the India security forces, whose intrusion in their lives often resulted in human rights abuses, including rape, torture, and extrajudicial killings. “We are stuck between a rock and a hard place,” said one Kashmiri lawyer. A plague, they seemed to be saying, on both your houses.

By 2001 the character of the Kashmiri separatist movement had drastically altered since the early days of the insurgency in 1989. The province had been mostly quiescent between 1948 and 1989. But in 1987 New Delhi had blatantly rigged the state assembly election to ensure that a pro-India party would take office. Resentment at Delhi’s heavy-handed and corrupt meddling in the state triggered an insurgency for an independent Kashmir. In the first few years, the uprising had little to do with Islam and was not yet fully controlled by

Pakistan. But gradually during the 1990s the indigenous Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, which sought independence for Kashmir from both India and Pakistan, was supplanted by other groups that had infiltrated the province and that wanted Kashmir to become part of Pakistan. Many of the groups were dominated by radical Islamists from the Pakistan side of Kashmir, from Pakistan Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. There were even some militants from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Chechnya, and other parts of the Islamic world. In short, the Kashmiri separatist movement lost its independence early on. The uprising was taken over by Pakistan, which was prepared to give free rein to *jihad* (holy war) fighters from outside Kashmir if they would in turn assist Islamabad in its mission to undermine India’s hold on the province. From Pakistan’s point of view, the timing of the Kashmir insurgency, which took both Islamabad and Delhi by surprise, was highly propitious. It coincided with the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989, leaving in their wake thousands of victorious foreign mujahideen fighters looking for a new cause. Pakistan’s notorious Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—the equivalent of the CIA—recycled many of the Afghan jihadists to Kashmir during the 1990s and since.

A few weeks after my first visit to Kashmir in 2001, the world’s attention suddenly shifted away from Afghanistan to India and Pakistan. The Taliban had already crumbled after the Northern Alliance took Kabul. The Americans were beginning to realize that they might not find Osama Bin Laden in the Tora Bora mountain range on the Afghan-Pakistan border, which they were bombing intensively. In a replay of the *fidayeen* attack on the Srinagar assembly two months earlier, suicide terrorists attacked India’s parliament in New Delhi on December 13, 2001. Four men, strapped with explosives, burst through the gates to the outer rim of India’s circular parliament complex and detonated the white Ambassador car they were driving. The attackers, who killed fourteen people, were stopped by security guards a few yards short of the parliamentary chamber. Parliament was in session. A couple of seconds later and the car would have de-

molished part of the chamber and likely taken much of the Indian cabinet with it. I got to the scene within half an hour. Already the streets had been cleared. There was an ominous atmosphere. Previously lackadaisical checkpoint guards were waving guns in people's faces. The whole city was echoing with the sounds of screeching sirens and helicopters overhead. The Indians traced the attack to a Kashmiri militant group based in Pakistan called the Lashkar-e-Toiba—the Army of the Pure. Atal Behari Vajpayee, India's prime minister, held Pakistan accountable and demanded the immediate extradition to India of twenty alleged terrorists harbored by Pakistan. Vajpayee also demanded the immediate cessation of militant infiltration across the LOC and the closure of alleged Pakistan-backed terrorist training camps in Azad Kashmir. General Musharraf angrily denied any involvement. It looked as though the two neighbors were preparing for another round of high-octane antagonism. It would get worse than that.

My parents were visiting India that Christmas and we took them to Ranthambore, a famous tiger reserve in the state of Rajasthan. As it happened we did not see any tigers. But on our journey to the tiger reserve we did catch glimpses of one of the largest military mobilizations in modern history. Vajpayee had ordered the relocation of most of India's 1.2 million-strong army to the international border with Pakistan. The states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Punjab are on the Pakistan border. We got stuck at Jaipur railway station in Rajasthan. It soon became apparent why our train to Ranthambore had been delayed. For two hours we sat on the platform watching train after train pass northward through the station carrying tanks, heavy artillery, armored personnel carriers, and thousands of soldiers. Watching India's rusting military hardware chug past us reminded me of what I had read about the preparations for the First World War. Mobilization had followed the dictates of the European railway timetables. India's mobilization, which was later dubbed "coercive diplomacy," was following the stately pace of the Indian railways. Somehow this made events seem even more troubling. It was an un-

usual beginning to our Christmas break. And it ruined my short holiday since I felt journalistic guilt at being in the wrong place. It was unclear, however, where the right place might be.

As it turned out, nothing happened. Or at least, a great deal nearly happened over the next six months before India stood down from what it had called Operation Parakram (Valor). There were unsubstantiated but widely reported rumors that both sides had fixed nuclear warheads to nuclear-capable missiles in anticipation that the conflict, which was threatening to break out at any moment, would escalate very rapidly. In the next chapter we will look at the region's precarious nuclear status, which involves China and increasingly, in many respects, the United States. We will also look at America's role in the subcontinent, which proved instrumental in 2002 in averting conflict between India and Pakistan. Twice during the tense standoff, India was on the brink of ordering some kind of cross-border military strike—in January 2002 and then again in late May 2002. Merely, it pulled back from the brink. In October 2002 India's railways lumbered back into action, this time to assist the massive demobilization of a very tired and somewhat dispirited Indian army. Perhaps by then Ranthambore's tigers had emerged from their nuclear bunkers.



Somebody once described wars between India and Pakistan as "communal riots with armor"¹⁴ ("communal" meaning religious). It is a catchy phrase. Pakistan is certainly a Muslim country and under its constitution the republic derives its sovereignty from Allah, rather than the people. But India is a diverse and multifaith country with a secular constitution. For all its faults, it would be unfair to describe India's army as "Hindu." India has Muslim and Christian military officers. It has many Sikh regiments. India's parliament elected a Muslim head of state in 2002. General J. J. Singh, who was ap-

pointed India's army chief of staff in 2005, is a Sikh, as is Manmohan Singh, India's prime minister. India's most powerful woman is a foreign-born Christian.

The phrase "communal riots in armor" might be misleading for another reason. Communal rioting has the connotation of butchery. Comparatively few Indian and Pakistani soldiers have been killed in wars between the two countries since they came into existence. In total, India and Pakistan have been to war three times, in 1947, 1965, and 1971. There was a fourth unofficial war between the two in 1999 when a large group politely known as a "guerrilla force"—in fact a force of Pakistani soldiers dressed in mufti—occupied the strategic heights of Kargil on India's side of the LOC. They were ejected after Indian infantry stormed the mountain in a bloody four-week encounter. Yet for the most part the wars have been very short with only brief moments of intensive engagement. The total casualties of all four conflicts between India and Pakistan amount to fewer than 50,000 killed. There were moments during the First and Second World Wars in Europe when as many men were killed in the space of seventy-two hours. If you expand the definition of war to include what India calls Pakistan's "proxy war" in Kashmir—war conducted through nominally independent militants—the number of deaths rises by between 40,000 and 80,000. It is a large number. But communal riots in India before, during, and after partition have claimed a multiple of this. Neither "armor" nor bullets are the principal cause of communal mortality in the subcontinent.

Yet to many Indians the very existence of Pakistan is seen as a dagger aimed at the heart of India. The Pakistan threat is perceived at a number of levels. First, Pakistan claims Kashmir, which is India's only Muslim-majority province. Pakistan is unlikely to relinquish that claim, since Kashmir is a Muslim-majority province. If the so-called "two-nation" theory (which Jinnah propounded) is wrong, then Pakistan should never have been created. If it is right, then Kashmir should belong to Pakistan, the Pakistanis argue. Given the degree to which Pakistan's military regimes have required national

sacrifice in both blood and treasure in pursuit of the Kashmir cause, it would be surprising if Islamabad abandoned its stance.

Second, the creation of Pakistan was seen as an amputation of India's natural geographical and cultural boundaries. It is not only the Hindu nationalists who wish for the day when Pakistan will be reincorporated into Akhand Bharat—greater India. Many Indians, of whatever background, see partition as an unnecessary tragedy that ought, at some unspecified stage in the future, to be peacefully rectified. Naturally, this attitude contributes to Pakistan's own profound insecurities. However, very few Indians would any longer subscribe to Nehru's view that Pakistan was untenable as a nation-state and that it would eventually merge back into India. Indian longing for subcontinental unity remains a vague sentiment. It is not a policy.

Third, and most intractably, Pakistan is seen as posing an existential threat to India's secular identity. No matter how stable relations are between India and Pakistan, in the Indian mind the existence of Pakistan will always have the potential to divide the loyalties of India's Muslim minority, which now accounts for almost 14 percent of the population, or about 150 million people. This, in turn, exacerbates the insecurities of India's Muslims. There is little doubt that Pakistan has on many occasions over the last sixty years sought to stoke this neuralgia. Yet, with the exception of Kashmir, which accounts for much less than 10 percent of India's Muslim population, the expectations of many in Pakistan (and around the world) that India would gradually break up under the weight of its diverse contradictions have been proved wrong. India's Muslims remain firmly ensconced in India, as do most of India's other minorities.* There have been no significant population movements between India and Pakistan since 1947. There have been a few overinflated incidents

*India does suffer from a rash of small separatist insurgencies, particularly in its geographically isolated northeastern states that border China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. But these are geographically confined, and most of India's neighbors, particularly China, are thought to have withdrawn the tacit support they once gave to many of the northeastern separatist groups.

wherein Muslim slums in India have flown the Pakistan flag when the two national cricket teams met on the field. But in a different country such displays would fail to register. Most of Britain's Asian community would not pass the notorious "cricket test" set by a right-wing politician in the 1980s in which they were asked to support England when it was playing against their respective country of origin.

The hard-line chauvinists in India and Pakistan have much more in common with each other than they would care to admit. Both mistrust diversity. Both seek through education and culture to regulate and control the role of women in society. They also share a partiality to the use and abuse of history. According to Pakistan's school textbooks, the history of modern Pakistan goes back to the early Muslim incursions into India, when marauders such as Mehmood of Ghazni, an Afghan strongman, conducted raids on north India. Pakistan's medium-range nuclear missiles are called the Ghauri, after Mohammed Ghauri, who became the first Muslim to rule a part of India when he defeated a Hindu Rajput prince, Prithvi Raj Chauhan, in 1192. Likewise India's short-range missiles are called Prithvis (*Prithvi* means "earth" in Sanskrit). Pakistan's schoolbooks stereotype Hindus as "cunning, scheming and deceptive."¹⁵ The textbooks that are used in the 20,000 or so schools operated by the Hindu nationalist RSS in India characterize Muslims as cruel and bloodthirsty. Meanwhile, the emperor Aurangzeb, who was quoted at the start of the chapter, is depicted as a hero by Pakistan and as a villain by India. His great-grandfather, Akbar, who was one of India's most enlightened rulers, is downplayed by both Muslim and Hindu communalists. They are two sides of the same coin.

Someone once said that the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States during the cold war was ideological, whereas enmity between India and Pakistan was biological. Whenever I visit Pakistan, I am struck by the very transparent paranoia that the military and diplomatic elites in Islamabad feel toward India. I am equally struck by the absence of these sentiments among ordinary

Pakistanis. The same is broadly true in reverse, although India plays a much larger role in the popular perceptions of Pakistanis than vice versa, partly because of the allure of Bollywood. When ordinary Pakistanis and Indians interact there is usually goodwill and warmth. In April 2004 I flew to Karachi, Pakistan's commercial capital, to attend the first cricket game in years between the two countries. The match was the first in a cricket series on which New Delhi and Islamabad had agreed after the bilateral peace process was launched in 2003. Thousands of Indians were given visas to attend the game. At that point it was the most significant "people-to-people" contact that had been permitted between Indians and Pakistanis since the peace process began. I spent most of the day touring the stadium in search of Indian supporters to ask how they had been treated. Most of them seemed overwhelmed. The boisterous Pakistani crowd were chanting "Akhtar Zindabad, Zindabad, Zindabad!"—Long Live Akhtar! Shoaib Akhtar is Pakistan's fastest bowler. When an Indian batsman played well, the chant of the Pakistan masses switched seamlessly to "India Zindabad, Zindabad, Zindabad!" Every Indian I met said he had been treated like a long-lost brother (the crowd was made up mostly of men). Shopkeepers had refused to accept their cash. Taxi drivers had declined fares. Hotels were waiving bills. And people kept approaching them on the streets to offer sweets and other small gifts. "It is overwhelming," said one among a group of Indian men, dressed in the blue shirts of their national team. "We didn't know what to expect but we feared there would be hostility." India's team won the game and it received a prolonged ovation from the vast Pakistani crowd.

In contrast, at the level of Pakistan's military-bureaucratic establishment, India is a migraine that outweighs all its other headaches put together. The perceived threat from India and the need to secure Kashmir has provided the principal justification for military rule in Pakistan for more than half of the country's history. It explains why Pakistan spends a much larger share of its gross national product on defense than India does. In 2003 India spent 1.5 percent of its budget

on defense compared to 54 percent in Pakistan.¹⁶ Some would describe Pakistan as a home for south Asia's Muslims. Others increasingly see the country as a Central Asian Islamic republic, or even as an extension of the Middle East. A more enduring description for Pakistan's national identity might be "Not India."

Even during periods of warmer relations between Islamabad and New Delhi, the Pakistan establishment routinely uses the perceived threat from India to justify its grip on political power. In October 2005 the region was hit by the most devastating earthquake in living memory, claiming 70,000 lives and making millions homeless. The zone that was the worst affected was on the Pakistan side of Kashmir, although the Indian portion was also hit. There was strong domestic criticism by the Pakistani media of General Musharraf's handling of the emergency. Many believed the Pakistan army had acted too slowly in response to the desperate plight of millions of Kashmiris, which had given the Islamist charities an opportunity to step in and boost their popularity. One ray of light came when India and Pakistan moved (albeit reluctantly) to open up several points along the Line of Control for the delivery of relief aid, mostly from the Indian to the Pakistani side. In the midst of all this, dozens of large billboards suddenly appeared in Islamabad implying that there was a new threat from India. The billboards demanded that India return Kashmir to Pakistan immediately. One said: KASHMIRIS ARE NOT CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD. It was a reminder of the instinct of Pakistan's military leadership to resort to diversionary propaganda whenever its back is to the wall.

It has become fashionable over the decades to argue that the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan is insoluble. From the Indian side, the view is that Pakistan, as long as it is under military rule, will never agree to a peace deal that falls short of full sovereignty over Kashmir. But if a democratic Pakistani government were to conclude a deal that fell short of the country's maximum demands, the army would use this as a pretext to launch another coup. As with General Musharraf's coup in 1999, which followed the decision by Nawaz

Sharif, Pakistan's democratically elected prime minister, to retreat from the Kargil heights on India's side of Kashmir, Pakistan's courts unflinchingly uphold the legality of army coups. Pakistan's Supreme Court cites the country's carchall "Doctrine of Necessity" (a body of law developed by judges in Pakistan but which does not appear in the constitution), which says, "That which otherwise is not lawful, necessity makes lawful."¹⁷ In other words, when there is a tank parked outside your courthouse, you tend to go with the flow. Not without reason, Pakistan is alternately perceived by India as either too aggressive or too weak to reach a credible peace settlement.

From the Pakistan side, India is correctly seen as a "status quo" power that will cling to Kashmir but happily leave Pakistan to its much smaller portion of the divided province. India would almost certainly accept a peace agreement in which the LOC were converted from a cease-fire line into an international border. Pakistan almost certainly would not. There are a few Indian irredentists who would like to regain all of Kashmir. But they are on the margins of the debate. Not unfairly, Pakistan's establishment sees India as a country that often agrees to something and then spends years arguing over what it has actually agreed. There are not many diplomatic corps around the world that are as accomplished at semantic nitpicking as India's foreign service. Sometimes this propensity can be self-defeating. In another context, Narayana Murthy, the founder of Infosys, India's largest software company, said that Indian bureaucrats were chronically prone to "MAFA"—mistaking articulation for accomplishment. It is not just the Pakistanis who have felt frustrated by this trait. India's habit of approaching diplomacy in the manner of a clever high-school debater has ruffled the feathers of many governments around the world at one time or another. But short of nuclear war, which would annihilate both sides, there is little Pakistan can do to alter the status quo. It has tried conventional war on several occasions and failed.

Ultimately most observers believe that any credible solution to the Kashmir dispute ought to lie at least partly in the province itself. As

the status quo power, India can probably do more to influence the attitudes of Kashmiris in a positive direction than can Pakistan, which, in spite of the peace process, has retained the option of deploying terrorists across the LOC. There have been signs in the last few years that the population of Kashmir would be ready to accept some kind of settlement that would fall short of independence for the province or full merger with Pakistan. It is not because of any sudden affection for India, which has consistently misread the situation in Kashmir and treated its inhabitants with high-handedness and arrogance. This relaxation is probably more to do with the growing sense of fatigue Kashmiris feel about the violence and uncertainty that have dominated their lives for so long. The gradual shift in mind-set might also be related to India's relative economic success in the last few years compared to the more precarious economic scenario in Pakistan.

On my last two trips to Kashmir, this shift has been increasingly visible. Kashmiris more often refer to the militants as "foreigners" and "terrorists." In the past they had talked of "freedom fighters." Kashmir's bewildering array of separatist leaders, who are grouped under an umbrella movement called the All People's Hurriyat Conference, speak with less respect of the militant groups than before. Most of the separatist leaders are vulnerable to assassination at any time. Some of them are the sons, brothers, and nephews of leaders who have been killed by militant groups for having strayed too far from either the pro-Pakistan or the Islamist line. It is not just Kashmiri separatist leaders or the people of Kashmir who believe the militants are out of control. Some of the militant groups have been involved in assassination attempts on General Musharraf. The closest attempt occurred in December 2003 when a remote-controlled bomb blew up a bridge that General Musharraf's car was about to cross. The attempt took place just a couple of miles from Musharraf's official residence in the city of Rawalpindi, the Pakistan army headquarters. Two Kashmiri separatists were arrested. There was also a close shave for Shaikat Aziz, Pakistan's military-appointed

prime minister, whose driver and bodyguard were shot dead when Aziz was on the campaign trail in 2004 in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. For General Musharraf and the liberal and modernist sections of Pakistan that sometimes support him, the incidents served as a reminder that Frankenstein can also devour his creator.

The separatist leader in Kashmir who is most vulnerable to assassination is probably Umar Farooq, who is known as the Mirwaiz, the hereditary title of a widely revered Sufi position in Srinagar that has been held in his family for generations. The then teenage but highly articulate Farooq became Mirwaiz in 1990 when his father was assassinated. It is unclear who carried out the killing. In 2004 Farooq's uncle was killed by militants in Srinagar. When I spoke to the Mirwaiz in 2005, I was startled by how much his attitude had shifted since we had first met in 2001. "We, as Kashmiris, belong to many different religions," he said. "We are Muslims, both Shia and Sunni, we are Hindus, and we are Buddhists. Kashmir has a long and tolerant tradition that bears little relation to the Punjabi Sunni Muslim culture that dominates Pakistan." It was the statement of a man who had grown tired of weighing every word before he spoke. The Mirwaiz said that most Kashmiris, including him, had reached the limits of tolerance for violence, from whatever direction it came. "In the past when there was a bomb or an assassination, up to ten different militant groups would claim responsibility," he said. "Now, nobody claims responsibility. That should tell you something about the changes that are occurring."

I was equally struck in 2005 when I visited Abdul Ghani Bhatt, another seasoned Kashmiri separatist leader, at his ancestral village near the town of Baramulla about twenty miles from the Line of Control. I was with a colleague and we spotted Bhatt sitting behind a shop window having a cup of tea in the small high street. It was late winter and he was carrying a vessel filled with hot charcoal under his overcoat to keep warm, as is the custom of Kashmiris. I had met Bhatt on many previous occasions and he had come across as one of

the most inflexible, albeit charming, spokesmen for Islamabad's point of view. But this time his tone was different. "The whole thing keeps going round and round and people are getting tired," said Bhatt. "India says, 'I am big.' Pakistan says, 'But Islam is even bigger.' It is the usual civilizational debate. Nobody on the ground in Kashmir wants the peace of the graveyard anymore. They want India and Pakistan to pause and be more imaginative." I mentioned Syeed Geelani, the most hard-line Islamist separatist leader in Kashmir, whose Jamaat-e-Islami Party is linked to the most violent militant outfits in the province. Geelani was the most prominent among the remaining separatist leaders who still unequivocally opposed the peace process between India and Pakistan. It would still be dangerous to cross Geelani. "Oh, Geelani is just a malevolent narcissist," said Bhatt. "Don't pay him any attention."

I had, in fact, paid Geelani quite a bit of attention a few weeks earlier when I visited him at his residence in Srinagar. As was often the case, Geelani had been put under house arrest by the Indians. I went to see him with two colleagues, Simon Long of the *Economist* and Amy Waldman of the *New York Times*. The temperature was close to zero. We were seated in a row of three chairs facing the hard-line Islamist leader. "Are you sure you're not too cold, my dears?" Geelani kept asking. Disbelieving our replies, Geelani sent off a young minion to find a blanket. He then instructed the minion to tuck all three of us under the same blanket. It was my most intimate collaboration to date with journalistic competitors. Whenever Geelani said something, his minions would echo the last three or four words in unison. Geelani said: "The Indians kill us mercilessly. They rape our sisters and they rape our daughters." His chorus echoed, "Rape our daughters," before Geelani resumed his monologue. "The Indians have no respect for Kashmiri rights. We are human beings, not animals," he said. "Not animals," they echoed. In spite of his grim words, it was hard for us to keep a straight face. Yet Geelani could not disguise his unhappiness over the peace process on

which India and Pakistan had embarked in 2003. He cut a lonely figure.

Later that day we went to the central park in Srinagar where Manmohan Singh was to give his first address as India's prime minister to a rally of Kashmiris. The crowd of several thousand had evidently been corralled into attendance by local pro-India parties. Most of them had been paid a small sum to be there. Security was very tight and there were several helicopters in the sky. But the supposedly organized crowd could not be fully controlled. At various intervals in Manmohan's speech, a section of it would start chanting slogans and the prime minister would have to stop speaking. It was a familiar reception for an Indian politician in a highly dissenting and embittered outpost of the country. But the crowd was not yelling cries of freedom or Pakistan or Islam, as they might have done in the past. They were shouting for jobs. "Remove unemployment," they chanted repeatedly. Perhaps I overinterpreted this very small incident. But it seemed like another indication that the priorities of Kashmiris were changing. After a while Manmohan resumed speaking. The chanting continued.

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During my time in India I have constantly been on the alert for any sign that the loyalties of India's Muslim population might be in question. But outside Kashmir (and even there, sentiments are more complex than is often portrayed), I have yet to come across serious evidence of divided loyalties. India's Muslims are a disappointment both to Pakistan, where hawkish types look for signs of oppression of Muslims in India as something that would reaffirm the logic of Pakistan's existence, and to the Hindu communalists whose ideology tells them that it is impossible to be both a true Indian and a devout Muslim. The reality of life for India's Muslims is often more prosaic.

In 2004 the opposition BJP seized upon new data that had been released by India's census bureau. According to New Delhi's demographers, the India's Muslim population had grown by 29 percent between 1991 and 2001, whereas the Hindu population growth rate had been just 22 percent.¹⁸ It provided an opportunity for the Hindu right wing to raise the specter that India was in danger of being swamped by Muslims. It fit with the stereotype that Muslims were a threat to India's balance since they tended to have larger families. Narendra Modi, the chief minister of Gujarat, described the refugee camps that provided shelter to Muslims who had been burned out of their homes in 2002 as "child manufacturing factories."

But the story behind the population data was more complex. India's rate of population growth has slowed sharply among all communities, falling from an average of 2.2 percent in the 1980s to less than 2 percent a year in the 1990s. It is expected to fall to about 1.5 percent by the time of the next census in 2011. During the 1990s, the richer Indian states in the south recorded a more rapid fall in their population growth rates than did the poorer states in the north. The trends were a function of economics, not of religion. Muslims living in the south had a lower rate of population growth than did Hindus living in the north. But since a larger proportion of Muslims live in poorer states, their average growth rate was higher.

The question ought to be why such a large proportion of Muslims live in relative poverty in India. It is an issue that is rarely addressed. Its causes are multiple and varied. But there can be little doubt that the exodus in 1947 of most of India's Muslim intelligentsia to Pakistan was a big factor. A large proportion of India's Muslim civil servants, military officers, and university lecturers left for Pakistan, many of them believing they would have a better chance of preferment in the new state. Poor Muslims barely shifted. In addition, a large proportion of Muslims who remained in India were involved in traditional artisan occupations, such as weaving and basket making,

which have suffered economic decline since the 1950s. Some of the poverty is new.

Nevertheless, poverty among India's Muslims has been falling and continues to fall, although at a less rapid rate than the average improvements for India as a whole would indicate. But averages can mislead as much as they inform. Beneath the statistics and the stereotypes, India's Muslim population is as varied and diverse as the rest of India. It is as rare for a Tamil-speaking Muslim to marry a Gujarati-speaking Muslim as it is for their Hindu counterparts to marry outside their communities. Being a Muslim is just one attribute in the complex menu of identities available to most Indians. Nehru once described India as a palimpsest. It was his way of illustrating the large accumulation of histories and cultures that had left their mark on India, none of which had been fully erased. Indians themselves, including Indian Muslims, could be described as palimpsests in miniature.

For example, Muslims in many parts of India are almost as prone to caste classification as are their Hindu counterparts. In Uttar Pradesh, which is home to the largest number of Muslims in India, almost thirty million, Muslim castes are divided into Ashraf and non-Ashraf.¹⁹ Many of the former, who are upper caste, and who have noble-sounding names such as Shaikh, Pathan, Mughal, and Sayyid, claim descent from foreign aristocracy, whether Persian, Arabian, Turkish, or Afghan. They are as disdainful of the lower-caste Muslims, most of whom are descendants of lower-caste Hindus who converted to Islam (ironically to escape caste), as are the upper-caste Hindus toward India's lower castes. The only place in which Ashraf and non-Ashraf rub shoulders on equal terms is in the mosque. Lower-caste Muslims tend to copy the habits and codes of the Ashraf families in their villages by putting their women in purdah—a sign of wealth, because only the rich can afford to remove their women from work in the fields. Meanwhile, the Ashrafs are moving to the cities and in many cases "Westernizing" and abandoning purdah

altogether.²⁰ The long reach of the Hindu caste system might be another reason that more Indian lower castes have not converted to Islam, or to Christianity.*

Another relatively overlooked complexity is the division between India's Sunni and Shia Muslim communities. In cities such as Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, where there are large concentrations of both strands of Islam, the principal communal conflicts are between Shia and Sunni Muslims rather than between Muslims and Hindus. For years there was violence surrounding the annual Shia Moharram festival, in which Shia mourn the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Hussain. Being a minority among India's Muslims, Lucknow's Shia community occasionally votes for the Hindu nationalist BJP. It is another example of the "enemy of my enemy" principle in Indian politics. And it suggests limits to which the term *Indian Islam* makes any sense.

One particularly widespread stereotype about India's Sunni Muslims is that they prefer to educate their children in backward madrasas rather than to give them a modern education. Many Muslim children are sent to narrow religious schools, particularly in north India. But this is partly because so many of the government schools around them function only intermittently. According to India's government, on any given day one-third of teachers are absent from government schools. In the state of Bihar, which has a large Muslim population, less than 3 percent of government schools have electricity and less than 20 percent have toilets for their teachers.²¹ Only a few schools have separate toilets for girls. Both Hindu and Muslim parents alike keep their daughters away. But where there is a meaningful choice, Muslim parents appear as keen as any others to take advantage of an education for their daughters.

I visited the old city of Hyderabad, which is known as Char Mi-

*In most Christian churches in India, especially the Catholic Church, the caste system is almost wholly reproduced with Brahmins as bishops and Dalits as congregation, even though the latter vastly outnumber the former. In some parts of India, Dalits are even allotted a separate cemetery.

nar, after the four minarets that dominate the skyline of this once-Persianized princely capital. The mainly Muslim slums that dominate the strikingly beautiful old city are abysmally served by the government. Many government school teachers are available only for private tuition. So the parents have set up a flourishing network of private schools, staffed by untrained or semitrained teachers, which charge between Rs 500 and Rs 1,500 (\$12-\$36) a month in fees. The schools all teach in English, which is not available in their government counterparts, which teach either in Telugu, the language of Andhra Pradesh, or Urdu. The private schools overwhelmingly cater to the children of the Muslim working classes—rickshaw-wallahs, vegetable sellers, weavers, and mechanics. Perhaps the most striking dimension to the schools is that there are as many girls as boys in the classrooms. About two-thirds of the schoolchildren of this area of Hyderabad go to private schools in a zone with a population of more than a million.²² Very few of the girls are veiled.

The schools have incongruous names, such as Oxford Public School, Green Valley, California High, and Windsor Diploma, that belie their makeshift character and humble settings in the tiny back alleys of Char Minar. Although poverty is acute, many of the backstreet alleyways are spotlessly clean. The Muslim slum dwellers of Hyderabad appear to have taken more than just schooling into their hands. At one school, M.A. Ideal, named after its owner, Mohammed Anwar, there was a sign prominently displayed that said: IF LIFE GIVES YOU ROCKS, IT IS YOUR CHOICE WHETHER TO BUILD A BRIDGE OR A WALL. I talked to some of the mothers who were waiting for school to finish. Most were veiled. None of them was literate. And none had received proper schooling except for (oral) training in Arabic schools so they could recite the Koran. They wanted something different for their daughters. "The world has changed since we were children," said Rizwana Begum, whose husband is a rickshaw driver. "We want our daughters to learn English so that they can get jobs. We want our daughters to have the opportunities we didn't have." It was a refrain

I heard often. Begum's husband spends a fifth of his Rs 3,500 in monthly earnings on his children's education.

Inside the classroom, the girls were reciting a rhyme about Jack and Jill. I asked whether they wanted jobs when they were older. All raised their hands. I asked what they wanted to be. Their aspirations varied from doctor to lawyer to astronaut. A couple even wanted to be tennis players. Sania Mirza, a teenage Muslim from Hyderabad, had recently entered the top fifty in the female world tennis rankings and was India's number-one female player. Her poster could be seen everywhere. A Deobandi mullah had issued a farwa forbidding her from wearing short skirts on the tennis court. Mirza responded by dressing even more provocatively. As the minor controversy unfolded she took to wearing a T-shirt that said: **WHATEVER**. Outside the Jama Masjid Mosque in Delhi, probably the most concentrated area of urban Muslims in India, Muslim street hawkers responded with equal insouciance. Posters of a scantily clad Sania were on sale outside the hostels for hadji pilgrims. Some of the posters were doctored to make her appear even more scantily clad. I asked the girls what would happen if their husbands did not want them to work. "Then we wouldn't marry them," they said, clapping their hands over their mouths and giggling. They did not seem to be lacking in ambition. Sania Mirza told the Indian media: "It shouldn't matter whether my skirts are six inches or six feet in length as long as I am winning."

Down the road I visited Jamila Amshad, a local Urdu-language poet and a formidable Muslim feminist. She operates a center for slum women. Many are battered wives. "Muslim women have two enemies who have much more in common with each other than they think," said Amshad. "Our main enemy is Hindu communalism. They harbor nothing but ill will toward Muslims. Our other enemy is the Muslim mullahs who think women are just chattels." Amshad is one among a growing number of articulate Muslim women in India who is seeking to overturn central precepts of the Muslim personal law on the statute books. Chief among the women's complaints is the custom of "triple talaq," which permits Muslim husbands to divorce

their wives by saying "I divorce you" three times. Amshad reserved particular venom for the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), which, despite having no statutory position, speaks on behalf of the "Muslim community." The campaign to modernize India's Muslim personal law has yet to achieve success. But it is clear that if Muslim law is to be effectively reformed in India, it is Muslims who must accomplish the change. "Who elected the AIMPLB?" asked Amshad. "By what right do they speak on my behalf? They are not defending Muslims. They are defending patriarchy." On the wall of Amshad's office there was a poster that made me laugh: **DO NOT GIVE ME A BANGLE, GIVE ME A PEN**. Well-meaning charities often train illiterate slum women to make cheap trinkets.

My visit to Hyderabad coincided with an unrelated event in Lahore, one of Pakistan's largest cities, which was getting much airtime in India. A group of Pakistani women had been badly manhandled when they embarked on a marathon run to highlight the restrictions women face in Pakistan. The run was organized by Asma Jehangir, Pakistan's most courageous and well-known human rights lawyer. The run was broken up by the police before it got under way, since it was considered an un-Islamic activity for women. Some of the women were dragged off by the police and stripped. Jehangir had described the event as an exercise in "Enlightened Moderation," in a deliberate echo of a phrase used by General Musharraf to describe the type of Islam he would prefer to see in Pakistan. But Pakistan's military ruler did nothing to prevent the event from being broken up. I wondered whether Sania Mirza would be hitting forehead winners if she had been born on the Pakistan side of the border.

The condition of India's Muslims is often presented as hopelessly backward. But democracy is as much ingrained within India's Muslim communities as it is in any other. It became a cliché after the plane attacks on the Twin Towers, which were principally carried out by Saudi nationals, to say India had produced no Muslim terrorists because it was a democracy. The cliché was inaccurate. Muslim mafias in Mumbai organized a series of terrorist bombings in the city

in 1993 in revenge for the riots that followed the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya a few months earlier. The blasts killed 300 people. There have been plenty of other bombing incidents that, if the Indian police are to be believed (and very often they should not be), were orchestrated by Pakistan's ISI, the army-dominated intelligence agency. In 2003, dozens of bystanders were killed in Mumbai by a series of car bombs set off by a group describing itself as the Gujarat Muslim Revenge Force. It was an apparent retaliation for the anti-Muslim pogroms that had taken place in Gujarat the previous year.

Yet it is true that only a very small number of Indian Muslims have been recruited to the various global jihads that have occurred in recent decades, including the Kashmir insurgency. In spite of India's proximity to Afghanistan, there were almost no Indian Muslims involved in the jihad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. In contrast, countries as far away as the Philippines and Morocco, which have a fraction of India's Muslim population, were well represented in the ranks of the Afghan mujahideen. Part of this could be attributed to the fact that the Indian government, in contrast to the governments of most Islamic countries, had close relations with the Soviet Union and discouraged Indian involvement. But part of the reason could also be that unlike the citizens of most Islamic countries—Pakistan included—India's Muslims possess a clear right to freedom of speech, expression, worship, and movement. Terrorism is a complex phenomenon: It would be far too simplistic to say it is caused by absence of democracy. But the right to air your grievances peacefully and in public must surely increase the likelihood that you will vent your resentments in a nonviolent manner. Pakistan's population of 150 million is roughly equal to India's Muslim population. They share ethnicity, culture, and religion. Pakistani nationals are frequently linked to international terrorist networks, while Indian Muslims rarely are. Perhaps what really divides India's Muslims from their counterparts in Pakistan is the political system under which they live.

Yet there are concerns that as India's economy continues to grow, many of the country's Muslim communities are becoming more exposed to the type of Islam practiced in the Gulf countries of the Middle East, where the traditions of worship are seen as less tolerant and more orthodox than those in India. This influence is perhaps most visible in the south Indian state of Kerala, where millions of Keralite Muslims have worked and continue to work in the Gulf states, particularly in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. I visited "Mini-Gulf," a leafy district about seventy miles south of the Keralan city of Cochin facing the Arabian Sea. The district of Trichur, which includes the Mini-Gulf enclave, is a few miles to the south of Cranganor, a small town that is reputed to have played host to India's first ever mosque in the eighth century AD. Arabian dhows exploited the seasonal monsoon winds to ply the short route between the Gulf and south India bringing goods and the Word of the Prophet. Nowadays it is Keralite Muslims who cross the waters bringing hefty remittances from employment in the Gulf.

The first thing that I noticed about Abdullah Kutty, a retired Keralan chef who had worked almost thirty years in the Gulf, was that he spoke English with an Arabic accent. Kutty gave me a proud tour of his "dream home," which he had built from his earnings. Like many of his neighbors, who live in large white stucco houses propped up by fake Corinthian columns, Kutty had grown up in a small fisherman's shack, built with bamboo sticks and grass tharch. Now he has an upstairs, a downstairs, spare bedrooms, and a large teak door fronting the entrance. The interior of his home is decorated with the wood of jackfruit trees. One of Kutty's sons owns a hotel and a shop in the Mini-Gulf's booming high street around the corner. Next to the shop is a large new mosque that was built with donations from Kutty and hundreds of other Gulf expatriates. The mosque, which is several times larger than the small place of worship it replaced, is designed according to the prevalent Gulf style. Its minaret booms out the calls to prayer over a much larger radius than before. "We wanted to give something back to the community," said Kutty, who

did not otherwise appear to be particularly religious. Kutty said that the effect of exposure to the Gulf had changed other things. Most of the women who had lived there had become more conservative in their dress. "Now the women are considered vulgar if they do not cover all parts of their body, except the face," he said.

Yet the Gulf is having other, less obvious, impacts on Kerala's Muslims. Kutty has two daughters. One of them is a software engineer and has a job in the United Arab Emirates. The other was preparing for university entrance exams. Mrs. Kutty, who is illiterate, said she wished she had had her daughters' opportunities. "Nowadays the girls have to get a good education, otherwise they would never get a job in the Gulf," she said. "All the girls are studying so hard." Since they are educated and financially independent, a small but growing number of the younger women in Mini-Gulf are now deciding for themselves whom they will marry and when. "In our day none of us had any choice," said Mrs. Kutty. If I had driven through the district and simply observed life on the streets, I might have gotten a different impression. In the West, we are trained to see purdah and the veil as signs of women's oppression. But sometimes it is a corollary of women's emergence from the home.

The newfound wealth of this once-impoorished class of Muslims has had other strange effects, which would have been hard to anticipate. Some Muslim families are paying wedding dowries to the families of their sons-in-law, in the form of cash, jewelry, and white goods, such as washing machines. The practice of dowry was once confined to the Hindu upper castes. But it is spreading across India to the lower castes and to other religious communities, including Muslims. The popularization of the dowry could hardly be described as progress. But it is a marker in India of upward mobility. "People are becoming more greedy," said Mr. Kutty.

In the state of Gujarat, which, as we have seen, is perhaps India's least tolerant, Muslims are also changing their dress code. About a year after the 2002 killings, I was invited to a conference called "Vibrant Gujarat," in which Narendra Modi, the chief minister, was

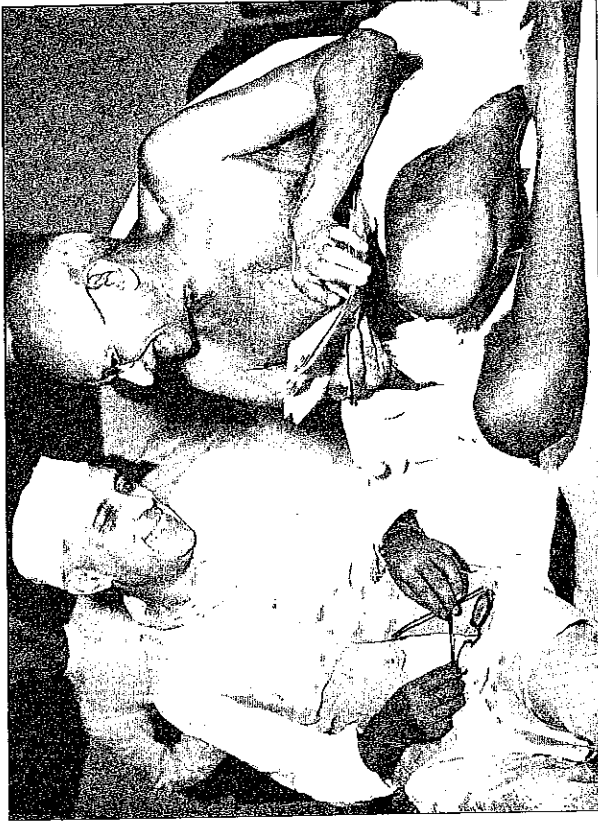
showcasing the state's investment opportunities to foreign companies. As had become usual with Modi, whom I had interviewed before, he turned aggressive the moment I asked about the treatment of Gujarati Muslims. He gave a blanket denial that there were any communal problems in Gujarat. "These are lies. You are listening to the propaganda of the pseudosecularists," he said.

Feeling somewhat despondent, I was about to catch a taxi to my hotel, when a senior police officer introduced himself and invited me out to dinner. The officer, whose name I promised to withhold, was in charge of one of the districts of Ahmedabad, Gujarat's commercial capital. My visit coincided with Gujarat's annual festival of Navratri, in which thousands of young women and girls dress up in traditional costumes and compete against each other in picturesque mass dance competitions. The police official took me to several of the Navratri events. During the evening he talked about what had happened during the riots. I suspected that was the reason he had invited me to join him. "In districts where Muslims were killed on a large scale, the police were collaborating with the rioters," he said. "In districts where there were very few deaths, such as in mine, the senior police official had decided to uphold the law and protect innocent people. If you want to understand riots in India, that is all you need to know." I could not vouch for his accuracy. But later I ran his name past a Muslim group in Ahmedabad, which confirmed his reputation as a professional officer.

The officer took me to one of Ahmedabad's largest private membership clubs, where there must have been at least two thousand young women swirling decorously under the floodlights in a large open ground within its walls. It was a captivating sight. They were wearing colorful skirts, many of which were decorated with sequins that flashed as they twirled. Thousands more were watching the competition in which the girls were progressively eliminated by judges until there was just one winner. The prizes included Hero Honda motorbikes and a Tata Indica vehicle. "If I were a betting man, I would bet that there is not one Muslim here," said the officer. "It is the same

in the street parties that are taking place across Gujarat tonight. The Muslims have gone. Ten or twenty years ago both Hindus and Muslims would celebrate each other's festivals. Now that has almost completely stopped in Gujarat." It was a melancholy thought.

The same gradual separation of communities is visible in the clothes Gujarati Muslims now wear. Whereas Muslim women would once wear saris, most now dress in *salwar chameez*, which cover all parts of the body. Likewise, Gujarati Muslim men are likelier to grow beards and don a white cap. "It is a very tragic divorce of two communities which used to be very interlinked and overlapping," said Hanif Lakdawala, a nonpracticing Muslim based in Ahmedabad, who runs a charity for slum women, and whom we briefly met in chapter four. "Now the Muslims of Gujarat are standing out and saying: 'If you want us to be different, we will be different.'" The walls of Lakdawala's small flat in the center of Ahmedabad are decorated with a picture of the god Ganesh, a painting of Jesus, and a scene from the Prophet's life. Lakdawala is married to a Christian from Kerala. They struck me as a quintessentially Indian couple: hospitable, tolerant, and happy for all religions to get at least a passing mention in their lives. Earlier, during my unsatisfactory interview with the chief minister, Narendra Modi had said: "In Indonesia, which is a Muslim country, they have a picture of Ganesh on one of their currency notes. Why can't India's Muslims be more like that?" At the time I did not answer. But it struck me later that Hindus are a minority in Indonesia, just as Muslims are in India. If you were to follow Modi's line of thinking, the accurate parallel would be for India to put an Islamic symbol on one of its notes.



Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi in conversation, 1946 (Empics)



Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul at the twenty-first anniversary of the death of Indira Gandhi (Empics)