

Muslim Indians

Struggle for Inclusion

AMIT A. PANDYA



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The **Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution** was established in January 2007 under the aegis of the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai. The overarching goal of the Institute is to create enabling conditions for peace and security by creating awareness in the society of factors affecting peace; addressing myths attributed to religious teachings; research and study into communal and sectarian conflicts; capacity building and peace advocacy, especially among youth; and supporting women's empowerment. IPSCR collaborates with other institutions, including the Tata Institute of Social Science Research, and the Department of Civics and Politics and the Department of Sociology, University of Mumbai.



The Stimson Center, located in Washington, DC, is a nonprofit, non-partisan institution devoted to offering practical solutions to problems of national and international security. Since its establishment in 1989, Stimson has been committed to meaningful impact, a thorough integration of analysis and outreach, and a creative and innovative approach to global security challenges. Stimson has three basic program areas: reducing the threat of weapons of mass destruction, building regional security, and strengthening institutions of international peace and security. These program areas encompass work on a wide range of issues, from nonproliferation to transnational challenges in Asia, from UN peacekeeping operations to analyzing the resources needed for 21st century statecraft.

Preface

Stimson's *Regional Voices: Transnational Challenges* project is devoted to enhancing the information and analysis available to US policymakers about emerging transnational security challenges. The project develops knowledge and analysis of the perspectives of technical and subject experts, and political and strategic analysts. The geographical range of the project's work is the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Africa.

The current essay reflects work that was begun in late 2007 and has continued into 2010. It forms part of a series that began with publication in 2008 of *Transnational Trends: Middle Eastern and Asian Views*. This was followed in 2009 by publications on the political economy of natural resources, climate change and river systems, maritime resources and security in the Indian Ocean, Indian climate policy, and the relationship between Islam and politics. Upcoming publications address maritime commerce, climate change and coastal zones, and migration and urbanization.

The overarching framework for our inquiry has consisted of the following questions. How is contemporary public discourse evolving to address new technical, governance, and cultural challenges? How do political structures and cultural traditions constrain or facilitate effective responses? What new opportunities for transnational cooperation do we find? What scientific or technical resources are available? How do social, economic, environmental, technological, and political trends interact? How do these new developments relate to traditional security concerns? What new sources of instability, crisis, or conflict do they present?

The present study about the Muslims of India takes an interdisciplinary approach. It weaves together history, politics, culture, and sociology in a series of sections, each focused on a theme or question related to current issues, such as religious and national identity, political participation, violence and extremism, and social and economic disadvantage. In the spirit of the *Regional Voices* program, we chose to approach this topic in as holistic a manner as possible, recognizing that many factors are at play simultaneously, and cause-and-effect relationships are often hard to discern. We hope that this nonlinear, three-dimensional approach will bring to life the richness and complexity of the topic of India's Muslims.

Ellen Laipson
President and CEO, Stimson Center

Acknowledgments

Hundreds of Indians, too numerous to name individually, have contributed to the understanding embodied here. They gave generously of their time and thinking; they organized focus groups throughout India; they spent substantial periods of time in discussion with their compatriots and in speaking to me in individual interviews. They know who they are, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart. This analysis is in large part the result of their work.

The indispensable and equal partner in this enterprise has been Advocate Irfan Engineer of the Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution. It is he who took the lead in organizing all the focus groups and other meetings and in identifying the essential interlocutors for this inquiry. This initiative would not have been possible without him. My association with him, apart from having been a personal delight, has taught me much about the important currents of political organizing and thought, and the often heroic struggles under way in Indian society. His essay, “Indian Muslims: Political Leadership and Ideology,” marked the beginning of our practical collaboration on this project.*

I am also most grateful to Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer, founder of the Institute of Islamic Studies and the Center for Study of Society and Secularism. He is a giant of Islamic scholarship, widely respected even by those of fundamentally opposed theological perspectives. He is also a leading light in the work of interreligious harmony. I have been fortunate to have been instructed by him in recent years about the history and ideas of Islam, and the varied histories of Muslims.

To all the staff and volunteers of the Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, the Institute of Islamic Studies, and the Center for Study of Society and Secularism, I offer my deep gratitude.

* Amit Pandya and Ellen Laipson, eds., *Transnational Trends: Middle Eastern and Asian Views* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2008). That essay is an excellent, succinct summary of the phases that Muslim political leadership has traversed since independence and partition, and the evolution of the contours of political discourse around the salient issues for Muslim Indians.

Two non-Muslim Indians particularly stand out as invaluable contributors to both my field research and my understanding of the issues discussed here.

Mr. V. Balachandran, whose knowledge of Indian policing and intelligence is peerless and is based on his experience in very senior positions in both areas of government service, has been a stalwart collaborator and partner in the wider work of the *Regional Voices* project. His contribution to the present study has been inestimably valuable. He has been my guide to the nature and workings of the Indian state, and has introduced me to innumerable retired and serving police and intelligence officials who have added greatly to this study.

Mr. R. B. Sreekumar, former Director General of Gujarat Police, and Additional Director General of Police for Intelligence at the time of the riots, showed great courage and principle in his willingness to challenge and stand up to the fascists, inside and outside government, who visited such suffering upon their Muslim fellow citizens. That he is also a scholar of Hindu thought reminds us of the very real resources within Indian society for the restoration of the syncretic, secular, and tolerant culture which is so essential if India is to remain at peace within.

The liberal and humane values of Messrs. Balachandran and Sreekumar, and the principled impartiality of their judgments, do honor and credit to the Indian Police Service, of which both are veterans, and are a testament to the capacity of the institutions of the Indian state to serve its citizens intelligently, effectively, and impartially.

None of this would have been possible without the superb *Regional Voices* team at the Stimson Center. In particular, Nicole Zdrojewski has made the complexities of preparing all our publications—particularly this one—and organizing institutional collaborations and series of events across international and cultural boundaries seem effortless. She has also always been my indispensable support, patient and encouraging, in ensuring that the project stays on task. Ellen Laipson, President of the Stimson Center, has enthusiastically participated in, supported, and encouraged this work, as well as offered intellectual guidance and leadership. Former Research Associate Kendra Patterson helped me begin this work on Muslim Indians three years ago, and was as unfailingly competent and professional as any researcher would wish in an associate. I also thank Rachel Kahan and Rebecca Bruening, who provided high-quality research support in the course of our work. Finally, I am grateful to Nita Congress for her untiring and uncomplaining work on rendering the manuscript into final form, and to Shawn Woodley for his support on final production of the current publication.

I cannot omit acknowledgment of my gratitude for the life and work of Rafiq Zakaria. Although he passed away just a short time before I began this work and I was therefore never able to meet him, his writings have been of inestimable value to me. I know of no

other contemporary writer who brought such historical, literary, and cultural erudition and acute political intelligence to the task of understanding and explaining Muslim Indians to themselves and to others. His passing leaves a huge gap.

I apologize for any inadvertent omissions of others who have helped with the current work.

Amit A. Pandya

Director, *Regional Voices: Transnational Challenges*

Introduction:

The Stimson Center/ Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Study

Since December 2007, the Henry L. Stimson Center in Washington, DC, and the Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution in Mumbai have conducted a thorough inquiry throughout India to better understand and describe the priorities, thinking, and concerns of Muslim Indians. We undertook this study because we believed that the state of opinion among Muslim Indians is inadequately understood. The adoption of policies in India that adequately address the sources of disadvantage and resentment demands a clearer understanding of how Muslims experience their membership in Indian society. US policy will be well served by a clearer understanding of the thinking and concerns of such a numerous and significant section of both the Indian population and of the global Muslim community.

What lends added interest for those concerned with security policy is the potential appeal of anti-state ideologies and violent pan-Islamist networks feeding on the alienation and despair of Muslim Indians. There is no evidence that violent and extremist pan-Islamist ideologies have yet spread widely or taken deep hold in any Muslim Indian community. Nonetheless, many Indians, Muslim and non-Muslim, of all ideologies and from a variety of occupational perspectives, express alarm at the prospect that they might do so. The widening of the gulf between Muslims and Hindus would certainly add fuel to any such development.

Moreover, in the absence of a dispassionate mapping of the actual state of Muslim opinion, the topic can and has become the subject of speculation that can be dangerous in its political implications. Surmises about the growth of radicalism in Muslim communities can become the pretext for more suspicion or harder line security policies and police practices. Not only is this likely to add significantly to the hardships already suffered by Muslims, but it could prompt the very resentment and radicalization that occasions concern. At the same time, the failure to understand the true extent of radicalization, or its roots in the alienation and marginalization suffered by Muslims, may lead to complacency and a failure to address the root causes of such alienation and marginalization.

We held focus group discussions lasting half a day in Calicut, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Delhi, Aligarh, Kolkata, Guwahati, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai. In Mumbai and Lucknow, we held two sessions each. The numbers of people attending the focus groups ranged from 15 to 60. These meetings were followed by a national meeting in Delhi in early 2010 to discuss the national implications of the discussions in each of the provincial focus groups; this was attended by 30 people chosen from among those who had attended the focus groups. Those attending the meetings included women and men, social activists, political leaders, religious leaders, social service providers, entrepreneurs, teachers, philosophers, scientists, lawyers, doctors, engineers, lay and religious scholars, and academics.

We also conducted interviews, throughout all quarters of India, of ordinary Muslim workers and the self-employed, as well as additional members of the occupations noted above. In sum, we have spoken to Muslims at all levels, from senior-most government officials to ordinary people struggling for livelihoods in communities.

In choosing people to interview, we were particularly careful to ensure that we found voices and points of view that, for a variety of reasons, were not present in the focus group discussions. In each interview and focus group, we have sought comments on the themes raised in previous discussions. Thus, the entire two-year process may be seen as a cumulative and ongoing single discussion divided into parts. And the value of convening focus groups has been that, in addition to the accumulation of individual points of view, we have been able to hear what Muslims from different points of view and life experiences have to say to each other, in debate or agreement. The opportunity to listen closely to the conversation within the community has been invaluable.

The invitation lists for the focus groups, and the lists of people to be interviewed, were developed so as to encompass as wide a variety of backgrounds as possible, in order to reflect the thinking of Muslims as accurately and in as much detail as possible. We sought to ensure representation of the widest possible variety of sectarian identities and religious and political ideologies, and of occupational, economic, and professional backgrounds. The composition of focus groups varied according to the location where each was held. Everywhere, we have heard from—and heard discussion and debate among—political philosophies including liberal secularists, militants, Islamists, and feminists; religious scholars and lay religious points of view from the most orthodox to the most liberal; and economic positions from the immediate and direct experience of struggle for survival, radical socialist ideologies, through statist perspectives up to radical free-enterprise capitalist points of view.

While the ideological stances and the tactical approaches of participants varied widely to the issues that were raised and discussed, there was a remarkable consensus on what are the principal sources of concern to the Muslims of India.

We must candidly acknowledge that our inquiry has not extended into rural India. While many of our interlocutors were well informed about developments in villages and rural areas, often on the basis of first-hand experience and observation, our fieldwork was entirely in the cities and towns of India, and the perspectives reflected here are largely urban.

We must also note that we deliberately did not include in this study the one Indian state with a Muslim majority, Jammu and Kashmir (often and misleadingly known as “Kashmir”), despite our having traveled there to study environmental change and economic trends. Kashmiri Muslims do not identify with other Muslim Indians and, whatever their positions on the sovereignty and status of their state, frame their situation as distinctly one of a national or subnational culture and history, defined by geography.

In the course of our focus groups and interviews, it was clear that Muslims in the rest of India see the issue of Kashmir and the welfare of Kashmiri Muslims as *sui generis*. In part they share the Kashmiri perception about the distinct historical and geographical dimensions of that conflict. They also fear that the taint of the India-Pakistan rivalry found there will prejudice their own standing in the larger Indian polity, lending fuel to the right-wing Hindu charge that most Muslims are “anti-national” or secret sympathizers with Pakistan.

The Larger Context

“I am a Muslim and am proud of the fact. Islam’s splendid tradition of 1,300 years is my inheritance. The spirit of Islam guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of that indivisible unity that is the Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice, and without me the splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim.”

—Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

The Larger Context

Muslim India and Indian Muslims

The stereotype of Muslim Indians has long been that they are a relatively quiescent minority that has made its peace with the larger non-Muslim context of contemporary India. Non-Indian Muslims may sometimes scoff at the perceived tameness of the Muslim voice in India or the assimilation of and into the wider secular but Hindu-influenced culture. They will at times profess solidarity with the trials of Muslim Indians. At other times they will note with satisfaction the Indian Muslim willingness to stand in solidarity with pan-Islamic causes such as Palestine. But they will rarely think of Muslim Indians as a force to be reckoned with in the *ummah* (the worldwide Muslim community).

It was not always so. And Muslim Indian thinkers see themselves in a larger context. They are heirs to a millennium-long civilization, one of the greatest in modern history, replete with the highest philosophical, architectural, artistic, and literary accomplishments. For much of Islam's history in India, Indian Muslim civilization was regarded by Muslims throughout the world as one of the jewels of Islamic civilization. And until the division of the subcontinent's Muslims into at first two and then three nations, there would have been little question that this was one of the great national traditions within Islam, if not the greatest.

The sense of geographical, historical, intellectual, and cultural unity that Muslim Indians share with Muslims in Bangladesh and Pakistan, common heirs of the same civilization, is politically delicate. It is vulnerable to the ready Hindu chauvinist (*Hindutva*) charge that Muslim Indians are "anti-national" because they secretly sympathize with the Pakistani enemy, because their Muslim identity is more important than their Indian one. But at the level of culture and religious thought, their South Asian Muslim heritage is a source of pride; theirs is a distinct and liberal version of Islam which draws on the particular characteristics of their geographical location and historical experience. South Asian Muslims constitute by far the largest regional and cultural group of any in the world of Islam.

The heritage of Islam and of Persian and Central Asian cultures remain an inextricable part of the fabric of the wider Indian national history, culture, and civilization. India's Muslims

have been integral to the freedom struggle, to the articulation of a multireligious political and cultural identity for India, and to the cultural and intellectual life of India today. Muslim Indians struggle with a difficult balance: on the one hand, they take pride in their religious-cultural heritage and in the larger national culture that it has formed; on the other, Islam was the basis in 1947 for the division of their homeland. Muslim Indians also take pride in being Indian. They are the ones who chose to remain in a multireligious India rather than migrate to the new Muslim nation of Pakistan.

Yet, despite individual successes, Muslims as a group have not prospered in independent India. Recently, both in India and outside it, there has emerged an inchoate concern that the existence of a large population of economically, socially, and culturally marginalized citizens is an Achilles heel of national unity, as well as a source of potential political and social instability. Some have feared that burgeoning anti-state pan-Islamist ideologies based on a sense of grievance, and the violent groups inspired by those ideologies, will also in the future seek to recruit disaffected Muslim Indians.

Even though the Muslim Indian population (160 million) is almost as large as the entire population of Pakistan (180 million), equal to the population of Bangladesh, and greater than the total populations of major predominantly Muslim nations such as Egypt (80 million), Muslim Indians remain relatively ill understood and understudied. Their preoccupations and predicament are little known among non-Muslim Indians, let alone non-Indians. There is even a sense among Muslim Indians themselves that they do not have a handle on what is happening in the very varied Muslim communities throughout India.

A Minority Unlike Others

Informal and unofficial estimates of the number of Muslims in India vary substantially, and are the subject of polemics by both their defenders and their detractors. The most conservative projection based on the 2001 census would place them at approximately 160 million, or 13.5 percent of all Indians. The dispute over whether the census offers an accurate count of the Muslim population is itself a volatile issue that reflects the volatility of the Muslim predicament in contemporary India. Anti-Muslim right-wing opinion offers estimates of the Muslim population as high as 30 percent of the total population, reflecting anxiety or a more deliberately alarmist stance toward the question of whether Muslims will render Hindus a minority and therefore threaten their security. More extreme Muslim voices believe that the actual numbers are double the official figures, and that the figures are deliberately understated in order to deny Muslims their proper place in the polity, or to mask the scale and significance of their underrepresentation in its key institutions. More responsible Muslim voices have suggested estimates as high as 20 percent. By any count, Muslims are the second largest religious group in India, and the largest Muslim minority by far.

Quite apart from the question of numbers, the complexity of the Muslim position in India arises from the fact that, although a minority in contemporary India, they are heirs to a political history of powerful Muslim kingdoms that long dominated India, and to cultural traditions, indigenous and of Central Asian origin, that have influenced the quintessential features of modern Indian identity. And as recently as the mid-20th century, before the separation of Pakistan, Muslims constituted approximately a third of the population of undivided India.

Thus Muslim Indians do not see themselves as a minority in the way that other minorities do. India is theirs, and they feel a sense of ownership and belonging shared by few minorities elsewhere. Yet, there is also a growing sense of unease with the rise of anti-Muslim right-wing Hindu chauvinism, along with a growing incomprehension of Muslims on the part of ordinary Hindus. Indian Muslims are increasingly subjected to chronic prejudice based on ignorance and stereotypes.

Religious and National Identity

Although Muslims have always constituted a minority in the subcontinent as a whole, the India that was gradually taken under British control was largely ruled by Muslim elites; Muslims of various ethnicities (Turkic and Persian) and dynasties had ruled most of northern India for six or seven centuries in the form of the Delhi Sultanate and the Moghul Empire. In many areas (largely those that became Pakistan), Muslims came to constitute the majority, and the cultures of Hindus in those areas bore a particular stamp of Muslim intellectual and cultural influence. Even areas not directly under Muslim control showed a Muslim influence in the presence of individual Muslims among elites, Muslim minorities among their populations, and syncretic culture in food, arts, architecture, and even religious thought.

The issue of religious identity has been a divisive one in India for a century. No consideration of India's current external security challenges can ignore the role of Islam in the formation of the nations that today divide South Asia. Yet Muslims have been present in force on both sides of the debate between Muslim separatism and inclusive nationalism. The development of a national movement for independence from Britain posed the question faced by all nationalist movements: what was the basis of Indian national identity? Three approaches emerged.

Secular nationalists, Hindu and Muslim, saw in the common and syncretic elements of Indian culture the basis of a national identity upon which to conduct an independence struggle and construct a national polity. These represented the overwhelming majority of Indian opinion.

Hindu religious nationalists saw in national independence an opportunity to restore the greatness of Hindu civilization, and to stamp a Hindu character on the polity, on the grounds

that the majority of Indians were Hindus. Muslims would be free to practice their religion but would live in a state marked by Hindu culture.

A section of Muslim leadership organized the Muslim League on the basis of the distinct interests of Muslims and Hindus, and a concern that Muslims would inevitably be at a disadvantage as a minority in a representative democracy. This culminated in the separation of British India into Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India. It was during the period before, during, and after partition that violence between Muslims and Hindus or Sikhs assumed its most virulent manifestation.

The difficulty posed by partition for Muslim interests *as a whole* was that a significant segment of Indian Muslims were in the Muslim-minority areas that remained in India. There were also Hindu minorities in what became Pakistan, but these were smaller. Although the movement for partition had been led by professedly secular Muslims who eschewed a religious state, Pakistan became increasingly defined by religion, and a combination of violence and intolerance resulted in the departure for India of all but a tiny number of Hindus.

The sensitivities occasioned by the partition of the subcontinent on the basis of the politics of religious identity are extremely complex. Not only did the partition divide India into Muslim and non-Muslim sovereignties, but it divided the Muslim community itself, reducing its proportion, weight, and influence in India. Moreover, the Pakistani reliance on a separate Muslim nation to safeguard the interests of Muslims in India undercut the Muslim position in post-partition India. It detracted from the otherwise unassailable argument for substantial embodiment of Muslim interests as an integral part of the body politic. Despite their numbers, and notwithstanding the legal secularism of the Indian state, Muslim Indians suffered a weakening of their political standing.

It is scarcely surprising that religious nationalist Hindus opposed the partition—and therefore weakening—of a Hindu-majority India. It is equally unsurprising that secularists, Muslim and Hindu, opposed the rejection of a common Indian identity and culture implicit in partition. What is notable is that the majority of Muslim religious and militant political leadership were similarly opposed: some, such as the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind (JUH), on the grounds of greater attachment to the anti-imperialist political struggle; others, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, on the grounds that partition would result in the division and therefore the weakening of the Muslim community and of Islam in India. There was also a sense among devout and culturally proud Muslims that India was their homeland. This is reflected today in the position of the conservative Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband seminary that India is not, as some pan-Islamists would have it, *Darul Harb* (enemy territory) but rather *Darul Aman* (Muslim-friendly), where *jihad* is meaningless. It also opposes referring to Hindus as *kafir* (unbelievers), with its negative and exclusionary connotations.

At the time of independence and partition into Pakistan and India, the syncretic Indian culture was a living reality. Despite being a minority, Muslims could justifiably take pride as Indians in a civilization whose highest cultural, religious, and political accomplishments included inextricable strands of Muslim influence. Hindus for the most part embraced those elements of Muslim influence that lent luster to “their” civilization. This syncretic understanding at the elite level was replicated in forms of joint celebration and community life at the ground level between Hindus and Muslims, including a respectful mutual acknowledgment of religious festivals, a shared reverence for the shrines of Muslim saints, and—in some cases—even observance of the religious festivals of the one by the other.

Perhaps of greatest contemporary relevance was the fact that the secular Indian nationalist movement that struggled to keep India united included Muslims in its senior leadership. Figures such as Maulana Azad, President of the Indian National Congress; Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the undisputed moral and political leader of the Pathans of the North West Frontier Province; Zakir Hussain, the third President of India; and many others established unequivocally the twin propositions that Indian nationalism was as much the pride of Muslim Indians as Hindus, and that there was an equal place for Muslims in a free India.

Political Participation

Muslims committed to a wider Indian sense of nationality were an integral part of the independence movement. After partition, they provided leadership and representation for Muslims within the context of a secular mass politics of coalitions of distinct interests. Their diminished numbers, and the association of separate Muslim organizing with the violence of partition and the trauma of Muslim families divided, fostered the practice of coalition politics. However, over the course of time, the intermediaries between the state and Muslim citizens came increasingly to articulate the distinct elements of Muslim interests and aspirations in terms of cultural identity, such as a separate family and inheritance law, rather than those social and economic interests that Muslims shared with non-Muslim Indians.

For many decades after independence, the Indian National Congress party was dominant, and the historical association of nationalist Muslims with the secular traditions of Congress kept them in the fold. There was always a rumble of discontent about the Muslims being treated as a “vote bank” by Congress. Muslims felt taken for granted and felt that they received only token concessions, while elements of Hindu opinion within and outside Congress saw appeasement and special treatment. With the dissolution of the Congress political monopoly, Muslim voters and leaders explored the prospects of coalitions for the purpose of maximizing Muslim power and influence. However, the instability of party politics has, if anything, divided and weakened Muslim leadership and representation.

The exception to these long-standing patterns has been found in Communist-ruled states and those where Communist parties are a powerful presence, such as West Bengal and Kerala. While Communist parties and governments have accommodated Muslim interests more effectively than others, recent discourse has noted that senior Muslim leaders have not appeared in mainstream politics in commensurate proportions, and that Communists have practiced the politics of tokenism just like other Indian politicians. In recent years Communists have been accused of seeking electoral advantage by flirting with extreme religious, antiseccular, and divisive Muslim political movements and leaders, such as Abdul Nasser Madani of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Kerala. Others note that the situation is more complex, and that religious extremists are also more willing to form radical alliances with other economically and socially disadvantaged Indians. Madani's PDP, for example, claims to be an alliance of Muslims, Dalits (the most disfavored caste), and the so-called "Other Backward Classes" (OBCs), reflecting Madani's evolution from his original founding of the Islamic Sewa Sangh, a radical Islamist movement based on the model of the right-wing Hindu Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

The results of the 2009 elections are instructive about contemporary Muslim political behavior. Whereas there has been a significant and sustained trend of Muslims "coming back to the Congress fold," Muslim political behavior has varied across India according to circumstances. Where the political competition is essentially between the right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress—as in Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh—the Muslim vote has generally been consolidated against the former. In states with more multifaceted political competition—such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Maharashtra—Muslim votes are divided among several parties reflecting varied local or class interests and coalitions.

In Assam, where not only are Muslims a substantial percentage of the population, but where many state legislative assembly constituencies have Muslim majorities, pluralities, or significant presence, the Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF) has had significant presence as a new and specifically Muslim political party. Kerala remains *sui generis*, in that Kerala Muslims constitute a steady quarter to a third of the population and have an established political presence and a party—the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)—which has been an essential partner to whichever of the other two major parties in the state (Congress or the Communists) wishes to lead a government. Other well-established Muslim political parties include the Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Musalmeen (MIM) in Andhra Pradesh.

A notable recent development in Muslim politics is the proliferation of new Muslim political parties throughout India, though many have not lasted long. In the most populous and politically most competitive northern state of Uttar Pradesh alone are found half a dozen. Although the precise political significance of this development remains unclear, it does

appear to demonstrate a fracturing of Muslim ideological and political consensus in ways that reflect the variegated character of Muslim communities across India. This development notwithstanding, Muslims do find themselves increasingly aware of common interests in the emerging and hotly contested discourse about the nature of Indian national identity, and the place of Muslim ideas and culture within that.

As important has been the development of deep divisions within long-established Muslim political parties and movements, such as the MIM, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind (JUH), and the IUML. In each instance, the split has been the result largely of personal rivalry or disputes over dynastic succession or family monopoly (the Owaisi family in the MIM or the Madani family in the JUH), evidence of the quasi-feudal nature of established Muslim political leadership.

Violence, Extremism, and the State

In Gujarat state in western India in 2002, Muslims suffered a vicious and systematic series of mob attacks, with gruesome deaths such as burning alive and dismemberment, rape, and widespread destruction of property, mosques, and shrines. The chain of events leading up to this has been described and debated in great detail, and with some controversy. Right-wing Hindu activists had engaged in abuse and violence against Muslims and others on a railway platform at Godhra, the train carrying them had been set on fire, resulting in death and injury, and Hindu mobs went on a rampage against Muslims in Godhra and elsewhere.

What is clear is that the subsequent attacks on settled Muslim communities elsewhere in the state, including its largest city Ahmedabad, were systematically planned by political activists closely affiliated with the state's governing political party.¹ Attackers carried voter rolls to identify the locations of Muslims. Police, with a few honorable exceptions, failed to protect Muslims, and likely acquiesced in and joined the violence. Elected leaders up to the state's Chief Minister have continued to be militantly unapologetic about these events. The term "pogrom" has often been used to describe what transpired.²

This was merely the latest in a series of events in the more than five decades since independence that had drawn attention to the vulnerability of Muslim communities in India. This pattern has long concerned those interested in Indian political stability and social

¹ R. B. Sreekumar, the Additional Director General of the Gujarat Police and responsible for intelligence at the time of the riots, later filed an affidavit with one of the official commissions charged with investigating them. In the affidavit to the Nanavati Commission, he said: "These riots were conceived, designed, planned, organized, prepared, and perpetrated by the higher stations of the ruling party. There is no doubt."

² For a detailed account, see Paul R. Brass, "The Gujarat Pogrom of 2002," *Contemporary Conflicts* (Social Science Research Council, 2004); <http://conconflicts.ssrc.org/archives/gujarat/brass/> (accessed March 29, 2010).

integration, or in human rights more generally. However, there is also a widespread sense in India that the 20th century pattern of chronic “communal” violence has taken on a new significance. There is a concern that a new nexus between state officials or institutions and extremist anti-Muslim organizations simultaneously constitutes a new threat to law and order and a debilitation of state capacity to respond.

There was credible evidence in Gujarat—for example, accounts of senior police officials—that the highest level of state officials had colluded in mob violence. Police officers such as Additional Director General of Police Sreekumar, who had sought to discharge their responsibility to protect life and property without discrimination, suffered retribution at the hands of senior government officials in their professional advancement.³ The systematic erosion of the state’s responsibility to uphold law and order threatens the welfare and interest of all Indians, non-Muslims as well as Muslims. It is arguably a significant source of weakness in the Indian state’s capacity to serve its citizens, and in the stability necessary for the larger Indian society’s economic development.

Apart from evidence of systematic collusion of state institutions in public disorder, the aftermath of Gujarat also suggested a new systematic weakening of public order. Previous instances of Hindu-Muslim violence in modern India have taken the form of eruptions of rioting, followed by retaliatory mob violence. In contrast, the *Times of India* reported on March 27, a full month after the initial events in Godhra, that 30 cities and towns in Gujarat remained under curfew. Where the established pattern of religious conflict in India has been one of localized violence, or of reactive violence in a limited number of localities, in Gujarat the violence was pervasive. One hundred fifty-three state assembly constituencies, 993 villages, 183 towns, and 284 police stations were affected.⁴

Although the Muslims’ minority status had always rendered them disproportionately vulnerable in such tit-for-tat violence, in Gujarat the disproportion assumed an alarming scale. In Godhra, the ratios of Muslims to Hindus killed was an already appalling five to one; in the aftermath of Godhra, this increased to 15 Muslims killed for every Hindu. Two new patterns of victimization of Muslims exemplify the qualitative change. Whereas Muslims have traditionally been relatively safe in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods, in the recent events in Gujarat they were attacked in Muslim majority areas,⁵ and there was an unprecedented extension of violence and killings to rural Gujarat.

³ The case of Sreekumar was resolved by the Supreme Court of India in his favor and against the Gujarat state government.

⁴ *The Indian Express* (Trivandrum ed.), November 24, 2007, p. 3.

⁵ Interviews by the author, various locations in Gujarat; see also T. K. Rajalakshmi, “Testimonies of Terror,” *Frontline* 19, no. 8 (2002).

Less than two months after Godhra, the number of displaced Muslims in camps was 150,000. Although many of these have since found more permanent homes, few have been able to return to their original homes. The long-term trend has been an extreme form of residential segregation, with even well-to-do Muslims who had been living in mixed neighborhoods moving to exclusively Muslim communities. The already substantial disabilities suffered by poor Muslim neighborhoods in the form of “redlining” (lack of accessible public services such as banks, public transport, and schools) have been compounded as a result of this intensified residential segregation.

Many Indians, Muslim and non-Muslim, have observed that there is an increasing psychological and cultural gap between mainstream Hindu opinion and the bulk of Muslims. This gap is characterized by increasingly suspicious and hostile assumptions about the intentions of the other toward one’s own community, by the mutual sense that the other is not truly committed to a national unity based upon a common national identity, and by highly fictitious notions about the other’s cultural prejudices and practices. In this respect, it is noteworthy that during the post-Godhra events, the Gujarati-language press engaged not only in highly provocative anti-Muslim reporting but also in incitement of their readers to anti-Muslim violence.

Hindutva zealots most commonly seek to justify anti-Muslim outrages by reference to the proliferation of terrorist incidents in India and the alleged complicity or sympathy of Muslim Indians in them. By contrast, the influential Islamic seminary Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband in late 2007 and early 2008 came out with a forceful public condemnation of terrorism, calling it a “heinous crime against humanity,” thus lending the prestige of a religiously conservative institution against terrorism. In May 2008, Deoband issued a *fatwa*, declaring terrorism “un-Islamic.” In early 2009, Deoband declared suicide attacks “un-Islamic.” Muslim extremists were enraged. The Jaipur bombers released statements in 2008 branding the Deoband authors “dogs,” “a bunch of cowards,” and “puppets of Hinduism.” An Islamist member of Parliament wryly noted that Muslims are attacked by (Hindu) communalists for supporting terrorism, and by terrorists for not supporting them.⁶

It is important to acknowledge that sources of difficulty remain, though none of them justify the zealots’ broad-brush condemnation of Muslim Indians. These difficulties stem from two sources, theological and practical. As noted by Muslim liberals, including former Union Minister Arif Mohamed Khan, the Deoband statement condemning terrorism coexists with an educational curriculum that includes the following language: “The destruction of the sword is incurred by infidels, although they may not be the first aggressors, as appears from various passages in the sacred writings which are generally received to this

⁶ Praveen Swami, “We Are Fighting to Defend Islam,” interview of Mahmood Madani, *The Hindu*, June 9, 2008.

effect.”⁷ Moreover, Muslim Indians have been found to be involved in some recent terrorist incidents and plots.⁸

State and Society

The Muslim position in modern India is ambiguous. There is, on the one hand, the emergence of systematic, officially sanctioned anti-Muslim discrimination, sustained by several related developments. One is the steep growth over less than two decades of the Hindu right wing, embodied both by the coming to power (nationally and at the state level) of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and in the increase in ideological influence of its more extremist and anti-Muslim allies, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), and Bajrang Dal. Governmental power has conferred control of educational curricula and the opportunity to deliberately recruit ideological zealots to public services.

These developments have in turn promoted and been promoted by the emergence of a resurgent cultural discourse. That discourse draws in part on Hindu incomprehension of Muslim experience and opinion, in part on an emerging global sense about the supranational loyalties of Muslims to pan-Islamic identity at the expense of national loyalty to predominantly non-Muslim states, and in part on the increasing segregation of the two groups in their everyday lives. This undercurrent of Hindu chauvinism, or at least Hindu supremacy, is of longer standing than the recent rise of the BJP and its *Hindutva* allies, according to an influential body of Indian historical scholarship, and it has long been present even in the professedly secular Indian National Congress party, albeit as a minority tendency. Although many have noted the Congress party’s opportunistic turn to “soft *Hindutva*” in the past two decades throughout India, and particularly in Gujarat in the past decade, the tendency may be older.⁹

⁷ See Amit Pandya, “Faith, Justice, and Violence: Islam in Political Context,” in Amit Pandya and Ellen Laipson, eds., *Islam and Politics: Renewal and Resistance in the Muslim World* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2009).

⁸ These include the February 2010 bombing in Pune and the attacks on Mumbai in 2007 and 2008. Earlier incidents include attacks in 2007 in Lucknow, Varanasi, and Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh; an arrest in Kolkata; arrests in Hubli, Karnataka; planned attacks in Goa; arrests in early 2008 in Uttar Pradesh for 2005 attacks in Bangalore and planned attacks on Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, and Mumbai in 2008. Very often, the involvement of Indians has been at the level of local low-level facilitators, usually for money or in furtherance of criminal objectives. A shadowy nexus, reflected in the recent attacks on Pune, has developed between Pakistani-supported operatives (such as David Headley of Chicago) and indigenous Indian covert groups such as the so-called “Indian Mujahideen” and the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). In many cases, the Indians involved are relatively well educated in technical disciplines. Arrests of young men from Kerala have given rise to concern that the empowered, educated, well-to-do, and well-integrated Kerala Muslim community is also being radicalized.

⁹ Manu Bhagavan, “The Hindutva Underground: Hindu Nationalism and the Indian National Congress in Late Colonial and Early Post-Colonial India,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 13, 2008, p. 39.

The countervailing and still influential trend emphasizes the secular traditions of Indian political life and the secular requirements of the Indian constitution and law, and appeals to a syncretic vision of Indian national identity inextricable from Muslim culture and history. This tradition also appeals to the larger requirements of social peace and political stability in a society where Muslims are pervasive and are intermingled with non-Muslims.

Many have leveled the charge of tokenism or “vote-bank politics”—a sense that concessions to Muslims have been cynical electoral calculation rather than service of their substantive interests. There is certainly some truth to this, and often the accommodation of Muslim interests has been of those elements of cultural identity, such as separate laws relating to marriage and inheritance, that emphasize distinction rather than common national identity. At other times, political elites have a particular view of Muslim identity and interests—those articulated by conservative religious leaders—rather than the variety of interests, including those articulated by Muslim reformers, Muslim feminists, or other liberal currents of thought. The perception that there has been “appeasement” of Muslims has given rise to resentments on the part of many Hindus, and has been readily fostered and exploited by anti-Muslim movements and ideologues.

Nonetheless, as clearly discernible is the very real weight and prestige in Indian political practice of the need to address the broader concerns of Muslim Indians. One important manifestation of this is Indian officialdom’s repeated search for an assessment of the welfare and security of Muslims. Bodies have been set up under the 1952 Commissions of Inquiry Act or under the notification powers of the Prime Minister to constitute high-level committees for preparation of reports. Many analysts and observers have repeatedly, and often justifiably, criticized the various investigative bodies as empty gestures, and have suggested that the results have often been a whitewash or have proved to be “dead letters.”¹⁰ Nonetheless, the fact that the state has felt the need to conduct such inquiries, and has devoted resources (and, in some cases, substantial political attention) to them, is at least a partial reflection of its acknowledgment of the importance of the issue and of the political attention that Muslim interests command in the Indian polity.¹¹

The most important recent example is the high-level committee set up by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Justice Rajender Sachar to report on the Social, Educational and Economic Status of the Muslim Community. The Sachar Committee reported in 2006 in the form of a comprehensive review based on fieldwork, statistics, literature, and hear-

¹⁰ The Srikrishna Commission report into the anti-Muslim riots in Mumbai in 1992–93 remained without official follow-up or corrective actions despite changes of government at the state level and promises during subsequent elections to redress the wrongs.

¹¹ The Ram Sahay Commission, although not discussed here, is testament to the attempted reach and detail of official Indian efforts to address Muslim concerns, specifically those of Muslim artisan weavers.

ings. The 1983 report of the Gopal Singh inquiry into minorities had previously drawn attention to the educational problems of Muslims, including high primary school dropout rates and low participation in higher and technical education. In this respect, as well as in government employment, Muslims were found to be significantly worse off than Sikhs or Christians.

In 2007, the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Mishra Commission) arrived at many of the same conclusions as the Sachar Committee about the unacceptable disproportion in educational and employment opportunity for Muslims. However, the Mishra Commission's primary interest for political and social analysts was that it addressed the thorny question that many had raised in light of the Sachar findings: whether affirmative action measures to help victims of the caste system (currently restricted to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, and tribal peoples) should be extended to lower caste Christians and Muslims. Many advocates of Christian and Muslim interests have suggested that this is appropriate in light of the fact that the Indian caste system is not entirely absent from these religious groups, and that those whose families before conversion were of lower caste are still subject to caste disabilities. The existence of caste distinctions among South Asian Muslims has long been an open secret, with differentiated treatment extended to those who converted from Hindu lower castes and those descended from families originally of Central Asian origin.¹²

The Srikrishna Commission report of 1998 reported on the anti-Muslim rioting in Mumbai in December 1992 and January 1993 following bomb attacks on the Bombay Stock Exchange. This report rejected the notion that the riots were spontaneous eruptions of Hindu anger, and suggested that publications and leaders of a local right-wing party, the Shiv Sena, had deliberately incited or legitimized the rioting, while the state government had been complicit through acquiescence and inaction. The commission found, in a revealing precedent to Gujarat a decade later, that the attacks on Muslims were mounted with military precision, with voter lists in hand.¹³

As would also later occur at Gujarat, Justice Srikrishna found that in Mumbai individual policemen had participated in the attacks on Muslims, and that there was evidence of anti-

¹² A dissent by a commission member suggested that the inclusion of Christians and Muslims in caste-based affirmative action would constitute insertion of caste into religions that do not recognize it. Behind this debate lurks the suspicion that the failure to include Muslims and Christians in affirmative action is based less on the absence of caste in those religions and more on a desire to punish those who have converted to religions of non-Indian origin.

¹³ For an excellent summary of the Srikrishna Committee findings, see Praveen Swami, "A Searing Indictment," *Frontline* 15:18 (1998).

Muslim bias in the police force, which led to a reluctance to take firm measures against violence, looting, and arson.¹⁴

That said, a clear indication of ameliorative capacity and responsiveness to Muslim concerns of state institutions and Indian society is found in the aftermath of 1992–93 in Mumbai. The police and Muslim and secular community organizations banded together to form the highly successful Mohalla Committees, to provide confidence building, consultation, and collaboration between state and society. These committees include very senior retired police officers alongside community activists, and help keep the police aware of developments in the community, and the community aware of the requirements of policing. They take pride in having prevented any communal violence since their establishment, despite the occurrence of two major terrorist attacks in Mumbai in the past few years, which would ordinarily have been triggers for extremists to provoke violence.¹⁵

The most recent report (2009), has been the commission chaired by Justice Liberhan to look into the events surrounding a Hindu mob's demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, in December 1992. The Liberhan Commission, which was charged with reporting within three months, has justly been criticized for reporting almost 17 years after the events in question, and for taking several years after concluding its inquiry to prepare its report. The government in turn has been criticized for delaying several months in releasing the findings to the public.

A source of irritation for some Muslim advocates has been that the Srikrishna and the Liberhan bodies, while unequivocally finding that violence was planned rather than spontaneous, and that right-wing Hindu mobs acted at the behest of senior political leaders (in the case of Ayodhya, the BJP) and in collusion with state officials and police, excoriate the role of Muslim sectarians and criminals who joined the fray and compounded the problem. It has been suggested in certain quarters of Muslim and secular Hindu opinion that these types of conclusions reflect an unfortunate pattern of blaming the victims.

A similar charge was leveled against the Nanvati-Mehta (formerly Nanvati-Shah) judicial inquiry's findings (presented September 2008) about the burning of the train at Godhra station which set in motion the carnage in Gujarat. The reasons this has proved to be controversial vividly illustrate many elements and offer a case study of the Indian state's responsiveness to attacks on Muslim security. The original chairs of the inquiry had made remarks

¹⁴ Several official inquiries have looked at the actions of the police over the years, in addition to the Srikrishna Commission; these include the Madon inquiry into Bhiwandi Jalgaon, Jagmohan Reddy into Ahmedabad, and Vythyathil into Tellicherry.

¹⁵ Usha Thakkar, "Mohalla Committees of Mumbai: Candles in the Ominous Darkness," *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 7, 2004.

at the outset suggesting that they had made up their minds before the investigation. The forensic evidence they relied on was highly controversial, of a Muslim mob deliberately and for ideological reasons attacking the train. The Additional Director General of the Gujarat Police (Intelligence) at the time of the event, and therefore the officer most responsible for and knowledgeable about these events, testified to the Nanavati Commission that he had been threatened by senior political leadership if he dared reveal the truth, but the Nanavati report included no reference to this testimony. Finally, the report made no refutation of the findings of an earlier commission of inquiry into the same events, constituted as required under the Indian Railway Act, under Justice U. C. Bannerjee, which had reached exactly the opposite conclusions.

Social and Economic Disadvantage

In recent decades, the Muslim community in India has endured economic, social, and cultural marginalization. Muslim Indians, with some notable exceptions, are in the main disproportionately poor and uneducated, and suffer from impediments in access even to the scant social resources available to the poor. They experience increasing hostility in popular attitudes, discrimination at the hands of police and other officials, biased educational curricula, tendentious views of history, and the consequences of cultural incomprehension. Despite their having at times been viewed by popular prejudice as sympathizers of Pakistan, Muslims in India have for the most part remained patriotic and loyal.

Some of the current Muslim predicament in India results from the processes of rapid economic and social change brought about by modernity and globalization, such as the destruction of traditional Muslim livelihoods and physical communities. Some is the result of evolving notions of cultural nationalism among Indian Hindus. There is a widespread sense in the community, and among its Hindu allies and sympathizers, that the integral role of Muslims and Islam in the making of all aspects of Indian thought and culture is being deliberately displaced by the articulation of a more “Hindu-ized” sense of national identity.¹⁶

While the particular systemic and cultural determinants of Muslim status in Indian society demand attention, it is also important to place the Muslim predicament within its larger context of social and economic disadvantage that afflicts many social groups in India.

¹⁶ These processes are occurring at the same time as global cultural communication, as well as integration of economies, institutions, and communication technologies, which has led to the rapid transnational transmission of ideas, ideologies, and senses of shared identity and interests among co-religionists, including Muslims worldwide. In the past, Muslim and non-Muslim Indians, like Muslims and their non-Muslim compatriots elsewhere, would have assumed that the national cultures that united across religious divides would be more significant than the transnational religious identities that divide within nations.

Despite India's impressive aggregate economic growth rates of recent years, its capital in search of foreign asset acquisitions, and its competitive performance in knowledge-based industries, India is stuck in low per capita income, and suffers serious problems of inequality, malnutrition and child mortality at sub-Saharan African levels, and significant threats to social order and civil peace. Inadequate access to courts for the poor, police incompetence, long-term detention prior to conviction, and poor prison conditions are the bane of all poor Indians. No doubt these are often compounded for Muslims. However, to examine the common disabilities of Muslim and non-Muslim Indians may help us arrive at a clearer understanding of the relative significance of Muslim poverty and systematic anti-Muslim discrimination.

Migration to Pakistan in the population transfers attending India's partition in 1947 drew away a disproportionate share of the best-educated and economically well-to-do Muslims, leaving the residual Muslim community in India composed disproportionately of poorer Muslims not confident of starting life anew away from their homes, and others (artisans, farmers) whose livelihoods in traditional occupations tied them to a particular locality. These included India-wide occupations such as leather goods manufacture and wholesale and retail trade by merchants in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and the west coast. They also included regionally specific and specialized occupations such as the weavers of Mubarakpur, Gorakhpur, and Benares, and the lockmakers of Aligarh. In many cases, these traditional occupations provided Muslims with a basis for economic self-sufficiency, or even advancement. The advance of modern education has not kept up with that economic advancement, as these occupations frequently rely on apprenticeship of children. When education has been sought, it has been a more traditionalist religious education.¹⁷ Recent economic trends have benefited some of these groups such as traders and leather merchants, while severely undercutting traditional handicrafts with competition from imported manufactured goods.

The shift in the social composition of the Muslim community with partition also changed the political leadership of Muslim Indian communities in the course of the 1950s and 1960s. Other than a small number of secular Muslim political leaders, the center of gravity of Muslim leadership shifted significantly to religious leadership or more traditionalist elements. This emphasized the indicia of Muslim identity rather than those Muslim political and economic interests that overlapped or were shared with the larger Indian population.

The disproportion in representation of Muslims in various groups confirms the particular disadvantage suffered by them, whatever the mix of general socioeconomic reasons and anti-Muslim discrimination. According to the Sachar Committee, Muslims are significantly

¹⁷ Thus, to this day, well-to-do Muslim merchant families in Rajasthan remain relatively lacking in education.

overrepresented in prisons. In the western state of Maharashtra, where Muslims are little more than one-tenth of the general population, they are almost a third of those convicted or facing trial. In the Indian Administrative Service, the elite officers of the public services, Muslims account for less than 3 percent as compared with their 13.5 percent proportion of the Indian population. Among district judges in a sample of 15 states surveyed, Muslims again constituted less than 3 percent. These figures improve slightly for the Indian Police Service (the centrally recruited and assigned elite officer cadre for police forces throughout India—4 percent), high court judges (more than 4 percent), and judicial officers (more than 6 percent), but are still short of their share of the population.

What is remarkable is the underrepresentation of Muslims even in those states where they constitute substantial enough minorities to have more cultural or political influence (Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar), or those states where there are well-established progressive and inclusive political and governance traditions (Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu).¹⁸

The figures shown in the table on representation in the ranks of the police illustrate this well. Given the importance of the issues of rule of law, personal security, and sense of victimization by the state reported from our fieldwork, these figures are particularly significant.

	Muslim %	
	of population	in police force
West Bengal	25.25	7.32
Assam	30.92	10.95
Bihar	16.53	5.94
Kerala	24.70	12.96
Uttar Pradesh	18.50	4.24
Tamil Nadu	5.56	0.11

Source: National Crime Record Bureau.

The armed forces tell a similar tale, of equal though distinct significance. The question of Muslim participation in the armed forces also affects the Hindu majority's *perception* of Muslim patriotism, regardless of the actual reasons for their underrepresentation. Muslims, for their part, are concerned that their lower level of recruitment into the armed forces reflects the nation's lack of trust in their patriotism.

At the time of partition, Muslims were almost a third of the Indian armed forces. This was reversed with the division of the Indian Army, and the decision of most Muslim officers to join the Pakistan Army. Despite the six decades that have elapsed since, there has been little restoration of the demographic balance through recruitment of Muslims into the Indian Army. Today, they constitute less than 3 percent of the armed forces.

The severe underrepresentation of Muslims in public service employment has given rise in recent years to a demand that they be entitled to "reservations" or affirmative action,

¹⁸ In Uttar Pradesh, for example, where Muslims constitute a quarter of the population, in 1960 they constituted 12 percent of public service employees. Today, that figure has dropped to 4 percent.

which is currently available to Dalits and so-called “Other Backward Classes” (OBCs), but is denied to Muslims and Christians on the spurious grounds that those religions do not practice caste. As noted earlier, this is a contentious issue, because some Muslims agree with the latter argument. Others believe that the Muslim community should not be entitled as a group to this benefit, owing to its great social variety. However, there is an emerging sense that those Muslims who occupy essentially the same low social status as lower caste Hindus should be entitled to reservations.¹⁹

A quite distinct issue from that of underrepresentation in various types of public employment is that of unequal enjoyment of publicly funded infrastructure and state services. This has been identified by the Sachar Committee. Thus, access of Muslim children to integrated child development services is disproportionately low. According to the 2001 census, there are 11 Indian districts with Muslim majorities. In 38 districts, Muslims are at least 25 percent of the population; these constitute 38 percent of the national Muslim population. In 182 districts, Muslims are more than 10 percent of the population, and in these reside 47 percent of India’s Muslims. There are also numerous small- and medium-sized towns where Muslims are a sizable proportion. All these areas are relatively poorly provided with urban infrastructure and other civic amenities. Some analysts have suggested that the geography of public infrastructure provision for Muslim Indians mimics that for the neglected populations of tribal Indians.²⁰

Education, Identity, and Empowerment

The relationship between education, identity, and power has been a complex one in modern Muslim history in India.²¹ The movement for Pakistan, and before it Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s Aligarh movement for a distinct Muslim identity within India, was led by modernizers who embraced modern education and the assimilation of Western learning and norms. Yet these modernizers also sought to regenerate a distinct sense of Muslim identity.²²

There is a close relationship, institutional and ideological, between Sir Sayyid’s establishment of the Mohamedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh and Maulana Muhammad Qasim’s establishment of the traditionalist though reformist Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband seminary, the intellectual powerhouse of one of the two most important Islamic schools of

¹⁹ See Irfan Engineer, “The Backward Muslims,” *Secular Perspective*, March 6, 2010.

²⁰ Javeed Alam, “The Contemporary Muslim Situation in India,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 12, 2008, p. 45.

²¹ See Arjumand Ara, “Madrasas and the Making of Muslim Identity in India,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 3, 2004, p. 34.

²² Hafeez Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

thought throughout the subcontinent.²³ Each had its origins in a common British-led and Mughal-sponsored institution—Delhi College, established in 1825.²⁴

Whereas elite modernizers might have been expected to embrace ideas that united Muslims with non-Muslims, their emphasis on Muslim identity led them to adopt approaches that looked to the consolidation of traditional sources of intellectual and cultural authority. Thus, while Muslim elites availed themselves of modern nonreligious education, and while *madrassah* and *maktab*²⁵ developed to educate boys of more humble families in conservative and traditional religious values and identity, there developed a convergence between the two in the attachment to the safeguarding and fostering of distinct Muslim identity. This consensus made Muslim identity paramount in the design of Muslim educational institutions.

In the absence of an equal emphasis on education for economic opportunity, for poorer students religious identity and values were counterposed to the pursuit of economic advancement through modern education. With the departure of modern-educated Muslim elites to Pakistan, or their assimilation after partition into the Indian upper middle class, distinct sources of traditional religious identity such as Muslim family law became the overwhelming definers of Muslim interests, and religious leaders and teachers became the articulators of Muslim identity.

Under the Indian constitution, Muslims enjoy the right of access to quality publicly funded education. In practice, however, they, like poor non-Muslim Indians, are denied such an education. This leads Muslims to seek out the alternative of *madrassah* (religious seminaries)—which in turn only further separates them from the mainstream. Moreover, *madrassah* uniformly provide inadequate preparation for occupations other than religious teaching

²³ There is much confusion about the nature of the Deoband seminary, which is often misleadingly termed “fundamentalist” or “radical.” Many of the most radical elements at war with the state in Pakistan are descendants of the same tradition as Indian Deobandi. In late 2008, Pakistan’s government complained to the United Nations Security Council that Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband was influencing terrorists in Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas. However, as the Pakistani writer Akbar Zaidi has suggested, the Indian and Pakistani Deobandi traditions have developed distinctly since partition; the latter much affected by Saudi Wahhabi funding and influence in recent decades. The mainstream Deoband tradition has a history of robust engagement in pluralist discourse and a more progressive and nationalist political orientation. Early in its history, Deoband participated in religious debate and discourse with Hindu and Christian scholars, and struggled jointly with Indians of all religions in the largely nonviolent anti-colonial movement. Deoband was also influential in the nonviolent, Islamist, yet nonseparatist anti-British struggle of the Pathan Khudai Khidmatgar in the North West Frontier Province, in alliance with the secular nationalist Indian National Congress. (For a brief account of the Khudai Khidmatgar, see Pandya op. cit.) Such traditions still affect Deoband’s engagement in the broader Indian political discourse.

²⁴ S. M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 280.

²⁵ Religious elementary school. In the present essay, for simplicity, the term *madrassa* (plural *madrassah*) is used to refer to both types of schools.

or prayer leadership. Thus, the emphasis on indicia of religious and cultural identity for Muslim empowerment acts against their empowerment in terms of educational and economic opportunity.

Because of the distorting effects of the prejudices of the well-to-do which often accompany the lack of educational opportunity for the poor, the discourse has gained currency in mainstream opinion that Muslims have, for cultural reasons or reasons of poverty, rejected modern education. The figures suggest otherwise. Attendance of Muslim children in publicly funded secular schools has increased faster than that of non-Muslim children.

National Sample Survey Organization data collected in 1999–2000 and 2004–05 show that, in rural areas, attendance of Muslim boys (ages 5 to 14) increased almost 12 percent compared to 9 percent for non-Muslims. The figures for girls were 16 percent for Muslims compared to 13 percent for non-Muslims. This increase closed the gap with Hindus: in 2004–05, 76 percent of Muslim boys and 71 percent of Muslim girls were attending school compared to 84 percent of Hindu boys and 71 percent of Hindu girls. In urban areas, the rate of increase was equal between Muslim and non-Muslim boys; Muslim girls experienced double the rates of increase of others.

These figures do not tell us about the quality of education offered, which is uniformly low in the publicly funded education systems, and by some accounts even worse in predominantly Muslim schools. What is more troubling is the inequality in employment opportunity for equally educated Muslims and non-Muslims. In rural and urban areas, the unemployment rate for Muslim graduates was double the rate for Hindus. Whether for this reason or otherwise, the rates of increase in numbers studying beyond the secondary level were significantly lower among Muslims than among others. Muslim men in higher education in urban areas actually declined during this period.

A news report on the National Sample Survey Organization findings brought home the link between these dry statistics and the headline news of the day. It quoted a Muslim resident of Jamia Nagar, where police had recently arrested suspected terrorists: “Many educated boys spend the whole day hanging around at tea shops. Who knows what is going on in their minds.”²⁶

The fear of loss of cultural autonomy poses a substantial obstacle to attempts to bring the values of quality modern education to the *madrassah*. Nonetheless, initiatives have been taken to introduce modern secular curricula to *madrassah*, and to subject them to some quantum of regulation for content and educational standards. In the past year, efforts have included funding from the national Human Resource Development Ministry’s Sarva

²⁶ Subodh Varma, “More Muslims Studying, but Can’t Find Jobs,” the *Times of India*, October 27, 2008.

Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) scheme for *madrassa* modernization in Delhi. This includes assignment of teachers from the ministry pool, and training of *madrassa* teachers for science and English instruction. Legislation drafted by the government would provide funding in return for regulation of curriculum content and standards, under the aegis of a proposed central *madrassa* board. It must be acknowledged that the poor quality of secular government-funded schools lends little persuasive force to such efforts.

The quality of most *madrassah* remains low, and their curriculum suggests that they act to separate Muslim students culturally and intellectually. The likelihood or outcomes of official attempts to regulate them and improve their quality remain uncertain. However, at the level of popular initiative, encouraging counterexamples may be found. Leading and prestigious organizations of religious teachers (*ulema*) such as the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind (JUH) have taken a lead in the reform of religious schools. As part of this effort, *madrassah* have hosted political debates and discussions on issues including terrorism, to which non-Muslim political and social activists, journalists, and religious leaders have been welcomed.²⁷

Perhaps as significant is the development of models for interreligious collaboration on improvement of Muslim religious schools. A collaboration between the JUH and Janvikas, a secular organization, resulted in the development of the Jeevan Talim project, which works in Gujarat to improve numeracy and literacy education in Muslim schools, including pedagogical training for religious teachers and peer instructors. Bringing together the capacities of Janvikas, which has long worked with primary education reform for all socially disadvantaged groups including Muslims, and the access and prestige of *ulema*, this collaboration has threaded the needle of religious/cultural identity and educational quality.

Such initiatives are particularly important in a political climate where other socially disadvantaged groups have, since the Gujarat riots, often kept their distance from solidarity with Muslims for fear their cause might be set back in the face of growing anti-Muslim sentiment.

Uncertain Data

While some official data, albeit incomplete and not entirely reliable, exist on the representation of Muslims in public services, other demographic data are sorely lacking. The Sachar Committee, possibly the most comprehensive review ever undertaken, itself acknowledges the problem of data insufficiency. Sachar suggests that a national body is

²⁷ Yoginder Sikand, "Reforming Traditional Muslim Education," *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 19, 2008, p. 19.

needed to generate data. Demographic issues are one indicator of the ways in which factual uncertainty can feed the respective anxieties of Muslims and non-Muslims. To assess these anxieties, let alone effectively address them, is almost impossible in the absence of clarity about the true situation.

The social marginality of many Muslim communities and populations throughout India compounds this problem. Many Muslims make their livelihoods in traditional artisanal occupations that are obscured to all but the most comprehensive survey. Their participation in traditional artisanal occupations and their disproportionate representation in the informal economy make Muslims less visible and less susceptible to modern social science tools for social policy. In turn, the deficiencies of policy tools act as significant constraints on the capacity of state institutions to address clearly identified and agreed priorities such as access to education. Planning for appropriate numbers and placement of public sector schools is doubly difficult for such populations.

While it is dangerous to ignore the role of official discrimination or neglect in the denial of equal educational opportunity to Muslims, it is also important to recognize all significant sources of their disadvantage.

In Their Own Voices

“Muslims want jobs, not Iftar.”

“Spend government resources for Muslim education, not Hajj subsidies.”

In Their Own Voices:

The Stimson Center/ Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Study

Summary of Findings and Major Themes

The purpose of the Stimson/Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Study was not to use focus groups and interviews as a means of ascertaining the objective reality of the conditions of Muslims in India. There have been many systematic studies that have been comprehensive in scope, and others that have addressed one or another important dimension. Many are quite recent. These studies along with others in recent decades provide a baseline to assess objective realities. The Gopal Singh, Srikrishna, Liberhan, Mishra, and Sachar reports are cases in point.

Rather, what we have sought to address through our study has been the perceptions among a variety of Muslims of their own condition. Which of the issues identified by the reports do Muslims themselves feel are of greatest significance, and precisely what form do they themselves see these issues taking? While the approaches among our interlocutors varied widely regarding the issues raised and discussed, a remarkable consensus has emerged through the process as to the principal sources of concern to the Muslims of India.

The overall picture is of a community that feels a variety of acute challenges. It is overrepresented, relative to its proportion in the population as a whole, in the ranks of the poor and the economically vulnerable. It is underrepresented in the ranks of all public services—administrative, police, military, and diplomatic. It feels politically weak and divided. It is immobilized by a sense of fear that forceful articulation of its concerns will spawn a backlash and by anxiety that the larger society is unprepared to address its concerns.

The most significant findings are as follows.

- The predominant concern is education and the closely related issue of economic opportunity, for the benefit of individual Muslims and the community as a whole. This belies the general Indian perception that cultural or ideological issues of identity are the principal concerns of Muslims.

- Religious issues as such are a very minor part of the discourse and concerns. The concern about unequal treatment on the basis of religious identity is more important.
- The other principal emphasis is the concern with the rule of law, and personal security from mob violence or from injustice perpetrated by state institutions such as the police and courts.
- Muslim Indians are like their non-Muslim compatriots in their aspirations; contrary to popular non-Muslim perception, the tone of Muslim positions is constructive and emphasizes self-improvement and self-restraint.

There is a pervasive sense that non-Muslims are either unaware of Muslim concerns and points of view, or disinterested in or hostile to them. There is a sense that the evolution of Hindu sentiment is increasingly anti-Muslim, that the integral role of Muslims in Indian history and society is under attack, and that the national political discourse is infected by an exclusive majoritarianism. The image of the loyal Muslim community, once the source of nationalist and cultural pride for most Indians, is slowly being replaced by, at best, a sense of their irrelevance and, at worst, a sense that they somehow challenge the emerging self-image of the new India. The calumny that Muslims are “anti-national” and covertly sympathetic to Pakistan is never far from the surface.

Acceptance of such unfavorable views of Muslims and a triumphalist sense of Hindu identity have become pervasive. These subtly affect the climate of opinion, even among Hindus who may not exhibit bias or other hostile feelings toward Muslims. This is sought to be justified in terms of resistance to alleged “appeasement” of minorities. The actual experience of Muslims is of anything but appeasement: rather, they feel significantly discriminated against.

The predominant post-independence nationalist pride at the continuing presence of Muslims and Muslim heritage in secular India, distinguished from the narrowly religious identity of Pakistan, has now been replaced by suspicion. The celebration of India’s Muslim heritage has been replaced by cultural irritation. The celebration of the role of many prominent and distinguished Muslim leaders in the nationalist freedom struggle has now been ignored and increasingly given way to the calumny that Muslims are disloyal to India, with pejorative references to their localities as “Pakistan” and the suspicion that they support subversive activities. Such suspicions mark popular perception, and are subtly and not so subtly promoted by many in the news media and by some political leaders.

Outside the realm of cultural and ideological discourse, the increasing marginalization of Muslims in Indian society takes the following forms.

- *Increasing segregation and decreasing contacts between Muslims and Hindus.* This is found in the form of physical segregation of housing and communities, to an extent

greater than ever before, reflecting mutual security perceptions and concerns and deliberate choices. It is also found in the form of many Hindus losing interest in the lives and concerns of their Muslim fellow Indians. The long and proudly noted syncretic culture of India, where Hindus and Muslims participated in each others' festivals and religious observances, has now given way to a palpable irritation at the physical and sartorial indicia of Muslim identity. Public Hindu religious celebration is increasingly deliberately used to provoke and exclude rather than invite.

- *Muslim marginalization as a result of economic trends.* Processes of economic change that have affected all poor or economically vulnerable communities and classes have left Muslims at a progressively greater disadvantage. To some extent, this has been because Muslims are overrepresented among the poor and in those classes and traditional occupations that have been the most harmed by the direction that economic development has taken in India. The role of the state in protecting citizens against such shocks has meanwhile diminished. Avenues of economic advancement have recently depended more than before on education, and Muslims as a group have had particular difficulty in finding educational opportunity and availing themselves of it.
- *The significant role of state institutions in the marginalization of Muslims in Indian society.* In addition to Muslim underrepresentation in public services such as the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service, and in public sector enterprises, there has been a significant increase in anti-Muslim sentiment among officials at all levels. This has been reflected in discrimination against Muslims by court personnel, the police, the judiciary, and those officials responsible for the distribution of public welfare services and benefits (ration card, relief, public health care, and education) and other public goods such as permits and licenses. State officials including the police have been guilty of violence and other abuse against Muslims simply as a result of hostility. In general, Muslims do not trust the institutions of the state to protect their physical safety or their legal rights.
- *Pervasive decline in Muslim participation in all institutions, public and private, though all Indian citizens are equal under the Indian constitution and laws.* This is because of discrimination, deliberate social and cultural exclusion, and partly because Muslims have lost interest and become demoralized from seeking participation owing to the hostility and discrimination they encounter.

The principal policy issues on which the Muslim leadership articulated the demand for equality in the post-independence era were predominantly those that go to cultural identity, such as the laws of family and inheritance (personal law), the survival of Urdu, and the preservation of the minority character of Muslim educational institutions such as Aligarh Muslim University. The Muslim consensus is that these issues have receded in their actual importance and that the state appears to have conceded on them.

The focus and emphasis in recent years have shifted to issues of lack of empowerment, lack of full participation in society, and lack of economic opportunity. Since the early period of independence, the actual experience of the community has shifted from conflict at the community level to the state's collusion in injustice and violence against the community. There is a perception that the incidence of popular violence has diminished in recent years, but that its ferocity has increased, in instances such as the state-sponsored pogrom of 2002 in Gujarat. This appears to lead to a degree of pessimism about the actual effects of even successful efforts at building intercommunal understanding and at educating Hindus at the community level about the true state of affairs.

The series of reports that have addressed one or another of the key issues, such as those of the Gopal Singh, Srikrishna, Liberhan, Mishra, and Sachar Commissions, have not themselves led to substantive reform, nor is there an expectation that they will. However, they have sharpened both the Muslim community's understanding of the exact dimensions of its predicament, and its sense of grievance and alienation owing to the inaction of the state in response to them.

That sharpening of the sense of grievance and alienation poses a significant threat of social division and instability if the community's concerns remain substantively uncorrected.

Cultural, Ideological, and Social Diversity of Muslims

Regions of India vary significantly in history, cultural configuration, demography, the economic condition of Muslims, and the condition of Hindu-Muslim relations. The differences in perspective resulting from this were clearly reflected in our focus group discussions and interviews. Social stratification within the community on the basis of education, caste, class, and other factors has also resulted in variant perspectives. Finally, the Muslim community, like any other, benefits from a rich variety of philosophical, ideological, and religious perspectives which lend it a complexity that challenges generalization.

One of the fundamental questions raised is whether it is any more accurate to speak of a "Muslim community" in India or to generalize about the experience and concerns of "Muslim Indians" than it would be to do so about Hindu Indians. Should we perhaps refer instead to "Muslim communities of India"? Rather than thinking of these as homogeneous communities, even in the plural, is it more accurate to speak in terms of the particularly defined experiences of Muslims as citizens of India, as individuals, in particular localities, and of certain social classes? The variegated character of the Muslim community in India reflects the rich sociological, historical, and cultural variety characteristic of Indian society as a whole.

Diversity need not suggest a disunity of purpose or action. While the approaches to the issues varied widely in different parts of India, there was a clear consensus on the principal

problems that affect the Muslims of India. However, finding a unified—or at least consistent—voice, or coordinated political leadership for the Muslims nationally remains a challenge. The issue of inadequate political representation, identified as one of the key Muslim concerns, compounds this difficulty. There also remains disagreement about what form Muslim political organization and advocacy should take, as discussed below.

Muslims in Kerala appear to feel a sense of distinction from their northern compatriots, and to enjoy a greater sense of security than Muslims in other parts of India. The role of Muslim political organization in larger coalition politics is clearer. Nonetheless, even here established patterns are being destabilized, in part because the predominance of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) is challenged by more varied and militant Muslim voices, in part because of the changes under way in secular Indian and Kerala politics, in part because communal polarization is increasing particularly in the north of the state as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and other extremist *Hindutva* organizations seek to make inroads, and in part because of a higher degree of radicalization in the Muslim community.

The radicalization is explained by several factors, including the Muslim backlash to communal developments in the state and a greater awareness than before of the national situation, and the impact of ideological influences from the larger Muslim world as a result of the substantial expatriate Keralite population in the Gulf workforces. While the sense of Muslim grievances and disadvantages being shared with vulnerable non-Muslim groups is present throughout India, it appears to be stronger in Kerala, probably because of the history of class-based politics in the state.

At the other end of the spectrum are the Muslims of Gujarat and Assam. In both cases, there is a remarkable strength and calmness in the tone of Muslim response, yet it is clear that they feel an acute sense of threat and crisis.

In the case of Gujarat, it is because the nationwide patterns summarized above—discrimination by state institutions, a pervasive cultural hostility, and physical segregation—are found in a particularly extreme form, as embodied in the pogrom of 2002 and its aftermath.

In Assam, the sense of threat is rooted in the combination of the extreme poverty of most Muslims, the state's ethno-demographic-political complexity, the relatively high proportion of Muslims in the population, the demographic insecurity felt by Assamese Hindus, concerns about Bangladeshi migration and its impact on how Assamese Muslims are perceived and how ethno-demographic issues are framed in terms of threats to national security. Despite the often-repeated nervousness that Assam is shaping up to be “the next Gujarat,” the political demography of Assam is seen to offer some degree of protection. Of 121 state assembly constituencies, 23 have Muslim majorities, and despite political party

divisions among Muslim members of the legislative assembly, there is a sense of Muslims being essential to the arithmetic of coalition building in the state.

In West Bengal, the issues that have been at the forefront of public attention in general, such as displacement of the rural poor and small cultivators in favor of industrial development, are also seen as having a disproportionate impact on Muslims. Thus, consideration of issues of concern to Muslims is seen as part and parcel of the wider debate about social policy. As in Kerala, the relative strength of class politics in the state may explain the greater willingness to frame the issues in terms of concerns shared with other communities. However, there is also a sense that, despite the opportunistic willingness of the Communists and the left-wing parties to embrace symbolic Muslim causes, all political parties remain unresponsive to the actual predicament and concerns of Muslims. Another important distinguishing characteristic of the Muslim situation in West Bengal is the extent to which the legacy of the partition of Bengal in 1947 between Pakistan and India continues to affect the perceptions of both Muslims (defensiveness) and non-Muslims (suspicion). And, while there remains a basic body of concerns that Bengali Muslims experience, their interests are often not exactly those of Urdu speakers in Kolkata and large cities, particularly those who are from Uttar Pradesh or Bihar.

Uttar Pradesh and the so-called Hindi heartland present particular challenges. These areas constituted the historical heart of Muslim power, cultural accomplishment, and prestige. The departure to Pakistan of Muslim elites, including many feudal land-owning elites as well as the modern educated and professional classes, left poorer Muslim farmers and artisans isolated and often leaderless. In Uttar Pradesh in 1947, a higher proportion of Muslims than Hindus was educated. This advantage has long since been reversed.

Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu offer social and political contexts where Muslims have been relatively empowered, owing to a combination of political history, demography, and more recent political developments, such as the dominance of anti-elitist populist Dravidian movements in Tamil Nadu or the dominance of Communism and left-wing ideology in Kerala. There is often a clear distinction between the morale, status, political participation, and accomplishments of Muslims in South India and in North India.²⁸

Caste is an important dimension that is frequently overlooked in discussions of Muslim Indians. Islam ostensibly does not recognize caste, yet the system retains viability as a principle of organization, ordination, and segmentation throughout Indian society.²⁹ Cer-

²⁸ See Syed Iqbal Hasnain, *Muslims in North India: Frozen in the Past* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 2009).

²⁹ See Irfan Engineer, "Indian Muslims: Political Leadership and Ideology," in Amit Pandya and Ellen Laipson, eds., *Transnational Trends: Middle Eastern and Asian Views* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2008), pp. 96–98.

tainly, caste acts to differentiate the interests of Muslims of high and low status, and the discussions in the focus groups grappled frankly with this element.

The issue of caste is a specific manifestation of a broader distinction of interests between socially excluded, less educated, and poorer Muslims, and the relatively well-off. While anti-Muslim social and cultural prejudice is suffered equally by both groups, the former would like to see less emphasis on issues of cultural identity and more on those that affect economic and educational opportunity. Even though poorer Muslims pursue material interests more markedly, this should not suggest that cultural issues such as Muslim personal law or *fatwas* against offenses against Islam are unimportant to them. On the contrary, these issues are at least as important, if not more so, to the poor. It is simply that they chafe at the articulation of only the cultural issues by Muslim leaders.

Among the relatively well-to-do, there is a distinction between the more traditionalist—often those who have prospered in business in traditional occupations and artisanal industries—and those who have benefited from modern education and participation in modern corporate and bureaucratic settings. The former tend to favor issues of identity more than the latter.

Self-Help and Spirit of Responsibility

There can be little doubt that, following the trauma of the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Muslim opinion in India underwent an evolution that resulted in a rejection of the traditional leadership's emphasis on cultural issues such as Urdu, Muslim personal law, and the minority character of certain state-supported institutions such as the Aligarh Muslim University. These were replaced by an emphasis on the community's educational and economic advancement.

The clear message that has emerged from our study is that, despite a fair share of anger and anxiety expressed, the community is willing to take responsibility for its own welfare. Indeed, the Stimson Center's research into other aspects of Indian social and political life, and into the political and ideological currents in the wider Muslim world, suggests that the rejection of the rhetoric of victimhood is particularly noticeable among Muslim Indians, more so than among non-Muslim Indians or among non-Indian Muslims.

The predominant tone is one of accepting responsibility for attitudes that compound the "backwardness" of the community and for taking measures to reverse this, expressly rejecting blame of others. Alongside this, however, is a sense that a culture of hostility and the unresponsiveness of state institutions and policies make the task of self-improvement extremely difficult if not impossible.

Some object to the rhetoric of "self-improvement" or "introspection" as blaming the community for the failures of the wider society. Others note that, even when Muslims wish to

take self-help measures, such as establishment of better quality educational institutions, they require the support, cooperation, and permission of the state. The state is seen as particularly unresponsive to Muslim initiative, though there is also a recognition that all Indians suffer from similar unresponsiveness. “Attitudinal change” in general thus refers to both the need to effect a change in the way Muslims view their own responsibility and the need to communicate more effectively with Hindus about Muslim concerns.

A commonly expressed view is that most of the problems identified as affecting Muslims are also shared by many Indians, whether as a result of poverty, vulnerability to economic change, or disadvantaged social status. These problems include poor quality public health and education, malnutrition, and stressed livelihoods. There is recognition that their solution depends on national action. Nonetheless, there is a sense that these problems are more acute among Muslims, who suffer from additional disadvantages because of their religious identity, and that they must demand social policies on issues of security, participation, and services that take note of this particularity. For example, it was noted that Muslims are often bypassed in targeted programs such as the Prime Minister’s 15-point program, and that there is specific discrimination in the distribution of welfare assistance.

Regaining the trust of non-Muslims was repeatedly emphasized, whatever may have been the reasons that trust was lost. It is assumed that the improvement of relations with non-Muslims is the key to empowerment, again regardless of who is to blame for the deterioration of those relations. There appears to be almost no significant dissent from the need to take a pluralistic approach to political organizing and the need for coalition building.

A wide consensus exists on the need to note the latent strengths within the community and to build on them, and to avoid focusing on Muslim weaknesses, even while struggling for justice and demanding appropriate social policies.³⁰ There is significant emphasis on the importance of drawing on Muslim religious, intellectual, and historical traditions as sources of guidance for the social, ethical, and cultural approaches necessary for survival and prosperity in contemporary India.

When Muslims discuss the role and importance of internal institutions, educational and cultural, there is repeated mention of the role to be played by traditional charity—*waqf* property and *zakat* funds. These are not viewed as an alternative to government aid, which continues to be seen as essential, but as an important means to supplement scarce and inad-

³⁰ Islamist leader and member of Parliament Mahmood Madani, of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind, notes: “In my view, the biggest challenge before Muslim leaders is to move away from a destructive and pointless emotionalism towards framing a constructive agenda for the community. Young Muslims are doing very well today in fields as diverse as the media, the sciences, engineering and sports. How can we work to broaden these gains for the widest possible section of the community?” (Swami 2008, op. cit.)

equate resources, and as essential tools for preserving a degree of Muslim autonomy in the continuation and governance of Muslim institutions.

Muslims are concerned that the effectiveness of these traditional charitable tools is vitiating by the corruption of *waqf* boards, by parochialism or sectarianism or petty personal interests and grudges. They worry about the narrow vision that guides Muslim charitable giving, directing it to religious schools rather than schools that provide young Muslims with the practical skills to overcome the handicaps of the state educational system and of social discrimination. Support to religious education suffers from lack of accountability and poor quality control. Thus even when, as is often the case, there is support for religious education as an essential element in a total strategy and as a supplement to education for livelihoods, there is widespread concern that the quality of religious education provided is poor. There is also a sense that mercenary impulses have led to the deterioration and even evisceration of the quality of education provided by private educational foundations and bodies.

Renaissance

There is a sense that a “renaissance” in the cultural and intellectual life of Indian Islam is as necessary as political mobilization and building of Muslim community institutions. There is a sense of decline of the “spark” of greatness in Indian Muslim civilization.

Whether regarding political organization or the place of Muslims in the wider Indian culture, there is a sense that there is an internal intellectual vacuum that needs to be filled. In part this reflects a desire to step back from day-to-day struggles and develop a more strategic vision of concerns about poverty, representation, and media bias, partly on the basis of empirical research. We heard often that there is a dearth of independent analysis on the Muslim predicament in India, and that mainstream Indian research institutions have not made this a priority or recognized its significance to larger issues of national governance.

Aspiration to a renaissance also reflects the need to develop a renewed sense of intellectual authority within the community—something that transcends the criticisms leveled at the unrepresentative character of almost all Muslim leaders. There is a broad consensus, except among the most ideological elements, that the development of true intellectual leadership and authority requires moving beyond rigid dogmas, be they political or religious. There also appears to be broad acceptance of the need for diversity of points of view and ideologies in order to arrive at the richest and most useful and serviceable intellectual regeneration of Muslim life in India.

The need for intellectual renewal and leadership extends to grassroots issues (for example, the need for a coherent vision of the economic changes under way and their impact on

Muslim livelihood), to national issues (public policy and the evolution of the national political ideology and cultural matrix and its implications for the place of Muslims in Indian society), and to global issues (“Where are the *fatwas* regarding the global economic crisis, greed, and environmental degradation?”)

Many raised a concern about the lack of an adequate educational and institutional framework to sustain an Indian Muslim renaissance. They noted that Muslim institutions are lacking or, like Aligarh Muslim University, weakened. Others point to the need for women to play an integral role, suggesting that in the absence of adequate education for Muslim women, the Muslim community’s intellectual regeneration will remain fragile.

There is a concern that renewal or reform could bring to the fore more radical, pan-Islamist, and anti-Indian ideologies. Nonetheless, there is also confidence in and a substantial commitment to strengthening the South Asian Islamic traditions of tolerance and pluralism. This endeavor is under way in academic settings (e.g., the work of Shaheeb Rizvi at Rizvi College, Mumbai; or of Akhtarul Wasey, who heads the Islamic Studies program at Jamia Millia University in Delhi) and in the work of ideological community organizing such as by Iman Tanzim, founded by Mohammad Hamid Engineer to preserve Bareilvi Sunni approaches and identity in India.

The need to reclaim the historical record is important to many Muslim Indians in the face of an onslaught by right-wing officials to “Hindu-ize” the telling and teaching of Indian history and airbrush out the substantial role of Muslims and Islam. Two specific points deserve special note. One is the attempt to recover and propagate the history of Muslim political organizing and protest as a guide to action under current conditions and as a corrective to the view of Muslims as “anti-national.” The other is the observation that if Indian Islam and Indian Muslims are not placed in the context of Indian history, the only historical context available for Muslim Indians as a guide to present identity and action will be that of global Islam.

Economic Situation

The partition of India resulted in the loss of a significant portion of India’s educated and professional Muslims and Muslim entrepreneurs. Those who remained were joined by those in certain traditional economic and occupational sectors who have had some success; particularly artisans became successful and increased the scale of their enterprises. Traditional agriculture, even on a small scale, also continued to provide those Muslims engaged in it with at least subsistence. State policies such as directed and subsidized lending by nationalized banks provided a degree of support for both types of activity. Even so, the Muslim population of India has suffered from chronic and endemic poverty and poor education.

As the Indian economy has modernized rapidly in recent years, and as the role of the state in economic development and employment provision has diminished, the economic situation of Muslims has become more vulnerable. The small-scale and informal corners of all economic sectors have become less useful as a source of reliable livelihood.

Muslims have been consistently underrepresented in state employment, public services, and public sector enterprises. The falling proportion of Muslims in public employment affects all levels, including the lowest and most menial, suggesting that discrimination rather than lack of educational qualifications is to blame.

Previously, public employment did at least provide opportunity for some Muslims. Recent economic developments have made such public employment less attractive and less significant. The diminishing number of jobs in public services and the public sector, and their diminishing competitiveness in wages, has meant that an always poor support for Muslims has been eroded further.

The principal factor that Muslims identify as a means of improving their economic situation is the provision of quality education that equips students for livelihoods and advancement in the modern economy. There is also a widely expressed need for the provision of affordable and available credit. For a community that suffers from “redlining” and the absence of banks in Muslim localities, this would represent a radical departure.

While Muslims are suffering disproportionately owing to their vulnerable position, it is recognized that they are suffering in common from the impacts of liberalization and globalization felt by most Indians—the diminution of the importance of state employment and the assault on traditional sectors of the economy. Some Muslims note the signal lack of Muslim participation, let alone leadership, in the Indian anti-globalization movement, despite the fact that this would reflect their objective interests and provide opportunity for united political action with non-Muslims.

There is substantial discussion about the need for reservations (affirmative action in government employment and admission to educational institutions) for Muslims, or at least the removal of the bar to caste-based reservations for Christian and Muslim Dalits and “Other Backward Classes” (OBCs). At present, Muslims view themselves as the victims of reservations, since they see opportunities closed to Muslims that are reserved for Dalits and OBCs. Whatever may be the likely or perceived benefits of reservations in the context of educational opportunity, there is also recognition that, with respect to employment, this discussion may be taking place just as public employment is diminishing in significance.

There is a prevailing sense that there are obstacles to economic collaboration with non-Muslims through employment, trade, or joint investment. Muslim economic empowerment

must either take place through such collaboration or be self-sufficient. While the latter may seem a reasonable response under the circumstances, it contributes to the sense of vulnerability and apartheid/ghettoization/separation. Exclusively Muslim businesses are vulnerable to violence, especially in times of riots. Many recall Muslim businesses in artisan occupations being targeted by mobs out of envy at their prosperity.

Practice of Politics

Key factors identified as relevant to the practice of politics by Muslim Indians are the choice between coalitions with non-Muslims and autonomous Muslim political organizing, models of successful mobilization by other disempowered groups such as Dalits and “Other Backward Classes” (OBCs), the state of opinion among Hindus, the significance of recent structural trends in the larger polity, the dearth of high-quality Muslim political leadership, and the tactical and strategic mistakes made by significant portions of Muslim leadership historically and today.

There is also a widespread sense that, quite apart from outreach to and interaction with non-Muslims, Muslims need more interaction among themselves. An oft-repeated theme in many focus groups was relief that a wide variety of Muslims were gathering to discuss what is important and what to do about it.

The value of cultural identity politics is increasingly doubted. There is a sense that the privileging of identity politics by both the state and Muslim leadership—and the cutting of deals on that basis—has prevented strengthening of impartial state institutions and the rule of law, and the practice of political compromise based upon a multiplicity of political interests. The expression of inchoate Muslim discontent or unease in sacred or cultural terms has prevented the full-fledged emergence of a Muslim political discourse based upon material interests.

Opinions and perceptions vary widely as to how truly secular majority Hindu opinion is. Some believe that the vast majority of Hindus are secular and either unaware of Muslim concerns owing to the existence of the wall of separation, or are cowed into silence. Others believe that there is a more alarming development of anti-Muslim sentiment, and that the proportion of Hindus who remain committed to a secular polity is diminishing rapidly.

There is widespread concern about the poor quality of political leadership for Muslims. Even those who are honest, selfless, and well intentioned are seen as too focused on short-term goals and struggles, and lacking in vision as to how the practice of politics can strategically advance the long-term welfare and status of Muslims.

The older generation of Muslim leadership is seen as having been culturally divorced from the concerns of ordinary Muslims. It is faulted for being both self-serving and too

“Westernized.” There is a sense of a newer generation of potential leaders emerging, equally educated but more devout and in better touch with ordinary Muslims. The older generation leadership’s emphasis on politics rather than education is seen as a disservice to the community.

Politics is seen as increasingly failing to attract Muslim intellectuals to it; it is widely understood that this reflects the general decline in standards of Indian political leadership. The criminalization of politics and its deterioration through corruption and caste-ism are also seen as signs of a more general decline of political standards that has affected the welfare of Muslims. This is closely related to the perception that standards of bureaucratic practice, and the caliber of bureaucrats, have declined. On the one hand, this is understood as having a disproportionate impact on Muslims, because the weakening of standards is seen as opening the door for communalization of the bureaucratic culture. However, here too there is a sense that most Indians suffer from this, though Muslims do so disproportionately.

At issue is the optimal model for Muslim political organization. For the Muslims who remained in India, the organizational paradigm based on the struggle against British imperial power is that of united action on common problems with all Indians regardless of religious identity. In the post-independence period, Muslim participation in the Congress Party or other coalitions did little to disturb this pluralistic model. As Muslims have more recently felt marginalized by the political rhetoric, cultural discourse, policymaking, and calculations of political parties, and less personally secure, the utility of coalition politics in serving Muslim safety and prosperity has been questioned more.

There is broad and emphatic agreement among Muslims that, given their geographic and demographic distribution, there is no alternative to the practice of coalition politics.³¹ A significant question is whether this is best done through participation within secular political parties, or through separately organized Muslim parties making alliances with non-Muslim political parties. Given the large aggregate number of Muslims distributed throughout India, there is a sense that if Muslims find a way to unite to work on common concerns, their weight in coalition politics could be considerable, significant, and productive. A model that is often discussed is the relative success of Dalits and “Other Backward Classes” (OBCs) in promoting their political and economic interests through strategic alliances.

Muslims see the need for unity of secular political forces as the principal strategic thrust of Muslim political organizing, owing to the serious threat to secular culture and governance

³¹ Islamist leader and member of Parliament Mahmood Madani, of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind, notes: “How can we make common cause with Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and others to solve problems like unemployment, housing and health?” (Swami 2008, op. cit.)

posed by recent developments. They also believe that secular forces are weak—that secularism is only nominally adhered to by some parties, which abandon or dilute their secular commitment when it suits their short-term interests; and that even a solid unity of committed secular forces is incapable of producing stable political majorities.

A specific task articulated for coalitions with the likeminded is the larger Indian struggle to “reclaim democratic spaces” in Indian society by emphasizing the need to resist erosion of democratic norms and rights and the rule of law. This deemphasizes the element of religious identity and emphasizes instead the rights of citizenship, the denial of which particularly affects Muslims, but is shared by many Indians.

As ideological frameworks for the guiding of Muslim political action in coalitions with non-Muslims, the emphasis is variously on seeking in Islamic teaching the principles that embrace plural politics and unity with non-Muslims (the example of the Prophet’s statecraft in Madina);³² or on political participation on the basis of secular democratic principles alone, and leaving religious guidance to the private sphere. A variant of the latter approach is found even among those who believe that Muslims should first concentrate on developing unity within, where some urge that such a united Muslim front should organize on political rather than religious principles.

There are several obstacles to any of these approaches to Muslim political empowerment. Muslim power is fragmented among multiple political parties, and its voice is fragmented by region and subcommunity. Even politically active Muslims are not for the most part in influential or leadership positions in the secular political parties, thus limiting the reach and depth of Muslim issues in secular politics.

Coalitions of Muslim and non-Muslim political parties are seen as less successful recently (except in Kerala) than is united and strategic voting by Muslims for secular regional or national political parties (as in the recent Uttar Pradesh elections). Even where there appear to be powerful secular parties in alliance with Muslim political parties, the types of issues that such coalitions address are those related to religious identity—because of opportunism or lack of imagination—rather than the livelihood and governance issues of pressing concern to most ordinary Muslims. Nonetheless, there is recognition that in places such as Kerala and Assam, where the numbers of Muslims and their distribution makes them significant to political arithmetic, the Muslim community has avoided being politically marginalized to the extent found in other states.

³² A liberal Muslim approach to basing progressive principles on scriptural authority is found in the extensive work of Asghar Ali Engineer, who looks to the Quran as authority on the key concerns of India’s Muslims: women’s rights, justice, publicly funded welfare, and above all knowledge; see Asghar Ali Engineer, *Muhammad (PBUH) as Liberator* (Mumbai: Center for Study of Society and Secularism, 2010).

If there is a long-term trend in Indian politics of jockeying by multiple parties to form coalitions, then strategic coalition building by Muslim political parties can be useful, as can strategic Muslim voting for secular parties. This will be particularly so where the demography is favorable to Muslims. If the pattern of weak and shifting coalition governments is replaced by a more stable order of competition between two enduring alliances each led by a major national party, then strategic voting remains a viable strategy, although Muslim political parties will have difficulty finding an effective role.

There is a pressing need expressed for Muslims to organize politically on a national scale. The character of many objective challenges is national, such as the rapid economic changes wrought by globalization, and the policy responses, good or bad, are also national ones. Moreover, there is a perceived national convergence in the cultural and attitudinal threats to Muslims posed by *Hindutva*, and here too there is seen practical national coordination among anti-Muslim political forces, demanding a national Muslim response.

However, there remains a nervousness about organizing nationally, particularly on the basis of a rhetoric of warning and alarm. There is an anxiety about evoking echoes of “Islam in danger.” This was the slogan of the Muslim League, the last national organizing of Muslims on the basis of a perceived threat to Muslim welfare and status in a plural India, which ultimately led to partition. The fear of a Hindu backlash to such national Muslim organization is always present. Given the perceived urgent need for national unity of Muslim action today, the question often discussed is on what other basis may this be done?

One approach suggests that what is really called for is national *coordination* to address issues of common concern, not a political party or even a national organization. What is most needed is a common voice and a common vision of the future of Indian Muslims. Among the examples of coordinated initiatives offered are drives to increase Muslim voter registration, and especially the participation of women, the poor, and migrants.

Other voices call for a fundamental reform of the Indian electoral system. Objections are raised to the institution of “reserved seats” where only a member of the group in question, whether Dalit or Muslim, may serve. The irony is that this practice was developed by the British purportedly to guarantee the Muslim minority of undivided India adequate representation. Muslim Indians today object that these have become a Muslim ghetto. They also object that many seats reserved for other groups are in legislative constituencies with substantial Muslim populations, which are thereby disenfranchised. Discussions of ways to ensure that Muslims as a minority have adequate representation and influence over the choice of the successful candidate include many of the electoral reform ideas current in global political discourse. “First past the post” is rejected in favor of proportional representation or 51 percent margin requirements accompanied by either single transferable or second-round voting.

Quality Education—The Highest Priority

The issue that recurred most prominently in every focus group and almost every conversation was that of the need for quality education and the need for Muslims to embrace that as a strategy for advancement.³³ In almost all cases, education was identified as the single most important Muslim concern in India today. This is, of course, sharply at odds with the general non-Muslim perception of a community inordinately concerned with issues of religious identity.

Following the shock to the Muslim community's self-confidence and sense of security resulting from the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992, a clear commitment was made to self-improvement, and to turning to education as a tool of that, and a corresponding turn away from mobilization around identity issues. Muslim experience since then has been discouraging for various reasons. While many feel that too many Muslims are apathetic about educational opportunity, most feel that even widespread eagerness for it has received a poor response from both official policy and Muslim institutions.

Expansion and improvement of educational opportunity is seen as important to Muslim advancement for several reasons. Most important of course is the impact on livelihoods, and thus on economic and social advancement. The provision of more and better quality opportunities for vocational education and practical skill acquisition is seen as essential, particularly as a means of advancement for poor and working-class Muslims. A distinct aspiration is availability of quality English-medium education and education in the tools of global commerce such as information and other technologies.

Quality education is also seen as essential for building effective Muslim leadership, and for arriving at intellectual vision and clarity of purpose. A leading Muslim journalist put it succinctly: modern education is essential to the development of a Muslim middle class, and a middle class is essential to the development of effective leadership for Muslims. There is a perceived dearth of opportunities, aspiration, and role models for young Muslims to develop into politicians, lawyers, journalists, sociologists, economists, and others who can speak to the larger cultural, political, and social context. In the absence of an opportunity to play a leadership role in their own society, the most educated of Muslim Indians, including doctors and scientists, have left India to seek employment elsewhere, thereby depriving the community of its best qualified cadres. This absence leads to social stagnation, which in turn leads others to make the same decision, thereby resulting in a further Muslim "brain drain."

³³ In an interview replete with prolix answers, Mahmood Madani, leader of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind, answers the question, "What is the most important issue for the Muslim community at the moment?" with the single word "Education." *Indian Express*, August 31, 2008.

There is a sense that Muslims must come up with an educational strategy that allows them to counter the effects of many new professedly Hindu schools established by *Hindutva* organizations which promote an aggressively hostile anti-Muslim worldview. Like *madrassah*, these trade on the poor availability of affordable quality education and therefore attract a captive audience of poor Hindu students—potentially the natural allies of Muslims on the basis of class—whose attitudes are thus poisoned against Muslims at an early age.

The issue of Muslim religious education is important, and gives rise to a variety of positions. Many feel that religious education is important not only for cultural identity but also as a basis for the articulation of social ethics to guide Muslim participation in society and polity. Unfortunately, religious educational institutions are often found to teach neither livelihood skills nor Islamic values effectively. They are often faulted for emphasizing religion at the expense of marketable skills.

Yet *madrassah* are often the only practical educational opportunity available, owing to the poor not being able to afford other school fees, and to overcrowding and quality problems in state schools. Other disincentives from participating in the state system include a curriculum that increasingly ignores the Muslim role in Indian history and society, and undercuts Muslims' sense of Indian identity and their sense of place in Indian society. The anti-Muslim prejudices of many teachers and school officials are also a significant source of worry.

Attempts by Muslims to establish institutions to provide quality modern education for Muslims are frustrated by political interference in the operation of schools, poor funding, and legal and regulatory barriers. Many instead seek to standardize and modernize *madrassa* curricula, to make them more useful for teaching livelihood skills, and to help refocus the thrust of religious instruction to make them positive tools for elaborating Muslim ethics for the modern world and a plural society.

An important part of the ideological context for *madrassa* education is that even some progressive secularists see the religious institutions as a means of independence and innovation. It is suggested that the original impulse of the religious education movement was to liberate: to empower those not tethered or constrained by conventional wisdom to teach. Some produced good results, and most did not, but the good would have been impossible had the institution been formalized.

Rule of Law

After the issue of educational opportunity and quality, the most frequently expressed and highest ranked concern is that of the fear and insecurity prompted by an increasingly hostile state and the indifference of their fellow citizens. There is a disturbing disjuncture between Muslim perceptions of these issues and those of their detractors. Muslims feel

beleaguered by an increase in discrimination and violence at the hands of state institutions and officials, while their detractors seek to define the principal threat to the rule of law as emanating from Muslims, in the form of disloyalty and willingness to condone terrorism.

The issue of insecurity is related to that of education in several ways. Insecurity about physical safety, property, and one's place in the society gives rise to a lack of ambition, and a social depression that dissipates ambition and aspiration among the young. Family allocations of scarce resources to educating youth are also affected by calculations about the likely poor return on those investments owing to the denial of equal employment and economic opportunity to young Muslims. Indeed, there is a widespread sense, particularly in volatile localities, that educational advancement at the individual or community level has produced a backlash and has led to educated Muslim youth being arbitrarily targeted by police as suspects in terrorism investigations. Anti-Muslim bias in the police, and police violence and abuse, particularly against Muslim youth, are repeated sources of complaint.

The aggressiveness and arbitrariness of state institutions against Muslims have been fueled by a growing popular perception that terrorism in India is a specifically Muslim phenomenon, and that many otherwise innocent Muslims tolerate or are sympathetic to it. Muslims believe this perception is promoted by the state and the media. Victims of terrorism are compensated quickly and effectively by the state; Muslim victims of mob violence, who also see themselves as victims of a kind of terrorism, are not. The media provide lurid coverage of terrorist incidents while glossing over incidents of anti-Muslim mob violence on the pretext of not fueling communal antipathy.

The increase and impunity of police and mob violence against Muslims have been facilitated by an increasing pattern of physical and cultural separation between Muslim and other communities; this is increasingly being referred to as "apartheid."

Also discernible is a growing antipathy to the symbols of Muslim identity such as beards and traditional clothing. The intensified "ghettoization" of Muslim life proceeds from housing discrimination and a mutual fear of violence. Muslims are consequently denied quality housing and equal access to facilities such as banking or water, sanitation, and transportation infrastructure. While ghettoization makes for a sense of safety and the development of community institutions, it also contributes to the lack of understanding by non-Muslims of Muslim perceptions and life realities. At best, violations of the rights of Muslims are likely to be neglected or acquiesced to; at worst, Muslims are likely to be suspected by their fellow citizens.

Attempts to exercise or vindicate their rights by availing themselves of the legal protections still formally guaranteed by the Indian constitution and laws meet additional obstacles. Human rights lawyers are intimidated or discouraged from representing Muslims,

particularly in cases alleging “anti-national” activity. Judges are increasingly hostile to Muslim defendants and litigants. Lawyers and evenhanded judges are also subject to pressures such as blame for opposing bail for anti-Muslim rioters.

The role of the police is particularly problematical. There is a perception that the police forces have become increasingly susceptible to anti-Muslim prejudice. Opinion is divided as to whether this stems from blatant hostility or from a pervasive culture of ignorance and prejudice. Muslims cite the involvement of the police in shielding anti-Muslim rioters, police refusal to register criminal complaints (“first information reports”—FIRs) against rioters or their registration of FIRs in a form that makes prosecution impossible, and poor (presumably deliberately so) police investigative work on FIRs.

Recent developments remind all of the possibilities of redress. Thus, the Supreme Court’s order in March 2008 that cases arising from the Gujarat riots should be reinvestigated reassured observers that perpetrators might be held accountable. Similarly, certain cases had earlier been transferred to other jurisdictions (Zahira Sheikh, Bilkis Bano) when they were not properly prosecuted in Gujarat.

Migration of Muslims within India intensifies patterns of personal insecurity, especially in the form of intercommunity tensions. Migrants are particularly vulnerable to victimization by criminals and political thugs, and are used as scapegoats for mobilizing mobs. They are also vulnerable to extortion and intimidation by Muslim criminals in these fragile social settings. New arrivals into an urban environment are likely to be resented by other marginal groups in the context of stressed livelihoods and economic competition, and the issue of religious identity is readily at hand for demagogues to exploit such resentments. Finally, in economically marginal environments, unemployed migrants are more susceptible to recruitment for crime. Regardless of how frequently this occurs in fact, the perception that this is so adds to unfavorable views of Muslims.

Opinion on what to do about threats to security and the unequal implementation of legal protection inclines, as on the question of political organizing, to outreach to and education of Hindu public and elite opinion as to the true dimensions of the problem. There is a sense that Muslim leaders need to articulate more specifically the ways in which their problems resemble those of other Indian groups with the rule of law and to develop rhetoric, campaigns, and united action with other victims, including other religious minorities and economically or socially disadvantaged groups.

Official attempts at legislation aimed at addressing the problem of communal violence are met with less enthusiasm on the part of Muslims than one might expect. A draft bill proposed by the national government is criticized because it proposes to increase the powers of police and to enhance the powers of government to designate disturbed areas in such

circumstances, where individual mobility would be limited. Such approaches have been criticized as empowering the very state institutions that have been complicit in anti-Muslim violence. It is suggested instead that the Indian Criminal Code provides all the necessary powers to prevent and punish communal violence, and thus that the real issue is the willingness and capacity of state institutions to enforce existing laws.

An added complexity in the relationship between Muslim Indians and the rule of law is the issue of Muslim personal law. Muslims in India are today governed by a distinct set of *customary* family and inheritance laws, and this has occasioned some debate within the community. Some see the dual structure of personal law as protecting the Muslim way of life, while others see it as a denial to Muslims of legal equality. Anti-Muslim opinion, as one might expect, sees this as special treatment and “appeasement.”

Some Muslims support codification of Muslim personal law while maintaining its separate character, as a way to preserve the distinct norms of the community while providing more protection, consistency, transparency, and uniformity. Others believe that separate laws are symbolically pernicious for participation and citizenship, that all citizens of India should be governed by a uniform legal regime, and that an all-India uniform civil code is appropriate. Yet others believe that in the absence of codification, reform of an archaic and patchwork customary Muslim personal law should be undertaken immediately, as a reflection of the Muslim community’s own desire to reform and modernize from within.

There is also a significant current of thought that believes that, in order to speak cogently in favor of formal rights, Muslims need to address the denial of rights by Muslims among themselves, in the exclusion and even persecution of the Ahmadi/Qaddiani sect, or in the treatment of women as inferior in rights, or in the persecution of Hindus in Muslim majority areas such as the Kashmir Valley.

Urdu

An Indo-European language, Urdu developed as a *lingua franca* in most of northern India through a long process of synthesis between indigenous Indian languages and Persian. It thus reflected an important synthesis between pre-Islamic and Islamic cultural influences. Once the common language of northern India and many other urban centers, and the language of literature and learning regardless of religion, Urdu has sharply declined in India, even while one variant has become the national language of Pakistan.

The issue of Urdu, its use in public life, its teaching in schools, and its survival as an all-India language was till recently seen by many Muslims as a bellwether of the status and welfare of Muslims in the Indian nation. Certainly, among non-Muslims the perception

seems to have developed since independence that Urdu is a distinctly Muslim language. Today, opinion in the Muslim community on Urdu is more ambivalent and equivocal.

With the emphasis on economic advancement and opportunity, and the integral role of modern education in that, there is a widespread perception that emphasis on Urdu acts to isolate Muslims from opportunity. Those educated in Urdu schools, now almost exclusively Muslims, are seen as ill prepared for higher education. Urdu schools are seen as of almost uniformly poor quality. Training of Urdu teachers is weak or nonexistent. In the Uttar Pradesh curriculum, students must choose between the study of science and the study of Urdu.

Among some, there is a perception that the decline in Urdu's usefulness and the decline in the quality of Urdu education reflect an anti-Muslim bias in Indian society. They note that Urdu's removal as an option in the public service commission examinations (judicial) in Uttar Pradesh saw the number of Muslims passing decline from 40 out of 300 to 3.

Other Muslims note that Urdu is not distinctly a Muslim language, that until recently it was the language of educated Indians of many religions (some of the greatest modern writers of it were Hindus), and that many distinctly Muslim subcultures of India have not historically embraced it, such as in Kerala, West Bengal, Assam, or Gujarat. They note that in many places, including rural areas of the Urdu heartland, poor Muslims know Hindi better than Urdu. Many suggest that commonly used regional vernacular languages promote a Hindu-Muslim sense of cultural unity, whereas Urdu may separate Muslims from, for example, their Gujarati neighbors. Attention and resources for Urdu are demanded more forcefully by Muslims who are historically of its linguistic group, such as in Uttar Pradesh, non-Bengalis in Kolkata, and Rajasthan.

There is agreement on one important point: Urdu's demise reflects a tacit rejection of the syncretic culture and of the secular ethos based upon it.

Gender

The issue of the role and status of women is one that arises frequently in discussion about the current state and future of the Muslim community. There appears to be a significant variety of opinion. The conservative/orthodox/traditional perspective argues that traditions such as veiling are respectful and confer dignity, and that the rights of Muslims include the right to "veil our women." Others, including supporters of women's equality, believe that the issue of women's status is used to malign Muslims by those hostile to the community. Feminists believe that the community has to simultaneously struggle on both fronts, externally against such hostility and internally against the conservatives.

Muslim advocates of women's equality see themselves as doubly beleaguered, as Muslims from without and as women from within. There is a concern that candid discussion of the particular concerns of women is inhibited on the grounds that it constitutes internal disloyalty, showing Muslims in a bad light. In some cases, it is impossible to conduct a discussion accommodating all these points of view. In Lucknow, we were compelled to hold two separate focus groups, because traditionalists refused to invite feminists. Few disagree, however, that the state of the Muslim community cannot significantly improve without improvement in the status of Muslim women.

On a positive note, there has been an improved focus on female education (as on all education) since 1992–93. Muslim girls are doing better in education than boys, and the participation of girls in elementary education is improving. (However, this is a bittersweet accomplishment, as the participation of boys is declining.) The demographic ratio of females to males is better among Muslims than among Hindus. It is noteworthy that many, though by no means all, who take a conservative view of lifestyle issues such as women's clothing or public profile also support the need for more attention to women's education, if not their participation in the workforce.

The negative trends include the fact that participation in the workforce is lower for Muslim women than non-Muslim women; that health indicators among Muslim women are exceptionally poor; that they suffer high incidences of domestic abuse; and that in access to services they are twice disadvantaged, as Muslims and as women.

Media, Popular Perception, and Outreach

There is a strongly expressed need to engage in a campaign to better inform non-Muslims about the state of the Muslim community and its concerns. For some, but by no means all, this includes better educating non-Muslims about the true teachings of Islam and the Quran. For others, the issue is more about breaching the wall of separation that has sprung up between Muslims and Hindus. Some note that more contact of any kind is generally desirable; that in Gujarat, for example, the fewest clashes and least violence occurred in localities that had the most intercommunal interaction. However, our field visits and interviews in Gujarat suggest that the difficulty of crossing the line will be considerable.³⁴

All agree that it is imperative to remove the stereotypes about Muslims. These have become toxic not only to Muslim welfare but to the state of Indian secularism and democracy. They

³⁴ My Muslim driver, as Gujarati as I am, and conversing with me in an earthy Gujarati accent, pointed out the segregation of Ahmedabad to me. "This is a Muslim area," he said, "and that is a Gujarati area." By the latter, he meant of course "a Hindu area." The fascists are succeeding in changing language and perception to suggest that only Hindus are true Gujaratis.

include cultural stereotypes having to do with appearance or meat-eating, as well as those that relate to terrorism. There is widespread agreement that the news media, particularly television, are partly to blame for the proliferation of these stereotypes, and that they are essential to any potential solution.

In the immediate wake of terrorist attacks and bomb blasts, television offers long coverage of the scene, with a grim train of images of death and destruction, but little or no coherent reportage to place it in context and help viewers understand what is known about the situation and the perpetrators. Since the persons apprehended (and frequently—and much later—released for lack of evidence) are almost always Muslim, and often devout and therefore of “Islamic” appearance, the presentation of their photographs, juxtaposed with images of carnage, acts subliminally to associate Muslims with the horrors being visited on innocents. Rarely is there a fair and accurate depiction of the Muslim victims of such events.

Later, newspapers as well as television will uncritically offer the minutest details from the police investigations of the networks and conspiracies alleged to have been behind such events, though such “evidence” is based on police interrogation and therefore routinely on torture. Again, because this involves Muslim suspects who are ordinary citizens, this solidifies the popular perception of vast terrorist networks in the Muslim community manned by ordinary Muslims.

Muslim statements of condemnation of terrorism are rarely covered by the press. And mob violence against Muslims receives far less coverage than bomb blasts, despite the fact that the former are significantly more deadly and destructive than the latter.

The media rarely, if ever, provide positive coverage of Muslims and their accomplishments, and the full extent of Muslim life—cultural, economic, and social—is similarly neglected.³⁵

As with many areas and institutions of Indian life, the poor performance of the news media in relationship to Muslims is understood by Muslims as a reflection of a more general deterioration in media quality and incisiveness. This deterioration is in part due to the fact that the emerging electronic media require immediacy and therefore reward speculation, and that these new media do not have the time-honored and -honed standards of print journalism to guide and constrain their activities; moreover, there has been serious deterioration of Indian journalism in general, including the 150-year-old print media.

³⁵ Islamist leader and member of Parliament Mahmood Madani, of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind, notes: “Muslims are only reported on when they are victims of some tragedy, or when someone who is Muslim commits an atrocity. When will you understand and report on the community—and when will Urdu journalists do the same for their readers?” (Swami 2008, op. cit.)

To rectify this state of affairs, almost all agree that there is a pressing need for more Muslims who are politically aware to undertake careers in the media.

Violence

We sought to candidly explore attitudes to political violence. While non-Muslim opinion tends to assume, without reflection or evidence, a greater degree of tacit Muslim support for militant violence than is actually the case, Muslims are much more conscientious in examining their own attitudes toward violence. This conscientiousness springs both from the fact that terrorism perpetrated by Muslims has led to suspicion being cast on the community as a whole, and from the fact that, for the last half-century, Muslims have suffered from political and mob violence more than any other group of Indians.

The overwhelming body of Muslim opinion rejects violence in any fashion or for any political purpose. There is instead a sense of gratitude at living in a democratic society with constitutional protections and legal institutions, however flawed. Indeed, we often heard the sincerest expressions of patriotism and pride and love for “their” India, and a sense that they were better off in their Indian freedoms than Pakistanis in their Islamic state. And we particularly noted that, in hundreds of hours of conversation, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir was mentioned on no more than two or three occasions. On one of those, a Muslim asked for principled advocacy of all minority rights, including those of Kashmiri Pandits.

Even from a purely pragmatic perspective, Muslim Indians understand clearly that terrorism, or association with it, are not in their best interest. As a minority, they evince a keen awareness of their vulnerability, and know that they will be the unequal victims of a violent encounter.

However, there is acute concern within the community and among all schools of thought about the escalation of pressure and injustice by *Hindutva* extremists. This is compounded by the effects of increasing insinuation into state and other institutions of *Hindutva* sympathizers. There is a concern that this can only lead to an increase in youthful outrage and desperate resistance, and corresponding repression and retaliation against the Muslim community as a whole. With the most viciously communal individuals and groups—including senior politicians—publicly boasting of the atrocities they have perpetrated on Muslims, a vicious cycle of reaction and counterreaction seems increasingly likely.

Many feel that their capacity to speak out forcefully against extremist rhetoric (as distinct from violent actions) within the community is undercut by the fact that the entire community feels targeted from the outside. In a context where so many innocent young Muslims are profiled and wrongfully accused, many feel honor-bound to stand up for the rights of

all suspects. That some of those they advocate for are active *jihadi* complicates matters in a way that would not be the case if the state were scrupulous in arresting suspects.

In the post-9/11 world, where Muslims are forced to prove their loyalty to the established order before anyone will listen to them, where developing a long-term strategy and vision for the community is a heroic effort, and where they fight for their daily rights against mob and police violence, self-policing within the community against violent extremists is that much harder.

Some Muslims resent having to issue repeated denunciations of terrorism. They note that such denunciations to date have frequently been ignored by the press and public opinion. They also resent the presumption of guilt that appears to be implicit in such a demand.

It would of course defy credibility to suggest that sympathy for violence and desperate measures is entirely absent in the Muslim community. However, our research found it to be insignificant in scope, no greater than the sympathy expressed to us by non-Muslim opponents of the status quo for Naxalites and Maoists. Indeed, in a typically Indian response, the only interlocutor who expressed admiration for *jihadis* did so by reference to the positive example of “Naxalite and Maoist *jihadis*.” Our interlocutors noted that the Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband has repeatedly and forcefully issued public condemnations of terrorism and suicide attacks.

That said, there is an emerging anxiety about the prospects of radicalization of at least some Muslim Indian youth, however few, with potential consequences for Muslims as a whole. Historically, the pattern and expectation of instigation of terrorist incidents in India has been by Pakistan-based terrorists; however, since 2007, there have been several cases of Indians, often educated youth, involved in planning such attacks.³⁶

The case of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) is an instructive one. SIMI has been associated with the new Indian Mujahideen organization which has claimed many recent home-grown bomb plots. Founded at Aligarh University, the major center of modern Muslim higher education in India, SIMI originated as a militant but peaceful organization in the student wing of the radical but above-ground Jamaat-e-Islami Hind. The consensus among intelligence and police professionals is that by the early 1990s SIMI had already turned to terrorism and covert and conspiratorial organizing, before the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, the attacks on the Bombay Stock Exchange, and the subsequent anti-Muslim violence.

³⁶ See details at footnote 8.

Those more sympathetic to SIMI see its turn to terrorism and conspiracy as rooted in its harsh treatment by a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, before it was responsible for any terrorist acts. They ascribe its radicalization to its proscription under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act and to the detention and torture of its members. Certainly SIMI's origin in educated Muslim youth organizations runs parallel to, if it has not actually given rise to, a tendency of law enforcement agencies to target educated and militant Muslim youth whenever any terrorist events occur or are foiled, particularly those associated with the Indian Mujahideen.

Whatever the disputes on its merits, what is not disputed is the sequence of events surrounding the banning of SIMI. Law enforcement and intelligence agencies had sought this ban earlier, and believe that "vote-bank politics" prevented it. The BJP government banned SIMI in 2001; although the ban was lifted in 2003, it was reimposed in 2006. Meanwhile, political leaders of important states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Kerala) argued that its banning constituted victimization. The conclusion to be drawn is that the business of internal security has, for good or ill, become part of the politics of Muslim political participation in India.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Muslim Indians see themselves as those who, at the time of partition, stayed and threw in their lot with secular India rather than Islamic Pakistan. They see the creation of Pakistan as a tragedy that divided and weakened them. Indeed, given the integral role of Islam in Indian history and culture, and the distribution of Muslims throughout India, they are unified not by language or culture but rather by their Indian identity. They are thus bewildered by the insidious questioning by non-Muslims of their place in Indian national life and puzzled by the calumny that they are anti-national and disloyal. They have no other option but India. They are, as they say, “part of the fabric of India.”

Any attempt to eradicate Muslim identity or diminish it is to tear that national fabric. Because of their pervasive presence and numbers, India has no option but to deal with its Muslim citizens and their concerns. The practical dangers of such a large population losing faith in the state’s sense of justice and evenhandedness are self-evident.

There is recognition among Muslims that the state is capable of recognizing grievances. Commissions such as Gopal Singh, Srikrishna, Liberhan, Mishra, and Sachar attest to this. Yet there is also a sense that, by themselves, these types of processes have not led and will not lead to substantive reform. Thus the overriding question for Muslims is to what extent to rely on them, and to what extent and exactly how to use them. For example, what will it take to see action on the issues identified by the Sachar Commission? Some also note that Muslim leaders and institutions have been disorganized in the face of the findings of the Sachar report, and have wasted the opportunity provided by it to advance their long-standing demands.

Economic and educational welfare are the predominant concerns of Muslim Indians, closely followed by a sense of popular prejudice and hostility, state lawlessness and injustice, and physical insecurity. These concerns are closely related: economic vulnerability and educational backwardness diminish the ability to stand up for one’s rights in the broader political context, and insecurity and injustice diminish the capacity to establish and develop economic sources of strength. For example, each instance of mob violence leads to the destruction of Muslim enterprises and institutions, and each instance of displacement means a separation from community institutions and sources of economic activity.

To the extent that the taint of “terrorism” is wildly attached to all Muslims, the effect on their employment and housing opportunity is most damaging, as non-Muslims recoil from associating with them.

It is clearly and widely recognized that Muslim Indians share an economic and educational predicament with their vulnerable non-Muslim fellow citizens. Nonetheless, the growth in economic inequality and other aspects of economic “liberalization” and globalization that generally afflict the Indian population as a whole are of particular concern for Muslims because the Muslim population is disproportionately poor, and because Muslims are disproportionately represented among the poor or among those occupations most vulnerable to the rapid economic changes taking place in India.

Traditional Muslim occupations and economic sectors, which once provided bases for Muslim prosperity and empowerment, and relied more on apprenticeship than formal education, have been particularly hard hit by global competition from factory-made products. Examples include the weavers of Mubarakpur, Gorakhpur, and Benares, and the lock-makers of Aligarh. With respect to such broad-ranging economic processes and changes, there is less a sense that the state discriminates against Muslims in policy, and more a high degree of skepticism about the extent to which the state has any interest in intervening. Indeed, the assumption is that the state is the handmaid of such economic changes.

A pervasive ideological and cultural climate of increasing Hindu religiosity, political militancy, and hateful anti-Muslim rhetoric has been accompanied by the deliberate *Hindutva* infiltration and indoctrination of the state bureaucracies. These trends have gained traction from recent terrorism by professed or alleged Islamist groups. The result has been state discrimination, both at the policymaking level and at the level of individual bureaucrats. This discrimination is seen in matters as varied—and as essential to the equal enjoyment of citizenship—as voter registration; access to government grants and services, including health services; police protection; and equal justice.

While the low proportion of Muslims in government jobs has a bearing on the larger question of the social and economic status of Muslims, it is of particular relevance to the practice of state discrimination against them. More Muslims in public services, particularly at the more senior levels, would act as a safeguard against the worst prejudice.

It is widely believed among Muslims that they are not alone in suffering neglect, lawlessness, extortion, and violence at the hands of the police. They understand this as a reflection of a generalized culture of police lawlessness that afflicts all Indians, particularly the poor and socially vulnerable. However, there is a sense that the problem is especially acute for Muslims. The police individually and institutionally are empowered and emboldened by

a culture of anti-Muslim sentiment. Either through fear or indifference, non-Muslims are less likely to express solidarity with Muslims or to unite with them to resist such behavior.

Most significantly, the taint of terrorism has become a pretext for a perceived “reign of terror” against Muslim youth, in the form of arbitrary detention of alleged terrorist suspects, often on the basis of no evidence. Because such detention is believed to disproportionately affect educated Muslim youth, there is the added grievance that this disempowers Muslim families and communities by attacking their livelihoods and economic security. It also seems to some to be a disincentive against educating youth.

The physical insecurity of Muslims has led them to acquiesce in increasing physical and cultural separation from non-Muslims, and the term “apartheid” is sometimes used to describe this situation. Muslim localities suffer from very poor or nonexistent water, sanitation, public transport links, and banking services; this situation is particularly acute in the 93 Indian districts with Muslim majorities. Rural Muslims who had hitherto enjoyed relative security and relatively cordial relations with Hindus now find themselves increasingly subject to the effects of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and other *Hindutva* organizations expanding their reach into villages.

All of this leads to alienation from the government and society, and a sense of second-class citizenship despite the fact that the Indian constitution guarantees all citizens equal rights. Indeed, the phrase “contested citizenship” is often used by Muslims to describe their perception of how the mainstream and majority discourse treats them.

Appendixes

Appendix 1:

Study Framework of Inquiry

The following Framework of Inquiry was distributed to focus groups and interview subjects as part of the Stimson Center/Institute of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Study to gauge the status, welfare, security, and concerns of Muslim Indians.

What are the principal concerns of Muslim Indians today?

- Which of the following is most important?
 - Politics
 - Employment, economic status, and welfare
 - Public services
 - Security
 - Rule of law
 - State institutions
 - Religious freedom
 - Culture
 - Attitudes of non-Muslims
 - Issues within the community, including varieties of opinion and debates
- What are the main concerns in these areas?
- Can these concerns be answered through existing institutional, political, and social channels? If so, which channels? If not, what are the alternatives?
- How does the Muslim experience vary between regions?

Demographic trends among Muslim Indians

- How are Muslim localities and population centers changing?
- Where are Muslims moving within India?
- Economic, political, and cultural impacts of migration overseas

Politics

- Is there a unified Muslim voice in Indian politics?
- What are the main ideas in strategies for Muslim empowerment?
- What coalitions with non-Muslims have been tried, and which have worked?

Economics

- What is the state of employment opportunity?
 - In the public sector?
 - In the private sector?
- What is the fate of artisans?
- What other business concerns are there in the Muslim community?
- What is the state of the informal sector?
- Are there concerns about the availability of credit to Muslims?
- What issues of discrimination in employment or business opportunity are of concern?

Security and rule of law

- Mob violence against Muslims
- Role of the police
- Role of the courts
- Problems within the community

Education

- What concerns are there about educational opportunity?
- What concerns are there about educational quality?
- Are there concerns about anti-Muslim bias in curriculum and instruction?
- What are evolving attitudes to education in the Muslim community?

Gender

- What trends and developments are seen in female education and employment of women?
- How significant a concern is the status of women?

Leadership and institutions in the Muslim Indian community

- Who are leaders and opinion shapers?
- Who speaks for the Muslim community?
- What are the respective roles and importance of religious, political, and intellectual activists?
- What are the significant divisions within the community?

Culture, identity, intellectual, and ideological trends

- Religion, caste, class, regional, and language identities
- Urdu education and press
- Uniform Civil Code and Personal Law
- *Sharia* in a non-Muslim majority society
- The *Ummah*
- Recent trends in thinking about fundamentalism, militancy, and political violence

Appendix 2: *Regional Voices: Transnational Challenges* Partner Institutions

South Asia

All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI). The All India Disaster Mitigation Institute is an NGO based in Gujarat, India, that works toward bridging the gap between policy, practice, and research related to disaster risk mitigation and reduction. Established after the 1987–89 Gujarat droughts, AIDMI evolved from a project in 1989 to an autonomous organization in 1995. As an operational as well as learning organization, it is able to link local communities with national and international policies of relief and long-term recovery. AIDMI has expanded work over the years to now cover 11 types of disasters in six areas of India and seven countries in Asia. AIDMI has shown that disasters are not only about relief but about prevention on the one hand and development on the other.

Asia Foundation, Sri Lanka. Recognizing that a sustainable peace is tied to overcoming deeper problems of a weakened democracy, lack of justice, and human rights violations, the Asia Foundation’s program in Sri Lanka seeks to identify and support organizations and institutions that promote democratic governance and the rule of law as essential for lasting peace and prosperity. The Asia Foundation programs in Sri Lanka date back to 1954. The Foundation has been a pioneer in strengthening community-based legal services and mediation for the poor in Sri Lanka. It supported a definitive study on the relationship between aid, conflict, and peace building in Sri Lanka, and a follow-up study on the US involvement in the country’s peace process. The Foundation distributes some 80,000 new English-language publications a year to libraries throughout Sri Lanka.

The Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS). The Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, based in Dhaka, is an independent, nonprofit, nongovernmental policy, research, and implementation institute working on sustainable development at the local, national, regional, and global levels. BCAS addresses sustainable development through five interactive themes: environment-development integration; good governance and popular participation; poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods; economic growth, public-private partnerships, and sustainable markets; and corporate social responsibility.

Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution (IPSCR). The Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution was established in January 2007 under the aegis of the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai. The overarching goal of the Institute is to create enabling conditions for peace and security by creating awareness in the society of factors affecting peace; addressing myths attributed to religious teachings; research and study into communal and sectarian conflicts; capacity building and peace advocacy, especially among youth; and supporting women's empowerment. IPSCR collaborates with other institutions, including the Tata Institute of Social Science Research, and the Department of Civics and Politics and the Department of Sociology, University of Mumbai.

Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). The Institute of Policy Studies, based in Islamabad and founded in 1979, is an autonomous, nonprofit, civil society organization, dedicated to promoting policy-oriented research on Pakistan affairs, international relations, and religion and faith. IPS provides a forum for informed discussion and dialogue on national and international issues; formulates viable plans; and presents key initiatives and policy measures to policy-makers, analysts, political leaders, legislators, researchers, academia, civil society organizations, media, and other stakeholders. Periodicals and publications, interaction, dialogue, thematic research, and capacity-building programs are instrumental in its research endeavors. IPS garners collaboration as well as extends its active cooperation to other organizations in one or more areas of research.

Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT). The Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency is an indigenous, independent, and nonpartisan research and training institution committed to strengthening democracy and democratic institutions. PILDAT works to increase the legislative capabilities of elected officials, carries out in-depth analysis of the democratic developments of the country, provides performance reviews of the Parliament and provincial assemblies, and encourages the culture and value of democracy in youth through the first-ever Youth Parliament of Pakistan. The Institute also facilitates the formulation of issue-based caucuses across party lines, including the Young Parliamentarians' Forum, the Parliamentary Consultative Group on Women's Issues, and the Parliamentary Group on Inter-Faith Relations. PILDAT also facilitates non-Parliamentary groups of leading intellectuals and thinkers for discourse on issues such as free and fair elections, the electoral process, youth and politics, and dialogue between Muslims and the West.

Quaid-i-Azam University, Department of Defence & Strategic Studies. Quaid-i-Azam University, founded in 1967, is rated as one of the top public institutions of higher education in Pakistan and has established research collaborations with selected universities/research organizations in the United States, Europe, and South Asia. Since its establishment in 1980, the Department of Defence & Strategic Studies has awarded MSc degrees to 111 officers of the armed forces and 514 civilians. Thereby, it has made a significant contribution to the

development of national expertise in the fields of defense and security studies. The academic training imparted by the Department is geared toward the development of requisite academic knowledge and analytical ability for evaluation of national, regional, and international strategic environment and policies. Since 1980, 69 MSc theses and 556 seminar papers have been written on wide-ranging subjects in the field of defense and strategic and security studies. The Department's faculty, in addition to its regular teaching, contributes research articles to various professional journals and delivers lectures at the National Defense College, Foreign Services Academy, Joint Services Staff College Islamabad, and Staff College Quetta.

Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS). Based in Colombo, the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies is an independent, nonprofit NGO that fosters collaborative research, networking, and interaction on strategic and international issues pertaining to South Asia. RCSS coordinates research on strategic and security-related issues; promotes interaction among scholars and other professionals in and outside the region who are engaged in South Asian strategic and international studies; and fosters relationships and collaboration among institutions studying issues related to conflict, conflict resolution, cooperation, stability, and security in South Asia.

South Asia Center for Policy Studies (SACEPS). The South Asia Center for Policy Studies is an independent, nonprofit NGO engaged in regional cooperation in South Asia. SACEPS was established in mid-1999 and housed at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, and then at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka. SACEPS moved to Kathmandu after establishing its permanent secretariat in 2005. The Centre's main aim is promoting policy dialogues, research, and interaction among policymakers, the business community, and civil society. SACEPS uses its institutional base to network with well-established national institutions in the region and bolster regional cooperation.

Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). The Sustainable Development Policy Institute, based in Islamabad, was founded in 1992 as an independent, nonprofit organization which would serve as a source of expertise on socioeconomic development and environmental issues in Pakistan. The Institute works to conduct policy-oriented research and advocacy from a broad multidisciplinary approach; promote the implementation of policies, programs, laws, and regulations of sustainable development; strengthen civil society through collaboration with other organizations; disseminate research findings through media, conferences, lectures, publications, and curricula development; and contribute to building up national research capacity and infrastructure. The Institute acts as both a generator of original research on sustainable development issues and as an information resource for concerned individuals and institutions. SDPI's function is thus twofold: an advisory role fulfilled through research, policy advice, and advocacy; and an enabling role realized through providing other individuals and organizations with resource materials and training.

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). The Energy and Resources Institute was formally established in 1974 in New Delhi with the purpose of tackling the acute problems that mankind is likely to face in the years ahead resulting from the depletion of the Earth's energy resources and the pollution their unsustainable use causes. The Institute works to provide environment-friendly solutions to rural energy problems, tackle global climate change issues across continents, advance solutions to the growing urban transport congestion and air pollution, and promote energy efficiency in Indian industry. TERI is the largest developing country institution devoted to finding innovative solutions toward a sustainable future. TERI has established affiliate institutes abroad: TERI-NA (North America) in Washington, DC; TERI-Europe in London, UK; and has a presence in Japan and Malaysia.

Southeast Asia

Center for Migrant Advocacy Philippines (CMA). The Center for Migrant Advocacy–Philippines is a nonprofit, nongovernmental advocacy group that promotes the rights of overseas Filipinos, land- and sea-based migrant workers and immigrants, and their families. It works to help improve the economic, social, and political conditions of migrant Filipino families everywhere through policy advocacy, information dissemination, direct assistance, networking, and capacity building. CMA is also a resource center that gathers information, conducts studies, and analyzes urgent issues on overseas migration and related concerns and disseminates information to its partners, networks, and constituents. CMA is a member of the Philippine Migrant Rights Watch, Migrant Forum in Asia, and the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates.

Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta (CSIS). The Centre for Strategic and International Studies, based in Jakarta and established in 1971, is an independent nonprofit organization focusing on policy-oriented studies on domestic and international issues. Its mission is to contribute to improved policymaking through research, dialogue, and public debate. CSIS believes that long-term planning and vision for Indonesia and the region must be based on an in-depth understanding of economic, political, and social issues, including regional and international developments. In the area of foreign policy, the Centre's research is complemented and strengthened by its relations with an extensive network of research, academic, and other organizations worldwide. CSIS's research is used by government, universities, research institutions, civil society organizations, media, and businesses.

People and Nature Reconciliation (PanNature). People and Nature Reconciliation is a nonprofit organization based in Hanoi, Vietnam, and was established in 2006 by a diverse group of dedicated Vietnamese environmental professionals. Its mission is to protect and conserve diversity of life and to improve human well-being in Vietnam by seeking, promoting, and implementing feasible, nature-friendly solutions to important environmental problems and sustainable development issues. PanNature implements activities and programs with the

following tools: research and environmental education, training and capacity building, communication and publications, field conservation initiatives, policy analysis and advocacy, and networking and partnership development.

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). Based in Singapore, the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies was established in January 2007 as an autonomous school within the Nanyang Technological University. RSIS is a leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic international affairs in the Asia-Pacific region. Its name honors the contributions of Mr. S. Rajaratnam, who was one of Singapore’s founding fathers and a well-respected visionary diplomat and strategic thinker. RSIS includes the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, the Centre of Excellence for National Security, the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, and the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia. The focus of research is on issues relating to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and their implications for Singapore and other countries in the region.

Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA). The Singapore Institute of International Affairs is a nonprofit NGO dedicated to the research, analysis, and discussion of regional and international issues. Founded in 1961 and registered as a membership-based society, it is Singapore’s oldest think tank. Its mission is to make Singapore a more cosmopolitan society that better understands the international affairs of its region and the world.

Middle East

The American University in Cairo, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS). The Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, previously known as the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies (FMRS) program, at The American University in Cairo was established in 2000 as a program of education, research, and outreach on refugee issues. In 2008 it developed into a regional center that encompasses all forms of international mobility, whether voluntary or forced, economic or political, individual or collective, temporary or permanent. CMRS works along three building blocks—research, education and outreach—aiming to form strong synergies among them. CMRS’s research program includes a systematic and comparative inventory of the situation regarding migration and refugee movements across the Middle East and Africa, as well as in-depth studies of emerging issues in the region. It gathers in-house faculty and fellows as well as a network of scholars established in other countries covering the region, with a focus on producing policy-oriented research. CMRS’s outreach includes disseminating knowledge on migration and refugee issues beyond the university’s gates, as well as providing a range of educational services to refugee communities.

Gulf Research Center (GRC). Based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the Gulf Research Center is a privately funded, nonpartisan think tank, education provider, and consultancy specializing in the Gulf region (the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and Iran, Iraq,

and Yemen). Established in 2000, the Center conducts research on political, social, economic, security, and environmental issues from a Gulf perspective, redressing the current imbalance in Gulf area studies, where regional opinions and interests are underrepresented. With “Knowledge for All” as its motto, the GRC strives to promote different aspects of development and facilitate reforms in the region in order to secure a better future for its citizens.

American University of Beirut, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI). The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut (AUB) was inaugurated in 2006 to harness the policy-related research of AUB’s internationally respected faculty and other scholars in order to contribute positively to Arab policymaking and international relations. In the established tradition of AUB, IFI is a neutral, dynamic, civil, and open space where people representing all viewpoints in society can gather and discuss significant issues of the day, anchored in a long-standing commitment to mutual understanding and high-quality research. The main goals of IFI are to raise the quality of public policy–related debate and decision making in the Arab world and abroad; to enhance the Arab world’s input in international affairs; and to enrich the quality of interaction among scholars, officials, and civil society actors in the Middle East and abroad. It operates research-to-policy programs in the areas of climate change and environment, Palestinian refugee camps, youth-related issues, and think tanks and public policymaking in the Arab world.

The Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity (ACRLI). The Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity is a regional, non-governmental, nonprofit organization, founded in 2003 by a group of judges, specialists, lawyers, and academics from Lebanon and other Arab countries. ACRLI was established to develop and reinforce the rule of law in the Arab world and promote integrity and good governance based on respect for civil and human rights and sound democratic practices.

Africa

Moi University, Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS). The Centre for Refugee Studies was conceived in 1991 as a program of the Department of Government and Public Administration in the School of Social, Cultural, and Development Studies at Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya. CRS aims to promote teaching, research, and outreach activities in the area of forced migration, to understand its root causes, and to instruct the current generation in the principles and practices of social justice, peace, and democracy in the management of public affairs. CRS became operative in 1992, launching a one-week course on “Refugee Rights and Law” for relevant officers of the Kenyan government and NGOs. This marked the beginning of collaborative activities with the Refugee Studies Programme, University of Oxford, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Nairobi office, the US Agency for International Development, the British Council, and the Ford Foundation.

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Stimson's *Regional Voices: Transnational Challenges* project is devoted to enhancing the information and analysis available to policymakers about emerging transnational security challenges in the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Africa. It seeks the direct input of experts and practitioners in the regions, especially those who constitute new voices in the conversation with the US policy community.

Muslim Indians: Struggle for Inclusion

The stereotype of Muslim Indians is that of a relatively quiescent minority that has made its peace with its larger national non-Muslim context of contemporary India. Muslim Indians see something larger. They are heirs to a millennium long civilization, one of the greatest in modern history and an adornment to the history of Islam, replete with the highest philosophical, architectural, artistic and literary accomplishments.

More recently, there has emerged an inchoate concern, in India and outside, that the existence of a large population of economically, socially and culturally marginalized citizens is an Achilles heel of national unity, as well as a source of potential political and social instability. In light of the development of anti-state pan-Islamist ideologies based on a sense of grievance, and of violent groups inspired by those ideologies, there is also a concern that disaffected Muslim Indians are now and will in the future be increasingly susceptible to such ideologies.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the Muslim Indian population is almost as great as the entire population of Pakistan, equal to the population of Bangladesh, and greater than the populations of major predominantly Muslim nations such as Egypt, Muslim Indians remain relatively ill-understood and under-studied. Their preoccupations and predicament are little known among outsiders and non-Muslim Indians. There is even a sense among Muslim Indians themselves that they do not have a handle on what is happening in the very varied Muslim communities throughout India.

Since December 2007, the Henry L. Stimson Center in Washington DC, and the Institute for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution in Mumbai have conducted a thorough inquiry throughout India to better understand and describe the priorities, thinking and concerns of Muslim Indians. We undertook this study because we believed that the state of opinion among Muslim Indians is inadequately understood. The adoption of policies that adequately address the sources of disadvantage and resentment demands a clearer understanding of how Muslims experience their membership in Indian society, and of the actual facts of that experience.

The present publication analyzes the findings of this study, and places them in historical and political context.

Amit A. Pandya directs the *Regional Voices: Transnational Challenges* project. He has previously been Counsel to the Government Operations and Foreign Affairs Committees of the House of Representatives, and held senior positions at the Departments of Defense and State and at the US Agency for International Development. He is a South Asia expert and international lawyer, and was formerly an ethnographer and teacher. He holds degrees from Oxford, Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and Georgetown.

Stimson Publications of Related Interest

Islam and Politics: Renewal and Resistance in the Muslim World (Pandya and Laipson, eds.), 2009

Transnational Trends: Middle Eastern and Asian Views (Pandya and Laipson, eds.), 2008



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