Global Myth vs. Local Reality: Towards Understanding "Islamic" Militancy in India[1]

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Abstract

Islamic militancy in the form of armed protests against established regimes prevails in many parts of the world, notably in West Asia and North Africa. These movements owe much more to socio-political and economic factors rather than to religious factors, but it has led many to conclude that Islam is inherently radicalizing and orients Muslims towards militancy. This paper argues that Islam is neither monolithic, nor does it prescribe a single course of political action. It offers a wide repertoire of possible political actions from which individuals may choose one according to exigency. Under the present circumstances, any attempt to attribute a course of moral action as singularly binding upon a Muslim is grossly misleading. Moreover in India, the possibility of the rise of Islamic militancy is unfeasible because of India's adoption of a liberal-democratic framework after independence. Historically in India, there always existed moderate and reformist Muslims, albeit having low voice, along with radicals and fundamentalists. However, during the last decade the reformist elements are increasingly coming into the mainstream who are determined that the discourse of Islam must no more be hijacked by the radicals or the so-called "defenders" of Islam.

Introduction

Islamic militancy in the form of armed protests against established regimes prevails in many parts of the world, notably in West Asia and North Africa. These movements have assumed a global dimension especially after September 11, 2001, which has propelled the United States to launch its unending "war on terror". A spate of events such as the bombing of commuter trains in Madrid (2004), Bali bombings (2002, 2005), London blast (2005) as well as the Delhi (2005, 2008) and Mumbai (2006, 2007, 2008) blasts have made it clear that anyone can be the target of terrorism. However, it must be noted that while the London blast and the bombing of commuter trains in Madrid were the acts of "home grown" terrorists, the Delhi and Mumbai blasts were carried out by foreign terrorists. One might as well rightly ask here why India, which is housing the second largest Muslim population in the world, after Indonesia, has not seen the growth of indigenous Islamic militancy, while most of the European countries despite having very small Muslim population, have been witnessing the resurgence of homegrown militancy.[2] It must be noted that India has witnessed recurrent communal riots between Hindus and Muslims since the country achieved independence from the British Colonial rule in 1947 which also raises issues of security and the ability of Indian democracy to protect its single largest minority community.[3] Nevertheless, there is now some evidence of the growth of home grown militancy in India, particularly post-2002, which poses serious challenge for Indian democracy as Indian government so far boasted of its record of the loyalty of Indian Muslim towards the nation.[4]

The recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai in December 2008, also dubbed as India's 9/11, has reconfirmed that we all are living under highly vulnerable circumstances. At the same time, all these incidents also spurred growing debates in the popular media and academic circles about the religious nature of terrorism, blaming Islam for creating motivated fighters to wage *jihad* against the "enemies of Islam".[5] Thus, Islam is considered as inherently radicalizing which orients Muslims towards militancy. There is in this a covertly implied linkage between the followers of Islam and the propensy of Muslims to be terrorists and criminals. One cannot deny the role of religion because of its claim of a monopoly over the truth and its strong universalistic tendency in motivating young Muslims to become fighters. However, it would be erroneous to completely blame Islam, ignoring the other factors, as Islamic militancy in different parts of the world is not a monolithic entity. In this context, Anthony Shadid remarks that "the violence does not come from Islam *per se* but rather from people's frustration with the inability of the established order to achieve serious political and social change. The frustration is elaborated in the language of Islam, and violence finds a justification in its vocabulary".[6]

It must be noted that specific circumstances give rise to different movements in particular settings, and thus these movements owe much more to socio-political and socio-economic factors than religious ones.[7] As put by John Esposito:

> ... the challenge today is to appreciate the diversity of Islamic actors and movements to ascertain the reasons behind confrontations and conflicts, and thus to react to specific events and situations with informed, reasoned responses rather than predetermined presumptions and reactions.[8]

Thus, each movement is different from another and needs a separate analysis. It is this factor that many analysts seem to gloss over while writing about Islam. Islam has become an "explanatory concept" for any action of Muslims located in different historical, social and political contexts. Such simplistic reductionism and predetermined assumption that blame Islam for the behavior of a small number of Muslims disregards specific and complex local and political histories and takes us further away from understanding the root of the problem, and thus allowing ourselves an easy escape from the profound problems that confront the modern world. Thus, one needs a holistic approach while trying to explain the complexity underlying the current existential situation of Indian Muslims.

However, there are movements across the world where people other than Muslims are using violence to achieve political goals including in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka in South Asia; in Northern Ireland; and in the Basque country in Europe.[9] Muslim militancy by similar groups in similar situations easily gets projected as if it is inspired by religion. Any armed struggle of Muslims anywhere, regardless of its motive, is therefore generally perceived as part of a worldwide "Islamic militancy" and Islam is considered as inherently reactionary and militant.

This paper aims to deconstruct the nomenclature of "Islamic militancy" by asking whether the prefix "Islamic" is really warranted when the term "militancy" would suffice to explain the situation. The paper argues that militancy can take root under three conditions. First, the possibility of militancy is immense under autocratic regimes. Unsurprisingly, most of the Muslim countries that provide little space to raise political dissent have been witnessing a rise in militant groups. While movements can emerge in a democratic regime, the chances of getting it militarized are less, particularly if the central authority is well institutionalized and if the ruling group is ready to share some power and resources with mobilized groups,[10] than in an undemocratic regime. Second, militancy can take place in a society where the process of social change is rapid, threatening

traditional social bonds and where the community fears the loss of cultural identity. In such societies, it is the lower middle class, who have little say in policy-making, and therefore become radicalized. Third, militancy can take root within communities that are marginalized or excluded from the process of social and economic development, deliberately or otherwise. The paper largely focuses on India to draw inferences and conclusions.

The paper attempts four things. First, it examines briefly the question why the notion of Islamic militancy has gained global attention in recent times. Second, it seeks to investigate and analyze the Islamic concept of power and how this conception relates to the existential situation of Muslims in contemporary India. Third, it examines whether there are any trends towards Islamic militancy in India and, if the answer is in the affirmative, what forms it has assumed and where it is located. In the process the paper explains the sources of this militant response in the Indian context. Finally, the paper makes an attempt to deconstruct the terminology of "Islamic militancy" itself which is based on falsified notions of Islam as a militant religion.

Before starting the discussion it is pertinent here to find out how the echo about "Islamic militancy" has come to get such resonance and wide public attention.

Propaganda of Islamic Militancy: A Background

The hype about "Islamic militancy" is itself seen as an artifact created by the West, particularly the USA, to camouflage their original mission of hegemony through controlling the world economy that gained prominence especially after the disintegration of the USSR and later after the events of September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. As is well known, both the United States and the USSR crafted their foreign policies in terms of "threat perceptions" of the other as the front of a monolithic political force respectively, global capitalism versus Marxism–Leninism that needed to be contained wherever possible and destroyed when the circumstances allowed. The end of the cold war and the triumph of capitalism which led Francis Fukuyama to declare the "end of history" thesis,[11] created a vacuum which is now quite conveniently filled by the perceived threat of "Islamic Militancy"—that also needs to be contained and destroyed. The outbreak of the Iranian Revolution (1978–1979), which was portrayed throughout the world as "Islamic revivalism", despite the fact that it was Shi'ite revolution against the misrule of the Shah of Iran supported by the West, further contributed to the hype of "Islamic militancy". However, the Iranian revolution had a great impact on the Sunni Islamist movement and inspired them with renewed vigor to launch their campaign against the inept and corrupt rulers invariably supported by Western powers. Thus, the Iranian revolution was a serious setback to the West which feared a similar kind of backlash in other West Asian countries which might destabilize the balance of power in the world. In order to deal with the possibility of such an uprising, the USA, following its declaration of the "Axis of Evil" made a concerted effort to demonize Islam by launching a world wide campaign targeting Islamist groups. Thus, even political dissent against the authoritarian regime passed as Islamic militancy and Islam became another menace after communism. Invariably, individual acts of terror are constantly being portrayed as acts of "Islamic militancy" and of "Muslim fanatics" and so-forth. Therefore, one needs to question what is Islamic about militancy.

Edward Said, in his influential work *Covering Islam*, has already shown how in various ways Islam has been represented negatively in the West.[12] Such discourse of Islam, increasingly represented in the US media, has gained immense popularity in post-September 11 world.[13] The distortions cultivated by some sections of the people do

not reflect the fact that Islam has for centuries a better record of tolerance. As succinctly put by Graham E. Fuller:

> ... most religions have elements of both tolerance and intolerance built into them: intolerance because they believe that they carry the truth, perhaps the sole truth, and tolerance because they also speak of humanity, the common origins of mankind, concepts of divine justice, and a humane order for all. Violence does not flow from religion alone—even bigoted religion. *After all, the greatest horrors and killing machines in history stemmed from the Western, secular ideologies of fascism and communism.*[14] (Emphasis added)

However, there are two ways one can understand Islam: one, textual understanding; and the other, Islam as practiced by its followers in different parts of the worlds at different times in history. Thus, according to Imtiaz Ahmad, Islam, like other religions, throughout its past as well as in the contemporary period has been characterized by an obvious paradox. This is its simultaneous unity as a world religion and its bewildering diversity as the living faith of local, regional and national communities. On the one hand, Islam projects itself and thrives on the celebration of the projection that it is everywhere the same. On the other hand, the patterns of beliefs and behavior to which Muslims adhere in the course of their daily lives are everywhere diverse and varied.[15] The diversity of Muslim beliefs and practices gives the impression "that there are as many Islams as there are situations that sustain them".[16] Thus, in order to appreciate Islam it is essential to unravel the diversity within Islam as a religion and as a living faith.

Is there Militancy in Islam?

Let us now turn to the question of whether Islam is really militant and is radicalizing and orienting Muslims towards militancy. This is important because, of late, it has become commonplace and fashionable among a genre of scholars to assert that all Muslims should be blamed for the deeds of a handful of fanatic Muslims who consider themselves as the "defenders" of Islam. Quite apart from the highly motivated nature of this exercise, the perfunctory manner in which it is done itself deserves to be called into question. While all the known religions of the world call for love, peace, tolerance, freedom of belief and mutual understanding, many of the terrorist acts are committed by people who present themselves "religious", real or imaginary, and come from all faith traditions.

More often the act of militancy committed by Muslim actors is inspired by the belief that Islam is capable of offering a viable alternative in the shaping of the contemporary world. Here Islam is projected as a monolithic and closed religion based on unity of faith among its followers. This kind of projection of Islam is most popular among the non-Muslim masses and it glosses over the fact that there are critical differences within the Muslim community which inherits a hierarchy of assertive plural identities defined along linguistic, cultural, geographical, racial, tribal and occupational lines. Notwithstanding sharing the same faith, there are considerable differences among Sunni, Shia, Bohra, Khoja constituencies and any number of syncretic Hindu–Muslim sects and cults. Besides, despite the unity of faith which Muslims across the world are required to follow, there are crucial differences in the patterns of belief and behavior shaped and ordered by their temporal and environmental conditions to which Muslims adhere in the course of their daily lives. Perhaps, the persistence of internal doctrinal and cultural variety and diversity within the system of Islam and its ability to adapt to local cultural environment has been nowhere more evident than in India.[17] According

to Imtiaz Ahmad, the persistence of pluralism of belief and practices within Islam in India has two implications. First, it goes to show that the unity and integrity of Islam as a world religion is not axiomatic or given, but instead achieved through a complex interaction between codes derived through Islamic scriptures and derived from the exigencies of living in differing ecological, social, cultural and political environments. Second, as a practiced faith Islam is far more pluralist than the extreme degree of reification commonly attributed to it.[18]

The divisions within Islam do not come to the surface in India where mental "ghettoization" exists among Indian Muslims because of minority status. Thus, despite being given equal citizenship rights by the Indian constitution, Indian Muslims could not assert themselves in the public sphere and lived under constant self-imposed fear.[19] This mental "ghettoization", in turn, spurs a feeling of inferiority, compels them to hide their internal differences and present themselves as one united group. Differences among Muslims are more apparent where Muslim identity is secure; it is no wonder the Pakistani state regularly witnesses clashes among different sects and groups. Similar clashes along caste lines are also evident among Indian Hindus, who constitute the majority in India. Moreover, the Muslim political leaders have also been responsible for projecting Muslims as a monolithic group and thus claiming themselves to be the representatives and legitimate defenders of the interests of the entire Indian Muslim community. Media has further helped in buttressing the image of Muslims as a homogenous community by seeking a "Muslim viewpoint" on any event bearing an impact on the community as if there is a single collective "Muslim mind".

Looking at the existential situation of Muslims in India and in the other parts of the world, one can question the notion of "Islamic solidarity" which is invoked to hold Islam responsible for militancy. It is argued that Muslims in any part of the world are a part of the larger *ummah*, and despite the internal differences amongst them, Muslims are always ready to help their brothers in trouble in any part of the world, which is not the case in respect of adherents to Christianity, Buddhism or Hinduism. But in reality there is no such thing as Islamic solidarity; as we have noted, there are bitter sectarian divisions and ethnic distinctions which have always remained as obstacles for Muslims to come to a common platform, simply on the basis of religion. The creation of Bangladesh in 1971, which was earlier the part of Pakistan, has proved the triumph of language over religion. Similarly, the brutal conflict that has been going on between Shi'a and Sunni in Iraq is testimony to the fact that religion alone cannot work as a binding force. In this context, Graham Fuller and I. O. Lesser argue that "For a moment, iconic issues such as Palestine can bring Muslims together, but in the long term solidarity is always likely to be broken by local affinity, local antagonism, state interest, and the mundane".[20] Thus, to invoke the term "Islamic militancy" to describe the howl of rages in Muslim societies or the armed protests by the Muslims in any part of the world, in defense of Islamic causes would be erroneous.

Power and Militancy

Let me now turn to the issue of Islamic conception of power to find out whether militancy is inherent in the Islamic notion of power or it is no different from the modern conception of power. It must be noted here that as there is no difference between religion and politics in Islam, or religious power and temporal power—power can be exercised either by religious or political institutions. Power has never remained a central focus in Islam, but because of practical exigencies Muslims were required to

capture power or establish a state.[21] The purpose behind establishing power was to see that the community of believers and faithful were able to practice their religion peacefully and thus there came a distinction between *dar al-Islam* (land of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (land of war).[22] In case of *dar al-harb* Muslims were asked to make *hijra* or migrate which is not always easy or possible in the modern world. It is in these contexts that the condition of Indian Muslims, who were once in power in the country, has to be analyzed. The unsuccessful mutiny of 1857 against the British in India not only resulted in slipping of power from Muslims hands but they were also made to live as a minority in a largely Hindu set-up. In order to deal with the situation the main Indian Muslim movements worked out strategies to reclaim their identity within the existing territory, based on their faith and their specific beliefs which would have serious political ramifications for Indian Muslims in the long run. According to Gilles Kepel;

> . . . in this period, two main paths—religious and political—were mapped out. The first reinforced the religious singularity of Islam and its radical separation from the non-Muslim world; the second reasserted Islam through the elaboration of a political strategy of communalism, involving the establishment of separate electoral colleges for Muslims and Hindus and leading eventually to the secession of Pakistan.[23]

The religious path resulted in the emergence of many revivalist movements to purify Islam. But for my present purpose I am not going into the historical details of this evolution. Out of various reformist movements to purify Islam such as the Deoband movement which started with the establishment of Darul Uloom at Deoband in 1867; Tablighi Jamaat which came into being in 1927, under the influence of a Muslim scholar, Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas; and Jamaat-i-Islami,[24] founded by Abul Ala Mawdudi in 1941; it is only Jamaat-i-Islami which talks about establishing an Islamic state. However, the Jamaat has failed to persuade all Muslims and hence, during partition which led to creation of Pakistan in 1947, there were many Muslims who chose to stay back in India. They preferred to be governed by a secular and democratic constitution rather than joining hands to establish a state based largely on religion. After partition, the Jamaat was divided into two separate political organizations; Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan and Jamaat-i-Islami Hind (JIH). There was also a significant shift in their ideological orientation as JIH, unlike its sister organization in Pakistan, kept the agenda of political Islam at abeyance and started focusing on the preservation of the identity and rights of the Muslim community such as Muslim Personal Law, Urdu and Muslim educational institutions in secular India.[25]

The Role of the Madrasahs

The institutions of *madrasahs*, which were established to spread Islamic education and to create a community of believers who would defend Islam from any criticisms and preserve the Islamic traditions, have come under attack. There is now growing propensity among a section of society to lump together all *madrasahs* as "dens of militant activities" or to allege that "*madrasahs* teach terrorism". This is based on an erroneous notion of *madrasahs* and was imported here from Afghanistan and Pakistan where *madrasahs* were used for militant activities as a direct result of American and Pakistani government policies during and after the Afghan "*jihad*" era. Such developments have not taken place in India and there is no reason to believe that such developments may take place here in the future. Thus, the radicalization of certain *madrasahs* in Pakistan has little to do with

any inner logic of the *madrasah* system as such; rather, it must be seen as a result of complex developments in the larger political economy of the Pakistani state.[26] As Stephen Cohen points out, religious radicalism has only a limited support base in Pakistan. Militant Pakistani Islamic groups, he remarks, have tended to derive their minimal influence less from popular support than from active state patronage in order to counter secular opposition parties or to promote what are seen as Pakistani's external interests *vis-à-vis* India and Afghanistan.[27]

The sustenance of the institutions of *madrasahs* in India, which are in dire need of reform, has much to do with the power politics of the Muslim elite to continue their hegemony over the community, as *madrasahs* are producing a conformist community devoid of any independent thinking and critical imagination and thus a handy tool in their endeavor to exercise power. The *madrasah* system has been nurtured exclusively for the poor by creating a false perception that "Islam is in danger" and thus there is the urgent need of a community of believers to save Islam from extinction. Such false propaganda by a handful of elite Muslims has only helped in creating fundamentalist elements within the community and provided a fertile ground for the right wing groups to buttress their position.

Let us now take up the issue of Kashmir which is invariably used to show that Islam is radicalizing and Muslims are militant.

The Struggle for Kashmir: Autonomy Movement or Islamic Militancy?

The Kashmir problem has existed since the time of independence of India in 1947 and is essentially an autonomy movement. That those spearheading this movement are Muslim is incidental to the whole issue. The political, social and legal factors that have been responsible for the present situation in Jammu and Kashmir deserve detailed discussion. However, it must be noted here that Kashmir, where nearly 80% of the population was Muslim remained under Dogra rulers (Hindus) from Maharaja Gulab Singh to Maharaja Hari Singh for 106 years from 1846 and 1952, yet there never arose any communal conflict. It was these Kashmiris who rejected the two nation theory of Mohammad Ali Jinnah in 1947 and took up arms to resist Pakistani sponsored armed infiltrators, sang the Indian national anthem on every platform of Kashmir and supported the State's accession to the Union of India signed by Maharaja Hari Singh on October 26, 1947.[28] They lived in peace and harmony for 40 years, supported the secular fabric of the state and opposed any and every communal move of a microscopic section of Jamaat-i-Islami in the Valley. The foremost Kashmiri Muslim leader, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, had to change the name of his "Muslim Conference" to "National Conference" because of public pressure as the Kashmiris, both Hindus and Muslims, had grown together under the spirit of the *Kashmiriyat* or "Kashmiri identity", which they saw to be a unique amalgam of traditions drawing upon local Muslim, Hindu and other sources.

It must be noted here that the nature of Islam in Kashmir is very different from some other parts of India. The *Rishi* tradition has predominantly shaped religious and public life in Kashmir for centuries and is the basis of their self-identity as Kashmiris. Holding Islam responsible for the uprising of militancy in the valley demonstrates intellectual felony. Though we cannot completely deny the existence of fundamentalist strains in the present Kashmiri movement, the essential question remains, whether it is religion which instigates them to fight or the situation so developed that they feel inclined to take resort to religion as an instrument to easily mobilize the people?[29] As pointed out by Asghar Ali Engineer, though Islam was always there in Kashmir and it could have

inspired them anytime during all these years, no extremists appeared on the scene until the end of the 1980s.[30] The bigger question that needs to be answered is why Pakistan, which has been trying since the 1960s to fight a proxy war in Kashmir by making Islam a factor, could be successful only at the end of the 1980s. Insurgency in the Kashmir valley began in 1988 spearheaded by young nationalists from Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) which was supported by large number of Kashmiris who came out in the street to demand their legitimate rights of self-governance. According to Sumit Ganguly "Their grievances against the Indian state are not of Pakistan's making. Pakistan simply exploited the existing discontent within a segment of Kashmir's population".[31] Thus, the mistake lies with the Indian government in precipitating the crisis.

India never kept the promise of granting autonomy and special powers to the Kashmiris under Article 370. It was not only that special powers promised to the Kashmiris remained on paper, but there was a consistent attempt by the Indian government to curtail the existing freedom and autonomy. The mandate of the people was hardly respected and democratically elected governments were invariably overthrown. The only fair election ever held was that in 1977 during the Janata Government in the Centre.[32] Besides, the people were excluded from the process of development and there was hardly any economic progress. The movement for regional autonomy remained non-violent for four decades after independence. According to Gautam Navlakha "militancy in Indian-held-Kashmir was the result of a process that began long before people took up arms; and only when every avenue of democratic articulation was denied, dissent crushed, demands dismissed in the name of "national interest or security". Therefore, the burden of responsibility weighs heavily on the Indian government".[33] This provided an opportunity for Pakistan to play with the heightened emotion of the people and it started providing support in the form of weapons and money to the Kashmiris to fight against the Indian government. Thus, the nature of the entire movement changed from that of an indigenous movement to demand autonomy, to one aimed at destabilizing the Indian government with the covert support of Pakistan. Thus, Yoginder Sikand makes the point that:

> . . . from the 1990s onwards, a remarkable transformation in the terms of discourse in which the Kashmiri liberation struggle against Indian rule has sought to express itself may be clearly discerned. Kashmir in the 1930s witnessed the emergence of the Islamist movement. In its initial years the movement failed to garner a strong support base owing to the long-standing Sufi tradition in Kashmir. However, since the 1980s, the Jama-at-i-Islami Jammu and Kashmir (JIJK) has attempted to restructure the framework of the discourse within which the Kashmiri armed struggle has sought to express itself—the struggle is now being interpreted as a holy war. Not only has there been a growing intervention of Islamist groups based in Pakistan, the nationalist goal of a free Kashmir is being increasingly marginalized.[34]

However, it must be noted here that, in the late 1980s, Islamist groups failed to garner any support from the masses. But with the rise of militant anti-Muslim Hindu groups in India, and the subsequent killings of Muslims in riots in different parts of India in the wake of the Babri mosque demolition in 1992, provided them with an opportunity to question the safety of the Kashmiri Muslims under the Indian government. Thus, as Sikand asserts, "the growing popularity of the Islamists in Kashmir and the consequent marginalization of the Kashmiri nationalists has much to do with the rapid spread of the

Hindutva forces in India".[35] In the light of the above discussion, therefore, the case of Kashmir cannot be regarded as an example of Islamic militancy.

Is there a possibility of Islamic Militancy in India?

The rise of Hindu fundamentalism in the mid-1980s resulting from the opportunist policy of the Congress Party in relation to the Shah Bano case and the politics surrounding the Babri Masjid had a detrimental impact on India's secular ethos.[36] The capturing of power at the centre by the right wing political party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1998 gave further fillip to the Hindutva forces to impose their agenda on the national mainstream. There had been attempts by the BJP to impose their communal agenda which was reflected in the way they tried to "saffronize" history by inculcating a particular (Hindu) ideology through the educational system.[37] There is an increasing tendency on the part of Hindu right-wing groups to present Muslims as the "other" in order to unite Hindus against the Muslim so as to consolidate their hold over the power structure of the state. The rise of Hindutva forces has led many commentators to argue that it will give rise to Islamic militancy in India that has so far been limited to the conflict in Kashmir.[38] In order to deal with the issue it must be noted here that Muslims are the largest minority in India, constituting 13.4% (around 140 million) of the total population of the country, according to the 2001 census of India. This makes the issue of Islamic militancy more critical in India.

The rise of Hindutva forces in India has already resulted in some devastating consequences. In February and March 2002, over 2,000 people were killed in state-supported violence against Muslims in the western state of Gujarat, led by the Hindu nationalist BJP that was also heading a coalition government at the centre. The attacks were carried out with impunity by the members of the BJP, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal (the militant youth wing of the VHP).[39] Collectively, these groups are known as the "Sangh Parivar", or family of Hindu nationalist organizations. Police and state officials were directly implicated in many of the attacks.[40] Nationwide violence against India's Muslim community in 1992 in the wake of Babri mosque demolition and in 1993 after the Bombay bomb blast, has also stemmed from the violent activities and hate propaganda of these groups. The past BJP-led NDA government exploited the high flown rhetoric surrounding the global war on terrorism to silence political dissent while the Sangh Parivar invoked the threat of Islamic militancy in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States to justify the persecution of Muslims in India. Operating under the guise of patriotism, the proponents of Hindu nationalism are trying to achieve mainstream credibility. But to construe that this will result in the rise of Islamic militancy is to deny Indian Muslims of any agency and makes them capable only of reacting.

The process of modernization and democratization which is underway in India has also helped in the creation of minority consciousness and enabled the minorities to organize themselves politically.[41] They are not only determined to preserve their cultural identity, which has been threatened because of the rise of fraudulent Hindutva concepts of national identity and secular state, but they also seek to grab a share in the development and prosperity resulting from the ongoing process of modernization and liberalization of the country. It must be noted here that the process of modernization has resulted in an increasing number of well educated and underemployed youth within all religious communities. Further, the influx of uneducated or undereducated migrants from rural into metropolitan areas in search of jobs and better opportunities creates

groups of rootless people having no ties with neighborhood and not held together by kinship bonds. Such alienated and atomized individuals are readily available to be mobilized by militant organizations that play on their emotions.[42] The process of modernization has a more or less similar impact on all the religious communities especially amongst the lower middle classes and the poor and thus it would be erroneous to say that it will result in the growth of militancy among Indian Muslim. Moreover, the process of modernization has always been moderate in India, except during the BJP led National Democratic Alliance regime (1998–2004), when the interest of the poor and lower middle classes were overlooked.[43]

Even in the face of these developments, militancy within the Indian Muslim community has not found widespread expression. This is not to deny that there are radical Muslim groups in India, but they have failed so far to earn wide public acceptance.[44] According to Kanti Bajpai right-wing Muslim violence has so far been rather limited although the Mumbai (1993) and Coimbatore (1998) bomb blasts were amongst the bloodiest incidents of Muslim militancy outside Kashmir.[45] Islamic militancy on a wider scale has not evolved in India because of her adoption of a liberal-democratic framework after independence. India's success as a democracy lies in its successful handling of minority problems. The Indian constitution like that of other democratic countries incorporates a number of provisions that aim at safeguarding the interests of minorities and allows them to maintain their identity through cultural and educational rights while providing appropriate safeguards to protect their interests. However, the fruits of these special measures could not help much, especially for the Muslim minority to achieve economic prosperity. But they could help in instilling a sense of confidence and security among the minorities.[46] However, this sense of security has been gradually shattered, especially in the 1990s, owing to the rise of aggressive Hindutva forces. This poses a serious question for Indian democracy: will this development give rise to Islamic militancy? There is not any concrete answer to this question and much will depend upon the evolution of Indian state, particularly whether it will be able to maintain its democratic and secular credentials or allow itself to be maneuvered by the right wing forces.

It must be noted that the propensity among groups to undertake occasional acts of violence to achieve political goals is greater if they are assured that the state is sympathetic and therefore unlikely to take on acts of retribution. Consequently, it is not surprising that in Pakistan, where radical Muslim groups have found fertile ground to flourish because of the past state policies where fanatics were encouraged by the political machinery especially during the Zia-ul-Haq time, they invariably resort to violent means to achieve political goals rather than going through a democratic process.[47] It is in this context that the rise of radical Hindu groups, which already have ascendancy in the state apparatus and have the prospect of capturing state power, can result in the growth of political violence in the Indian state. However, the defeat of the right wing political party, the BJP, in the general elections of 2004 and 2009 has shown that the Indian society is largely secular and does not allow divisive and sectarian forces to play havoc with its shared culture and history. Similarly, in the state assembly elections of six states, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Rajasthan, which took place during and after the Mumbai terrorists attacks of November 2008, people did not out rightly vote for the BJP. The Mumbai terrorist attacks which were expected to dominate the assembly elections could not have much impact upon the political choice of the electorate.[48] Such examples clearly reflect that playing the sectarian card has not paid dividends for the right wing political party and Indian voters still repose their faith on secular ethos of the Indian nation.

Given the rise of a sizeable Muslim middle class and the growing power it has acquired, militancy is not likely to take root in the community. Though the middle class already existed among Indian Muslims before, it has undergone significant changes in the past 50 years; it has moved from being traditional landed elite to a class of salaried employees, intellectuals, businessmen and traders.[49] Many of them might well share the feeling, imaginary or real, that they are excluded from the mainstream and are discriminated against, but they would not agree to resolve their grievances through violent means. The new middle classes are less religiously-oriented and ideologically they are committed to reformist Islam. They are not swayed by emotional politics and religious zealots; instead they would send their children to public schools or convents and even inter-religious marriages are not uncommon among them. These transformations in the Indian Muslim middle classes are taking place because of a number of reasons such as the rapid growth of the Indian economy, the rise of literacy, and the migration of Muslims to the Gulf states for jobs. Indian Muslims have now become a force to be reckoned with as their actions—political, economic and social—have determining effect not only on the Muslim community but also on national politics.

Historically, there always existed moderate and reformist Muslims, *albeit* with a low voice. However, only during the last ten years, have these reformist elements been increasingly coming into the mainstream. They are determined that the discourse on Islam must no more be hijacked by the radicals or the so-called "defenders" of Islam. This is quite evident from the fact that the politics of *fatwa* that have played an important role in determining the behavior of the majority of Muslims in the past is losing significance. Indian Muslims are gradually becoming more individualist in orientation and not surprisingly, contrary to the *fatwa* issued by Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid to vote for BJP in the General election of 2004, Muslims out rightly voted for other secular parties. Thus, faced with grievances, they prefer to resolve them through democratic means rather than taking to arms and it is their faith in institutional and democratic means that has kept them away from reactionary politics even in the wake of the worst killing of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002.

Geographically, Indian Muslims are quite scattered over India and the problems they face are diverse in nature. Responding to distinctly different environmental conditions, assimilating diverse currents in the historical process and reaching disparate levels of socio-economic development, the life of Indian Muslims, like that of other constituents of the Indian population, has developed under distinct regional moulds from Kashmir to Kerala and from Punjab to Assam. If the Muslims in north India face problems such as the safeguarding of the Urdu language, recurring communal riots, and girls education, South Indian Muslims would ask for more economic security, more education facilities and better access to white collar jobs. The recurring communal riots have created a feeling of insecurity among the north Indian Muslims. South India presents quite the opposite picture. South Indian Muslims are better rooted in the local cultural milieu than their north Indian counterparts. Their linguistic identity is much stronger in many cases than the religious one. On the other hand, north India, which was the heartland of Brahmanical Hinduism, always resisted the assimilation of Muslims and Islamic values due to the widespread arrogance of belonging to an older and "higher" culture. This is why the south Indian Muslims, unlike Muslims in the north, have never been swayed by emotional politics and have always exerted themselves in non-controversial fields such as commerce and education.

Unlike migrant Islam[50] in Europe, Indian Islam is historical Islam and there exists a very close proximity between Indian Muslims and Indian Hindus across cultural lines

which also reduces the likelihood of Islamic militancy in India. As put by Assayag, "the continuous process of integrative and antagonistic acculturation has allowed each tradition to preserve its peculiarities and maintain a demarcating line between Hindus and Muslims".[51] Assayag goes on to explain:

> . . . This is obvious because Hinduism and Islam, as they were practiced until recently, continue to show a great deal of flexibility and a spirit of accommodation in their mutual relations. In fact, they display an understanding that is infinitely richer than the limited sectarian approach adopted by dogmatic, fundamentalist and neo-traditionalist circles on both sides.[52]

Thus, various differences notwithstanding, there exists certain commonality across cultural lines between Indian Muslims and Hindus that reduces the chances of these communities going for violence and terminating each other. There are, no doubt, instances of people having close affinities and still starting to kill each other. But such ethnic conflicts have their deep roots in the political economy of the state or the nation. In his recent study, Ashutosh Varshney shows that communal riots are mostly an urban phenomenon and that the rural areas in India have not witnessed communal tensions/riots on any noticeable scale. He further points out that people of two communities having close interaction via a network of voluntary associations within the civil society are less likely to fight each other.[53] Apparently partisan and sectarian stances of some right wing groups have hardly been able to shake the traditional cultural bonds and ties between Indian Muslims and Hindus. Thus, despite recurring communal riots, people of the two communities still trust and have faith in each other and often come together to defeat the divisive agenda of sectarian forces.[54]

New Cause for Concern

However, Islamic militancy which was so far confined to Kashmir has in recent times shown its mark of influence on other parts of India. Earlier the acts of terrorism orchestrated on Indian soil were mostly carried out by Pakistan-based terrorist organizations. There is evidence of involvement of Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), which is a largely homegrown Indian Muslim organization, in the acts of militancy. Investigations into recent bomb blasts in Bangalore and Ahmedabad have found evidence of the complicity of SIMI and "Indian Mujahideen".[55] This has become a cause of concern for Indian government which has so far boasted about its record of loyalty of Indian Muslim towards the Indian state.

The recent rise of neo-conservative Islamic scholars such as Zakir Naik, who have been using media, particularly the television, to propagate their message to the masses is said to have some impact on the perception of the Indian Muslims. The popularity of QTV, Pakistan-based Islamic channel, among Indian Muslim is a testimony to the fact that neo-conservative ideology has been growing rapidly.[56] Such kind of proclamations are providing the intellectual and ideological support for the rise of neo-conservative ideology among some sections of Indian Muslims.

At the same time, there is ongoing effort by important Muslim religious organizations in India to fight back the implantation of the ideology of terrorism. In February 2008, All India Anti-Terrorism Conference organized by *Rabta Madaris Islamiah* (Islamic Madrasahs Association), strongly denounced terrorism.[57] In June 2008, *Darul Uloom Deoband*, important religious seminary of India, issued *fatwa* against terrorism.[58] There has now been increasing contestation between the growing right wing ideology

among sections of Indian Muslims and the vast majority of Muslims who still repose their faith on Indian democracy.

Conclusion

The above discussion clearly shows that Islam is neither monolithic, nor does it prescribe a single course of political action. It offers a wide repertoire of possible political actions from which individuals may choose one according to exigency. Under the circumstances, any attempt to attribute a specific course of moral action as singularly binding upon a Muslim is grossly misleading. Which terminology, then, would be most appropriate to describe the Muslims who demand for change range from advocating socio-political-economic reforms to seeking violent revolutionary action? Some scholars favor "Islamic fundamentalism" or "Muslim fanaticism", others speak of "Islamic militancy". In the light of the above discussion, however, it should only be termed as act of militancy.

Given their divisions and diversities, Indian Muslims, in general, can neither harness their inner resources to evolve a common vision nor work as a collective group in the pursuit of shared goals. The supposedly monolithic structure of the Muslim leadership and organization does not exist either at the national or local level. Thus, the national mainstream Indian Muslim is not in a position to give a militant response to the contemporary problems. The aggravation of the situation in Kashmir is mainly due to the failure of the Indian government to fulfill the legitimate demands of the Kashmiri people under the Indian constitution, which later on resulted in the armed struggle and provided Pakistan with the opportunity to exploit the sentiment of the Kashmiri people to its advantage. Thus, Islamic militancy in India is confined to Kashmir so far and the chances of it affecting the national mainstream Indian Muslims are not great, even in the wake of growing Hindu radical groups. This is due to the fact that since independence Indian Muslims have traversed a long path. The sense of insecurity and uncertainty prevalent among those who stayed back in India after partition has died down. Another factor is India's adoption of a liberal-democratic constitution which safeguards the interest of the minorities and guarantees them their rights and appropriate protection.

The case of Kashmir is different because the community has not only been marginalized and excluded from the process of development but left to live in a situation of perpetual uncertainty because of the armed conflict. The moderate process of modernization underway also discounts the rise of militancy. The sizeable rise of Muslim middle classes has further contributed to the democratization of Indian Muslims and resulted in the resurgence of reformist elements who now, like other progressive Indians, have a vision that is more constructive, positive and goal-oriented. Faced with grievances, they would rather resolve them through the democratic process than through taking to arms. This is quite evident from the fact that the hate propaganda unleashed by Sangh Parivar since the 1990s, especially during the Gujarat carnage of 2002 against the Muslim minority, has not resulted in any significant rise of militancy among mainstream Indian Muslims. Rather, some Muslims have come forward to even join a rightist political party such as the BJP which shows that their inclination to retrieve their grievances through political processes has increased.

Thus, the Indian Muslims who have largely remained entrapped in a ghetto-mentality are gradually coming out of it and making efforts to see that they are equally benefited by the process of modernization and development. There are some scholars who believe that the liberal tendency among Indian Muslims is on the retreat.[59] No doubt, there is rise of radical groups within the Muslim community, but so far they have failed to

gain support from the Muslim masses who still repose their faith in Indian democracy. It is, therefore, in the interest of Indian democracy that the rise of radical Hindu groups which is corroding the very values and the institutions that the country has cherished since its independence, must be controlled. The crisis that India is facing in the wake of the 2008 Mumbai attack can be turned into an opportunity to devise policies and programs that will help in further strengthening the faith of Indian Muslims in Indian democracy and in the future of the Muslim minority community in India.

Acknowledgements

NOTES

1. The paper is the revised version of a paper presented at 18th European Conference in Modern South Asian Studies, Lund, 6th to 9th July 2004.
2. Three suspects of the September 11 attacks lived in Hamburg, Germany.
3. According to Javeed Alam, the recurrence of communal riots in India has helped in uniting the internally differentiated Muslim community. See, Javeed Alam, "The Contemporary Muslim Situation in India: A Long Term-View", *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 12, 2008, pp. 45–53. The victims of riots have also been recruited by terrorist organizations to wage Jihad against the Indian state. See Praveen Swami, "The Well-Tempered Jihad: The Politics and Practice of Post-2002 Islamist Terrorism in India", *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September 2008, pp. 303–322. Thus, Javeed Alam's observation and Praveen Swami's evidence show the growth of sense of discrimination and deprivation among some sections of Indian Muslims and a small number of them are even willing to take to arms. The Indian government should take it as an early warning for even a small number of motivated fighters can jeopardize the security of the Indian state.
4. Praveen Swami shows the evidence of the growth of home grown Islamist terrorism in India, especially after post-2002. See Praveen Swami, *ibid.*
5. All these developments have also led Samuel Huntington to speak even more explicitly about "the age of Muslim Wars" and the global emergence of Muslim grievances and hostility towards America. See, Samuel P. Huntington, "America in the World", *The Hedgehog Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Spring 2003, pp. 7–18. Even Connecticut's liberal Senator Christopher Dodd, in a television interview in November 2003, cautioned Americans not to expect too much tolerance from Islam given its propensity for ideological control over public life. Quoted in Mark Juergensmeyer, "Is religion the problem?", *The Hedgehog Review*, Vol. 6, No 1, Spring 2004, pp. 22–31. See also Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, New York: Random House, 2003; Barry Cooper, *New Political Religions, or an Analysis of Modern Terrorism*, Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004; Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11*, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
6. Anthony Shadid, *Legacy of the Prophet: Despots, Democrats and the New Politics of Islam*, Oxford: Westview Press, 2002, p. 97.
7. For a detailed discussion on the factors leading to these movements see N. Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, London: Routledge, 1991. See also Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1996. Also see Anthony Shadid, *Legacy of the Prophet, op. cit.*
8. John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
9. One of the most violent conflicts has been carried out in Sri Lanka by the followers of Buddhism, often assumed to be the world's most peaceful religion. Similarly, bombings of abortion clinics and killing of abortion doctors by the Christian fundamentalists are rarely described as Christian militancy.
10. A well institutionalized democratic state provides room for self-determination movements to emerge and possesses a fair amount of legitimate coercion to repress these movements. See Atul Kohli, "Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism? The Rise and Decline of Self-Determination

Movements in India", in *Community, Conflicts and the State in India*, eds Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 7–14.

11. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Free Press, 1992.

12. Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1981.

13. See Lila Abu-Lughod, *Local Contexts of Islamism in Popular Media*, ISIM Paper 6, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006.

14. Graham E. Fuller, "The Future of Political Islam", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 2, 2002, pp. 59–60.

15. Imtiaz Ahmad, "Introduction", in *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India*, ed. Imtiaz Ahmad, New Delhi: Manohar, 1981.

16. Leif Manger, ed., *Local Islam in Global Contexts*, London: Curzon Press, 1999, p. 17.

17. Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969. Also see Imtiaz Ahmad, "Fundamentalism and Islam", *World Focus*, Vol. 16, Nos 2–3, 1995, pp. 24–27.

18. Imtiaz Ahmad, "Fundamentalism and Islam", *World Focus*, Vol. 16, Nos 2–3, 1995, p. 25.

19. The Sachar Committee report released in 2006 clearly highlights the deprivation of Muslims in comparison to other minorities in India, which is concomitant to their own self-imposed fear that kept them away from participating as equal citizens in the public sphere. However, one cannot totally exonerate the past governments for pampering and siding with the conservative elements within the community, rather than devising policies and programs that could uplift the marginalized groups of the community. See Justice Rajender Sachar, *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India: A Report*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2006.

    For a detailed discussion, see Taberez A. Neyazi, "State, Citizenship and Religious Community: The Case of Indian Muslim Women", *Asian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 15, No. 3, December 2007, pp. 303–313.

20. Graham E. Fuller and I. O. Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995. Quoted in Francis Robinson, "Islam and the West: Clash of Civilizations?", *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 33, Part. III, October 1995, pp. 307–320.

21. However, there are scholars such as Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutub and Ruhullah Khomeni who assert that power has always remained central to Islam, ignoring the fact that the Arab unity that existed in the time of Prophet Muhammad was not political unity and the leadership of the Messenger over the Arabs was a religious leadership and not a civil one. The people's submission was a submission to beliefs and faith, not submission to a government or a power. Moreover, the Prophet never hinted at any thing that could be called an Islamic or an Arab state any time throughout the length of his entire life. See Ali Abd al-Raziq, "The Problem of Caliphate", in *Contemporary Debates in Islam: An Anthology of Modernist and Fundamentalist Thought*, eds Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof, London: MacMillan, 2000, pp. 95–100.

22. There are many other categorizations that developed later on to describe the division of world under Islam such as *Dar al-Amn* (house of safety), *Dar al-Sulh* (house of treaty), *Dar al-Dawa* (house of invitation). For details, see E. van Donzel, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Leiden: Brill, 1994.

23. Gilles Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe*, London: Polity Press, 1997, p. 89.

24. Though the aim of the Deoband movement and Tablighi Jamaat was to purify Islam from non-Muslim influence, they never resorted to violence and thus confined their activities to the establishment of *madrasahs* and public preaching. For a very good study of Deoband, see Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982. For an insightful study of Muslim history in South Asia, see Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

25. Under the impetus of Abul 'Ala Mawdudi, the Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan was converted into a veritable political party and the conquest of the state became its main objective. The Indian counterpart had to operate in a different social and political environment where Muslims constituted a minority (only 11% of the population at the time of partition) and therefore JIH could not afford to carry the heritage of Mawdudi's original way of thinking and vow to establish an Islamic state. For details on the difference between the political programs and strategies as well as on ideological differences between Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan and JIH, see Frederic Grare, *Political Islam in the Indian Subcontinent: The Jamaat-i-Islami*, New Delhi: Centre De Sciences Humaines & Manohar Publication, 2001.

26. For a detailed discussion on developments of militancy in some Pakistani *madrasahs* see Yoginder Sikand, "Militancy and *Madrasahs*: The Pakistani Case", *Muslim India*, Vol. 22, No. 1, January 2004, pp. 10–13.

27. Stephen Philip Cohen, "The Jihadist Threat to Pakistan", *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2003, pp. 17–18.

28. Bhim Singh, "J&K Situation: The Genesis and the Resolution", *The Hindu*, 10 July 2001.

29. The role of religion as the guiding principle in Kashmir imbroglio has also been discounted by Jonathan Fox in his recent study, where he shows that several other factors are consistently more important than religion in determining the extent of ethnic militancy. These include repression, international military support for the minority group, and the spread of conflict across borders, and all these factors are present in the case of Kashmir. However, these factors cannot be wholly insulated from the religious overtones of the conflict and no doubt religion indirectly influences ethnic conflict through above mediating factors. See Jonathan Fox, "Are Religious Minorities More Militant than Other Ethnic Minorities", *Alternatives*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2003, pp. 91–114.

30. Asghar Ali Engineer, Introduction in "Secular Crown on Fire: The Kashmir Problem", *Islamic Perspective*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1990, pp. 1–14.

31. Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 16. See also Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the unending war*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2003.

32. Engineer, *op. cit.*, "Introduction", 1990, p. 9.

33. Gautam Navlakha, "Ceasefire in Kashmir: Some Critical Issues", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 9, 3 March 2001, p. 727.

34. Yoginder Sikand, "Changing Course of Kashmiri Struggle: From National Liberation to Islamist Jihad?", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 20–26 January 2001, p. 218.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

36. For a detailed discussion of the Shah Bano case and its impact on the image of Indian Muslims, see Taberez A. Neyazi, "State, Citizenship and Religious Community", *op. cit.*, pp. 303, 318.

37. For details on "saffronization" of history text books see Mushirul Hasan, "The BJP's Intellectual Agenda: Textbooks and Imagined History", *South Asia*, Vol. 25, No. 3, December 2002, pp. 187–210. See also Romila Thapar, "In Defence of History", *Seminar*, Vol. 521, January 2003, pp. 65–72.

38. For example Theodore P. Wright believes that post-1992 Indian Muslims have invariably resorted to violence and actively participated in terrorist attacks. See Theodore P. Wright, Jr, "Does Democratic Political Participation Reduce Political Violence? The Contrary Case of the Muslim Minority in India", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Winter 2004, pp. 89–112. See also Smita Narula, "Overlooked Danger: The Security and Rights Implications of Hindu Nationalism in India", *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, Vol. 16, 2003, pp. 4–68.

39. The BJP is not the only political party complicit in large-scale episodes of communal violence in India. In 1984, following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, the then-ruling Congress (I) Party was charged with complicity in the killing of over 2000 Sikhs in Delhi. See Smita Narula, "Overlooked Danger", *op. cit.*, pp. 4–68.

40. For a detailed account see V. R. Krishna Iyer, *et. al.*, "State Complicity", in *Fascism in India: Faces, Fangs and Facts*, ed. Chaitanya Krishna, New Delhi: Manak Publications, 2003, pp. 242–278.

41. The current political and democratic assertion of hitherto underprivileged sections of the society like Dalits, other backward classes/castes and women reflect their aspiration for intra-democratization (social and educational reform) as well as inter-democratization (recognition of equal social status in the society). This awakening is partly a result of polarization unleashed by the electoral democracy and partly due to social fragmentation of the constituency. However, the social position of the Indian Muslims has been left untouched by the working of Indian democracy. The Indian Muslim community by and large remains trapped in feudalized social mores, suffers from ghetto-mentality and inferiority complex and is unable to meet the challenges of modernity. Paradoxically enough, the community desires to live in a secular and democratic polity without democratizing itself. See Anwar Alam, "Democratization of Indian Muslims: Some Reflections", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 46, 15 November 2003, pp. 4881–4885.

42. Yogendra K. Malik and Dhirendra K. Vajpeyi, "The Rise of Hindu Militancy: India's Secular Democracy at Risk", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1989, pp. 308–325.

43. It should not be construed here that poor people were better off during the Congress period. Rather Congress could portray itself as pro-poor and adopted gradual and calibrated policies of economic reforms. However, the BJP-led NDA government over the past five years aggressively followed "pro-market and neo-liberal economic policies (which) increased its acceptability among the rich and upper middle class but alienated it from the rural and urban poor as well as middle and lower middle classes". See Manini Chatterjee, "Debacle and After", *Seminar*, Vol. 539, July 2004, pp. 14–21.

44. Deendar Anjuman and Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) are the two radical Islamic groups operating outside Kashmir. But both have been subsequently banned by the Indian government. However, evidence provided for their alleged involvement in the terrorist activities is rather slim. See Yoginder Sikand, *Muslims in India since 1947*, *Islamic Perspectives on Inter-faith Relations*, London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004, pp. 151–192.

45. Kanti Bajpai, *Roots of Terrorism*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2002, p. 21.

46. I am not saying this sense of security was always intact among the Indian Muslim. There were always communal riots and in those riots Muslims were the worst sufferers. But those riots were always confined to certain pockets. But the belief of Indian Muslims in democratic means to resolve their grievances could not be depleted.

47. However, the past policies helped the radical groups in Pakistan to buttress their position *vis-à-vis* the state. This resulted in the change in the nature of the state and the subsequent government, *albeit* trying to marginalize the radical groups from the national mainstream could not be successful.

48. BJP was defeated in Rajasthan, but they retained power in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. In the rest of the states, secular parties came to power. This reflects that people in India are not easily mobilized on the basis of communal and divisive issues such as terrorism; rather they make their choice on the basis of other local factors. For a detailed analysis of elections in these six states, see *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 6, February 2009.

49. The middle class never formed a homogenous group but rather differed from time to time as well as from place to place; nevertheless they always search for independence and individual rights, for specific freedom and the protection of their possessions, for a culture of their own and respect for individual achievements. See Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, "Introduction", in *Middle Class Values in India and Western Europe*, eds Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2001.

50. Here I do not mean that migrant Islam is more prone to militancy than historical Islam. Rather I wish to make a point that there is very close cultural proximity between Indian Islam and Hinduism which has developed because of the continuous existence of both communities over a very long period of thirteen centuries.

51. Jackie Assayag, "Can Hindus and Muslims Coexist?", in *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict*, eds Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2004, p. 55.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

53. Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, London: Yale University Press, 2002.

54. Defeat of the communal forces like the BJP in the General Elections of 2004 and 2009 are the best example of the two communities coming together to give a befitting blow to sectarian forces.

55. "Ahmedabad blasts: Indian Mujahideen claims responsibility", retrieved on 27 July 2008, available online at: http://specials.rediff.com/news/2008/jul/27video.htm. See also "India on high alert after Ahmedabad blasts", retrieved on 27 July 2008, available online at: http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/India-on-high-alert-after-Ahmedabad-blasts/341109/.

56. In a controversial speech on al-Qaeda chief Osama bin-Ladin, Zakir Naik proclaimed, "If he is fighting the enemies of Islam, I am for him. If he is terrorizing America the terrorist – the biggest terrorist – I am with him". "Every Muslim should be a terrorist", Naik conlcuded. "The thing is, if he is terrorizing a terrorist, he is following Islam". Quoted in Praveen Swami, "Ahmedabad blasts: the usual suspects", *The Hindu*, 1 August 2008, retrieved on 1 August 2008, available online at: http://www.hindu.com/2008/08/01/stories/2008080155141000.htm.

57. "Declaration of All India Anti-Terrorism Conference", retrieved on 26 May 2008, available online at: http://darululoom-deoband.com/english/index.htm.

58. Harish Khare, "Indian Muslims and their Linkages", *The Hindu*, 6 June 2008, retrieved on 6 June 2008, available online at: http://www.hindu.com/2008/06/06/stories/2008060654460800.htm.

59. Gopal Krishna holds this kind of view. See Gopal Krishna, "Piety and Politics in Indian Islam", in *Muslim Communities of South Asia: Culture, Society, and Power*, ed. T. N. Madan, New Delhi: Manohar, rev. edn., 1995, pp. 392–395.