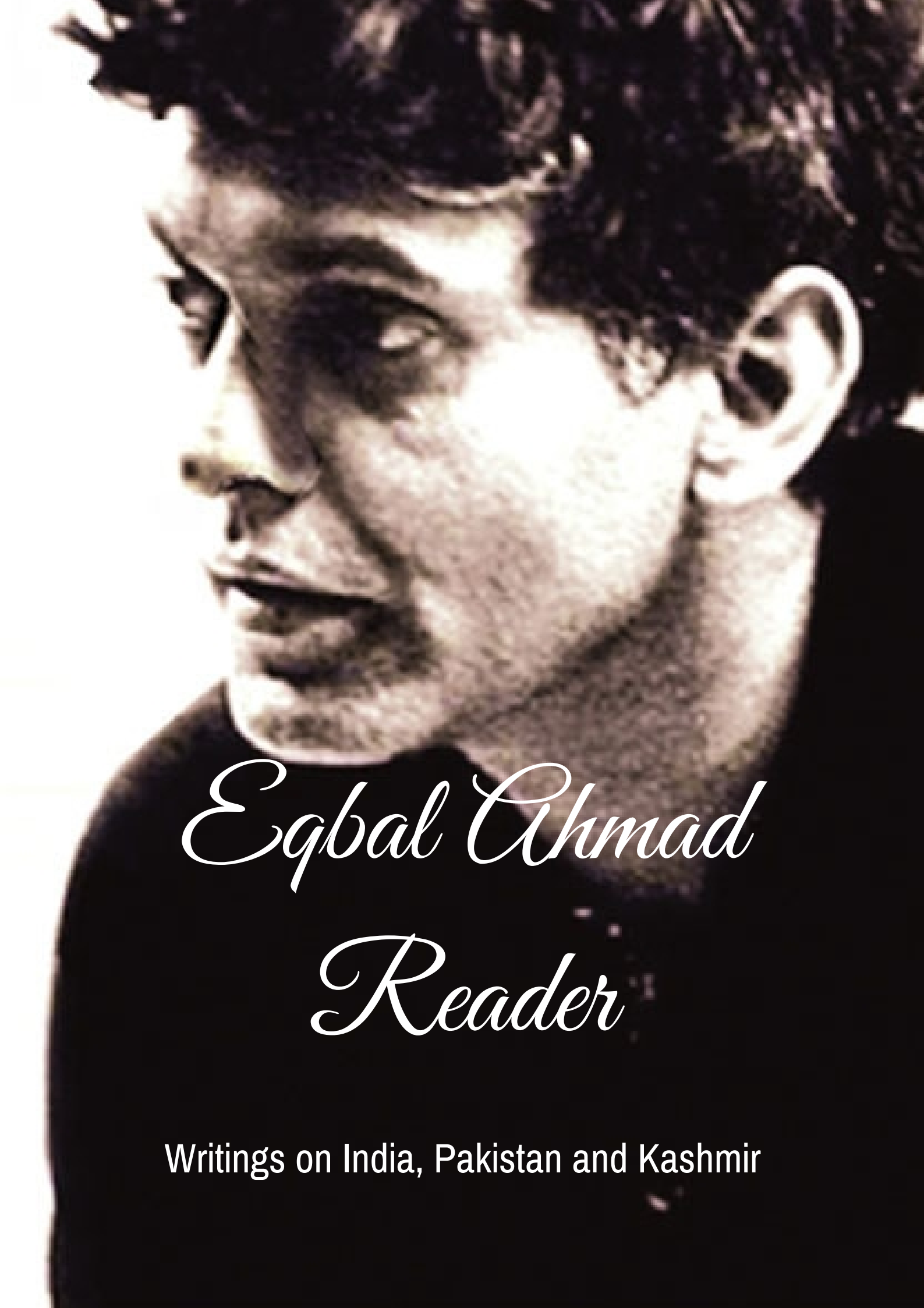

Eqbal Ahmad Reader

Writings on India, Pakistan and Kashmir

Eqbal Ahmad Reader

Writings on India, Pakistan and Kashmir

EDITED BY SARTHAK TOMAR

Texts are taken from *The Dawn*, *The Nation* ("Pakistan Portents") and "The Betrayed Promise" is adapted from an address at the launching of
Jinnah Papers, edited by Dr Z.H. Zaid ;from David Barsamian interviews.
"Kashmir and It's Challenges" appears in *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 43, No. 3

Table of Content

A Kashmiri Solution for Kashmir

"Political disenchantment aside, the alienation of the Kashmiris from India is mired in history, economics and psychology. The problem is not communal, although sectarian Hindu ideologues would like to view it in these terms" **While Pakistan and India engage in shadow boxing, Kashmir is trampled underfoot. The dispute over Kashmir can only be resolved by understanding Kashmiri aspirations.**
(excerpt)

Denial of Reality

India's failures in Kashmir have been compounding since the time Jawaharlal Nehru's liberal, newly independent government chose to rely on the hated and oppressive Maharaja Hari Singh's decision to join the Indian Union. Threatened with a military confrontation with Pakistan, Delhi took the dispute to the United Nations. It then promised to abide by the Security Council's resolution which called for a plebiscite allowing Kashmiris to decide between joining India or Pakistan. India broke that promise.

Delhi's only asset in those initial years had been Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah's cooperation. Because of his opposition to the Maharaja's unpopular regime and his advocacy of reforms of land and labour in Kashmir, the Sheikh and his party, the National Conference, had become the embodiment of Kashmiri nationalism. As Chief Minister of Kashmir, he promulgated land reforms in 1950, which further enhanced his standing with Kashmir's overwhelmingly rural and poor people. But this national hero was jailed in August 1953 after he began demanding greater autonomy. Except for two brief spells of freedom, he remained India's prisoner for 22 years, until February 1975, when the Sheikh became Chief Minister again after signing an agreement with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Mrs Gandhi was able to defang the Lion of Kashmir, who allied with the ruling Indian National Congress. The only freedom he, and his heir apparent Farooq Abdullah, exercised during his second term in office was the freedom to be outrageously self indulgent and corrupt. Kashmiris nurtured anger and a sense of humiliation over how their vaunted 'lion' had been tamed by Indian hands. Furthermore, they had been denied not only the right of self- determination, a right affirmed by the United Nations, but were now also witnessing the disintegration of their historic Kashmiri party, the Conference. This was taken as yet another assault on their identity and, as often happens in such circumstances, reinforced Kashmiri nationalism vis-a-vis India.

Political disenchantment aside, the alienation of the Kashmiris from India is mired in history, economics and psychology. The problem is not communal, although sectarian Hindu ideologues would like to view it in these terms. The latest phase of Kashmiri discontent followed significant social changes in Kashmir. The governments of Sheikh Abdullah and Ghulam Mohammed Bakhshi did free the Kashmiri from feudal controls, and helped enlarge a middle class. In increasing numbers, Kashmiri youth were educated but their social mobility remained constricted because meaningful economic growth did not accompany land reforms and expanded educational facilities. Rebellions are normally started by the hopeful not the abject poor. The roots of the popular uprising in 1989 lay in the neglect of Kashmir, and New Delhi's unconscionable manipulation of Kashmiri politics. Yet, India confronts the insurgency as incumbents normally do-with allegations of external subversion, brute force and unlawful machinations. Above all, it denies reality.

Kashmir in Partition

The reality is that New Delhi's moral isolation from the Kashmiri people is total and irreversible. It might be reversible if India were to envisage a qualitatively different relation with Kashmir, one which meaningfully satisfies Kashmiri aspirations of self- government, but so far New Delhi has evinced no inclination in this direction. But can India's loss translate into Pakistan's gain? The answer is that it cannot. Policy makers in Islamabad like to believe otherwise, and this is not unusual. It is quite common for rival countries to view their

contest as a zero sum game whereby the loss of one side translates as gain for the other. However, history shows this assumption to be false, and rival losses and gains are rarely proportional; they are determined by circumstances of history, politics and policy. India's Kashmir record offers a chronicle of failures, yet none of these have accrued to Pakistan's benefit. Rather, Pakistan's policy has suffered from its own defects. Three characteristics made an early appearance in Islamabad's Kashmir policy. Firstly, although Pakistani decision makers know the problem to be fundamentally political, since 1948 they have approached it in military terms. Secondly, while the military outlook has dominated, there has been a healthy unwillingness to go to war over Kashmir. And finally, while officially invoking Kashmiri right to self determination, Pakistan's governments and politicians have pursued policies which have all but disregarded the history, culture, and aspirations of Kashmir's people.

One consequence has been a string of grave Pakistani miscalculations regarding Kashmir. Another has been to alienate Kashmiris from Pakistan at crucial times such as 1948-49, 1965 and the 1990s. Success has eluded Pakistan's Kashmir policy, and the costs have added up. Two wars-in 1948 and 1965-have broken out over Kashmir; annual casualties have mounted during the 1990s across the UN-monitored Line of Control (LOC); the burden of defence spending has not diminished. A study of recent Kashmiri history will help put Islamabad's blunders in perspective. In 1947-48, Kashmiri Muslims were subject to contrasting pulls. The partition of India, the communal strife that accompanied it, and Kashmir's political economy, which was linked to the Punjab, disposed them towards Pakistan. However, the people's political outlook was rooted in Kashmiri nationalism which had been mobilised earlier by the National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah. Sheikh Sahib was drawn towards the men and the party with whom he had worked closely since 1935-Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad, and the Indian National Congress. (He did not meet Mohammad Ali Jinnah until 1944.) There was also a tradition of amicable relations between Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims, despite general Muslim antipathy to the Maharaja's rule.

What Kashmiris needed was time, a period of peaceful transition to resolve their ambivalence. This, they did not get. Owing to Lord Mountbatten's mindless haste, the Subcontinent was partitioned and power transferred in a dizzying sequence of events which left little time to attend to complex details in far corners. The leadership of the Muslim League, in particular, was preoccupied with the challenges of power transfer, division of assets, civil war and mass migration. The League was short on experienced leaders, and squabbling squandered their meagre skills. Quaid i Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was terminally ill.

In this climate of crisis and competition, Kashmir received scant attention. The little attention it did attract was of those who did not comprehend Kashmiri aspirations nor the ambiguities, and the extraordinary risks and temptations that lay in waiting. In a peculiar expression of distorted perspective, self serving officials like Ghulam Mohammed, a colonial bureaucrat who later wormed his way into becoming the Governor General of Pakistan, paid more attention to the undeserving and hopeless case of Hyderabad (Deccan) than to Kashmir.

When India's Home Minister Sardar Vallabhai Patel sent feelers about a possible give-and-take on Hyderabad and Kashmir, Ghulam Mohammed is said to have spurned this opportunity and carried on his lucrative dealings with Hyderabad's Nizam. Pakistan also welcomed the accession of Junagadh and Manavadar, whereas an overwhelming majority in both states (as well as Hyderabad) were Hindu. In effect, Pakistan held three divergent positions on the question of accession-in favour of the Hyderabad Nizam's right to independence, Junagadh's right to accede to Pakistan against the wish of the populace, and, in Kashmir, for the right to self determination. Double standard is a common enough practice in politics, but it invariably harms the actor who lacks the power to avert consequences. The Nawab of Junagadh tried to deliver his Hindu-majority state to Pakistan, which set the precedence for the Maharaja of Muslim-dominated Kashmir choosing India. Pakistan did not have the power to defend either the Nawab or the Nizam, nor the will to punish the Maharaja. So India, practising double standards in its turn, took it all.

Pork Barrel

India's policies have been no less riddled with blunders than Pakistan's. Its moral isolation on Kashmir is nearly total, and unlikely to be overcome by military means or political manipulation. New Delhi commands not a shred of legitimacy among Kashmiri Muslims. Ironically, even as India's standing in Kashmir appears increasingly

untenable, Kashmiris today appear farther from the goal of liberation than they were in the years 1989 to 1992.

Pakistan's engagement in Kashmir is indirect and unacknowledged. As such, it enjoys greater tactical and political flexibility than either Indian or the Kashmiri leaders. The diversity and nuances of informed opinion in Pakistan also render Islamabad more elastic than New Delhi, where the Hindutva right is powerful and breathes heavy over weak liberal shoulders. Furthermore, for a number of reasons-its popular standing in large segments of Kashmiri population, material support of militant groups, international advocacy of Kashmir's cause-Pakistan's leverage in Kashmir is greater than what most observers assume. Yet, beyond repeating tired shibboleths about "our principled stand", Islamabad lacks a functioning policy capable of exploiting its advantages.

To date, the governments of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir have spent millions of dollars to mobilise international support behind the question of Kashmir. Islamabad's jet setting, patronage soaked lobbying for a UN recommended plebiscite has elicited no significant international support during the last seven years of Kashmir insurgency. Cumulatively, Pakistan's score has been a pathetic zero, despite the hectic international itinerary of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the ever-travelling delegations headed by the Punjabi politician Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan. A few months ago, the Security Council even dropped Kashmir from its agenda, and it was only retroactive Pakistani lobbying that was able to obtain a temporary reprieve. The most that Pakistan has been able to achieve are favourable resolutions from the Organisation of Islamic Countries, an entity about as influential in world politics as an Arabian camel. Kashmir's cause therefore serves merely as one big pork barrel for Pakistani carpetbaggers and patronage seekers, religious and secular, parliamentary and private.

In sum, Pakistan continues to wage a half hearted "war of position" replete with private doubts, symbolic posturing and petty opportunism. Its support has not helped unify or energise the insurgency in Kashmir into a winning movement. The resulting stalemate appears 'stable', and unlikely to be upset in the absence of a conventional India Pakistan war. Since war is not an option, Pakistan's policy is reduced to bleeding India; and India's to bleeding the Kashmiris, and to hit out at Pakistan whenever a wound can be inflicted.

Eqbal Ahmad

E. Ahmad writes for the Al Ahram (Cairo), Al Hayat (London) and is a weekly columnist in the Dawn (Karachi). Portions of this article have appeared before in Dawn. The writer divides his time between Islamabad and Amherst, Massachusetts, where he teaches West Asian studies and international relations.

Fever: Between Past and the Future

There has existed throughout history an ironic relationship between the past and future. Those who glorify the past and seek to recreate it almost invariably fail while those who view it comprehensively and critically are able to draw on the past in meaningful and lasting ways. People who have confidence in their future approach the past with seriousness and critical reverence. They study it, try to comprehend the values, aesthetics, and style which invested an earlier civilization its greatness or caused it to decline. They preserve its remains, and enshrine relevant, enriching images and events of the past in their memories both collectively and individually.

By contrast, peoples and governments with an uncertain sense of the future manifest deeply skewed relationships to their history. They eschew lived history, shut out its lessons, shun critical inquiries into the past, neglect its remains but, at the same time, invent an imagined past -- shining and glorious, upon which are super-imposed the prejudices and hatreds of our own time. The religion-political movements of South Asia bear witness to this truth. Many Hindus and Muslims alike glorify their history -- that is what they imagine to be their history -- in ways that separate them from the other; rather, pit them against each other.

Thus for decades many Muslims viewed the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb as symbolizing the strengths and virtues of Muslim rule in India. On their part, Hindu nationalists presented the Maratha chief Sivaji as an embodiment of Hindu resistance to Muslim rule. In reality, both were tragic figures out of cinch with their own history, signalling the decline of Indian statehood, and the rise of a European empire in India. In this instance, as most recently in the Babri mosque affair, history became a casualty of communal myth making.

In the summer of 1990, 1 visited Ayodhya and Mathura while researching the campaign which militant Hindu movements -- BJP, VHP, RSS, and Bajrang Dal -- had launched to demolish the Babri Mosque and build a temple on the site which they claimed was the real birth place of Lord Rama two thousand years ago. I was particularly amazed at two features of this campaign. The Hindu revivalists had put out an enormous body of publications and l educational material on the alleged excesses of Muslim rule in India, and Hindu resistance to it. Apart from books, colorful posters portrayed in graphic detail the presumed atrocities and heroism of the Hindu-Muslim encounter in India. Narratives in prose and songs were also available by the dozens on audio cassettes. It seemed impossible to stem this tide of invented, poisonous history. To their lasting credit, the most eminent among India's historians openly and consistently debunked the revivalists' claims, in the short run they had little success. Subsequently, their impact was not inconsiderable, and the ire against them has risen in direct proportion to the decline of BJP and its ancillaries. "Inn historians kay liye Hindustan men koi asthan naheen hai", says a ranking BJP leader.

The phenomenon holds also in Pakistan. There are, however, underlying difference between it and. India. One is that during crucial periods of our history, governments have favored the distortionists and actively discouraged historical research, instruction, and inquiry. The other significant difference is that because our institutions of higher learning rapidly deteriorated and also because our insecure rulers -- Mohammed Ziaul Haq occupies the highest place in this pantheon -- needed the crutch of inverted history, in Pakistan historians did not thrive and history ceased as a subject of serious study. Hence in Pakistan the inversions of history are greater and embraces such contemporary subjects as the birth of Pakistan and the views and personality of its founding father. But few subjects have suffered greater disfiguring as Islam and Muslim history.

On a daily basis Islam and its history have been invoked In Pakistan for more than four decades. Yet, during all these years neither religion nor history have been accorded serious attention in this country either from the state or society. I know of not a single noteworthy work on these subjects to have been published in Pakistan. The curriculum of deenyat, a compulsory subject in our schools and. colleges, is almost entirely devoid of a sense of piety [taqwa] spiritualism [roohaniyat], or mysticism [tassawuf]. At best it is cast in terms of ritualistic formalism. At worst, it reduces Islam to a penal code.

As for history, any historian of Islam would shudder at what passes here for instruction in Islamic history. Three years ago, I queried an M.A. class in this subject at a major Pakistani university. None of the 25 odd students there had an inkling of the issues which defined the first major schism in Islamic history -the khawarij movement. None gave a satisfactory explanation of the Ash' arite doctrine and its place in Muslim theological development. And only one had an inkling about the Mu'tazila -- woh acchay log naheen thay. Unki fikr men dahriyat ke anaasir thay (They were not good. people, There were elements of atheism in their thought.) 'We are witnessing', I had then thought, 'the end of history in Pakistan.1 (Francis Fukuyama had not yet come out with his arcane thesis about history's end.) I was wrong of course, for this sort of ignorance, being widely cultivated in our colleges and universities, can produce a history of sorts.

The history thus produced shall bear but a remote, formalistic relationship to the past, and provide no positive links whatsoever to the future. For the past is not being viewed critically or creatively in most post-colonial societies. Take the Muslim world as a whole. For three centuries, it has been in steady decline. Yet, few Muslim intellectuals have inquired with a degree of rigour and honesty into the causes of this decline. It is only when one identifies the problem that one seeks solutions. In the 19th century, Syed Ahmed Khan inquired loudly into the causes of Muslim decline; and sought to overcome it with reformist zeal. The little that the sub-continent's Muslims accomplished in subsequent decades, they owed largely to his critical intellect. Similar efforts were made in the Ottomon empire, and among Iranian constitutionalists of the late Qajar period. The Muslim tragedy is that subsequent generations failed to build meaningfully on this reformist beginnings.

Politics are at the roots of this failure. For politics shape the intellectual environment. Isolated, illegitimate rulers no less than sectarian movements employ history and religion as ideological weapons and manipulative devices. Their appeal falls often on receptive ears. When the present is painfully replete with inequalities and frustrations, and the future holds little promise people, specially young people, turn to the past. The less they understand the past, the more they are prone to glorify, imagine, and invent it. The past then becomes the anchor of their hopes and their frustrations. The phenomenon is often, and wrongly I believe, identified as fundamentalism.

EQBAL AHMAD [Dawn, 1 April 1994]

India's Uncertain Future

He had charm, sense of humour, and gift of friendship. Rajiv Gandhi's untimely and tragic death is a great loss to his family and friends. It is not, however, a defining event in contemporary Indian history. His talents had already been tested. He had played out, unsuccessfully, in Indian politics. Had he escaped the lethal bouquet in Tamil Nadu, Gandhi would most likely have led the Indian National Congress to power. But there is no reason to believe that his second stint as Prime Minister would have been an improvement on his first.

He had been a family man more interested in aeroplanes, jazz, and the Beatles than in politics. In 1980, when his younger brother died in a plane crash, Rajiv's destiny changed. Sanjay had been Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's heir apparent, a role he had relished. The Iron Lady would not let her dynasty pass. Rajiv became the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress, the party which led the struggle for India's independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi (no relation), Rajiv's great grandfather Moti Lal, and grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister (1947-1964). In 1981, he was elected to parliament and appointed Minister for Science and Technology. In October 1948, after his mother was assassinated by two of her armed guards, Rajiv became Prime Minister and, to every one's surprise, an avid politician. The challenges facing him were enormous; so were the opportunities.

Divided by a dizzying variety of castes, languages, class and faiths, India is hard to govern in the best of times. His mother had left a dubious legacy. Under her, the Congress party, the most effective guarantor of democracy and national cohesion, was packed with sycophants, and riddled by factionalism and corruption. Use of strong-arm methods and party patronage led to what Indian scholar Rajni Kothari aptly described as "criminalisation of politics." Under strain, the party split; many older, well-reputed leaders defected. Mrs. Gandhi's bloated international ambitions for India yielded a costly and capital-intensive drive to build a military-industrial complex, wrecked her promise of gharibi hatao (remove poverty), and caused relations with neighbours to worsen. Above all, it was under Mrs. Gandhi that India's ethnically distinct outer states - Punjab, Assam, and Kashmir - began to be decisively alienated from the federation. Her decision, in June 1984, to send the army to eject dissidents from the Golden Temple, the Sikh people's holiest shrine, cost her life and India a festering wound.

India understood Rajiv's predicament. His youth, disarming manners and clean image assured his mass appeal. India's establishment, including its powerful bureaucracy, defence forces and influential capitalist class, had viewed the congress party and the Nehru family's leadership as the insurance of India's stability: it supported Rajiv. His promises to liberalise the economy, promote technological growth, ensure distributive justice, and free the Congress party from the clutches of the "feudal oligarchy" appealed widely. In the 1984 general elections, the Congress was returned with 413 of 545 parliamentary seats, a majority even his illustrious grandfather had not enjoyed. Rajiv Gandhi's opportunities appeared unlimited.

He used his advantages well at first. His economic liberalisation, though much too tentative, spurred the rate of growth. Agreements were reached with the Sikh moderates his mother had imprisoned, and dissident students ending four and six years, respectively, of strife in Punjab and Assam. An accord was also concluded with the rebels who for decades had demanded autonomy for the remote northeastern territories of Nagaland and Mizoram; and attempts were made to end friction between the Congress and the ruling National Conference in Kashmir. But soon the legacy of Mrs. Gandhi, the

venality of party bosses, the dead weight of the bureaucracy, and India's unrealistic international ambitions proved stronger than Rajiv Gandhi's instincts and intelligence.

His willingness to compromise with opponents encountered resistance from party stalwarts; his public denunciations of corruption aroused their anxieties. Senior bureaucrats, heirs to the British vice-regal tradition of centralised power in India, disliked his attempts to deregulate and liberalise the economy, and distrusted the influence of his technocrat friends and advisors. These masters of infighting and bureaucratic sabotage went to work on all that was new in Gandhi's politics.

Gradually, they pulled him back to the old ways. As he encountered criticism and opposition from people close to him - younger men like his cousin Arun Nehru, and V.P. Singh who defeated him in the next parliamentary elections - he became distrustful, quarrelsome, and increasingly dependant on the yes-men and old guard who had ruined his mother's reign. The party executive's decision to invite his Italian wife Sonia Gandhi to assume their leadership reveals the personalisation of power and bankruptcy of leaders which characterised the Indian National Congress under Indira and Rajiv Gandhi.

Rajiv Gandhi shared his mother's international ambitions for India, and continued her costly programme of military spending, and of building India's capability to produce sophisticated arms. This multi-billion dollar, capital-intensive programme contributed to widening India's poverty gap; yielded it a top heavy defence establishment, and accentuated its arrogance towards neighbours. Ironically, the defence extravaganza contributed to his worst political crisis, and parliamentary defeat. Accusation of $1.5 billion worth of weapons from the Swedish manufacturer A.B. Bofors remain unproven; but they decisively sullied Rajiv's image as Mr. Clean.

As troubles mounted at home, Rajiv took on neighbours. He intervened militarily, and unsuccessfully, to end the civil war in Sri Lanka. India's relations with Pakistan worsened as the cycle of rebellion and repression started anew in the disputed, Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He imposed a protracted and punishing economic sanction even against Nepal when the landlocked kingdom purchased arms from China. No one was really surprised when, in 1989, the Indian electorate voted the Congress out of power.

Today, India stands roughly where Gandhi had left it. The economy stagnates with increases in agricultural and industrial output (2.2%; 5.4% annually) below Indonesia and Pakistan and leaves half of its 850 million people below the poverty line (i.e. income level needed to sustain a healthy adult). India's external debt has mounted to $40 billion, making it the third largest debtor in the Third World, and its exports, as percentage of GDP, is among the lowest in Asia.

The rebellion in Punjab, India's breadbasket, continues to take a daily toll of lives. Insurgency has spread in Assam. Above all, the Indian army is engaged in a hopelessly protracted counter-insurgency war in the disputed valley of Kashmir where human rights violations have augmented to India's discredit, and from where a devastating war could start between India and Pakistan. Nearly a third of India's armed forces are deployed today against dissidents at home.

Possibly, the most fateful recent development has been the rise in the power of Hindu fundamentalist parties. They have divided the country sharply along religious lines, and created conditions of virtual civil war with their attempts to revive historic animosities, and demands for curtailing minority rights and converting Muslim mosques into Hindu temples. When the elections are finalised in June the largest of these, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is expected to occupy as much as a 20-25% of the parliamentary seats. If the secular parties remain divided, the BJP will surely exercise power out of proportion to its number. Its agenda is to rid India of its secular commitment, and

destroy Mahatma Gandhi's and Jawaharlal Nehru's finest legacy upon which rests the unity and solidarity of the Indian Union.

India's multiple crises have led some observers to predict the worst: a widened civil war and eventual disintegration. These counsels of despair are premature. Many sources of India's stability remain: continuity of culture and history; and a large, politically conscious national bourgeoisie whose interests lie in India's integrity and progress. Its weakness lies in an excess of nationalism, not in its lack of dedication to Indian unity.

India also has the oldest and most powerful capitalist class in the Third World which, like its American counterpart, has been historically allied to federal governments, and centrist politicians. Its giant bureaucracy continues to be both a source of stability and stagnation. Similarly, its military establishment, while unduly burdening its economy, would not want matters to get worse. Rather, the danger is that if the politicians continue to falter, the army would step in, as it did in Pakistan earlier.

This latest tragedy may serve as a needed jolt to India's politicians. Those in the centre of Indian politics, including former Prime Minister V.P. Singh, and the current Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar are frustrated defectors from the Congress party. Rajiv Gandhi's departure may encourage them to coalesce with their former colleagues. Consolidation of liberal, secular, and democratic forces is the only alternative India has to compromise with an eventual surrender to militarism and emergent fascism.

EQBAL AHMAD [Dawn: 26th May, 1991]

We Meet Again

Good Morning! We meet again in the South Asian Hall of Shame where emotions overcome the mind; where history surrenders to demagoguery; where barbarism embraces barbarism. We should introduce ourselves:

Namaste. Since I represent the larger country, the older civilisation, and a secular democracy, I insist on being introduced first: I am a Hindu revivalist leader. I am determined to turn four thousand years of civilisation - built by Dravidians and Aryans; Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims; Huns, Persians, and Turks, a variety of Europeans and Christians - into a single code of Kali. We do not regard history as a subject of study, or of comprehending the past. We deploy it as weapon of war. Like ironsmiths, we beat and burn history to shape it into swords and lances.

For the Muslim-loving historians - like R.S. Shanna, Suraj Dhan, D.N. Jha, and that sneaky woman Romila Thapur - who were educated in the West and write fat books in English, I have no use whatsoever. As one of my colleagues, R.K. Malkani, told a visiting Pakistani, "there is no asthan in Hindustan for such historians." To them I prefer such deep savants of India as Joseph Tieffenthaler and Konrad Elst of whom you may not have heard because of the nefarious anti-Hindu conspiracy to suppress the truth. But to tell you the truth, I don't care much about reading history. I like inventing it, and making it. History is what people believe. And I know for sure that when masses march, monuments are destroyed, and people die, history is made.

My followers are the true sons of Indian soil. Most of them are hungry, homeless, illiterate, and angry over these minor deprivations. Their anger is lethal like gunpowder, and deserves to be channelled in the right directions. I have a talent and commitment to channelling it against the dalit, Sikhs, and, above all, the Muslims. That is why rich Hindu families, including Dalmia Ji and members of the Birla family which once supported that false Mahatma called Gandhi, now support us with money.

While I am on the subject of money, let me tell you frankly that we have made a lot of money also from selling to millions of yatris posters - historical posters, mind you, which show Muslim Kings slaying pundits and rajas, and destroying Hindu temples and gods - and religious trinkets at the sites, like Ram Janam Bhoomi in Ayodhya and the Krishna Janam Bhoomi in Mathura, where we have identified centuries-old Muslim monuments as birth-places of thousands year old Hindu gods. It is a profitable business when you add the temple collection, commissions from shop owners and food hawkers, and contributions from educated Indians abroad - engineers and doctors mostly - who, being separated from Mother India, feel a special attachment to the usurped birthplaces of our ancient gods.

Why then, you might ask, have we killed the goose that laid the golden eggs; why have we demolished the Babri mosque? That concerns, Sir jee, matters of power, credibility, and opportunity. One cannot go on flogging a dead horse forever. To demonstrate power and to have credibility, one has to have victory. The Babri battle started in 1946; we the BJP, VHP, Shiv Sena and Bajrang Dal infused new life into it with the national shila pujan in 1986 and the Ram Jyoti of 1990. How long could we go on without destroying the mosque? The time was ripe. As my colleague Gulab Parihar said at the demo, there was a "eunuch government" in Delhi. As for the Islamic countries, the UN and all that hee hee hee look at Bosnia. Who was going to stop kar seva?

Also, small businesses have to be closed, dear jee, to go on to bigger ones, especially when the opportunities are enormous. We have Mathura, not far from Delhi itself. Thanks to the few great Congresswallahs, like Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Vallabhai Patel, a temple complex was already build there with Birlaji's money, next to the Idgah. Now we have built another temple, right smack in the belly of the mosque. That is our Krishna Janam Bhoomi. Yatris keep pouring. Pretty good business; also excellent political prospect.

What a shame that people have to enter the belly temple in Mathura from the back of the mosque built by the Moghul Aurangzeb. That has to be our next object of demolition. We have many more targets. Some colleagues have made a list of two thousand mosques. Then there is the Taj Mahal which, we have proof, belonged to a Hindu raja, and was expropriated by Shah Jahan to bury his wife. These Muslims! We also have powerful friends such as the Zionist colleague who published an article about the Taj Mahal in the New York Times. How can the Muslims fight both us and the Zionists? We shall get the Taj and call it Raj Mahal which is what it must have been called when Shah Jahan stole it.

Well, I was telling you about our followers. When their anger is aroused and hate of the Muslim is instilled in their hearts, they are really great. Brave; forward marching; ready to kill and be killed. Do you know, dear jee, that since we started the Pujan movement our followers have killed thousands of Muslims, and have themselves died in the hundreds - willingly, without complaining. And not one of us leaders was killed.

That takes political education, organisation. We are the best organised force in India. Look at our melas and Kar sevas! Each has been, like our historical inventions, an organisational masterpiece. We give our janta something to kill for and die for. They chant hymns in Sanskrit, hymns which bear messages of peace and love; but they do so without understanding and with hatred in their hearts. That's the power of myth and ritual which Hitler Sahib understood so well. We make them proud of our civilisation, and we make them fervently wish to wipe out at least a third of it.

Where will it stop? As I said, the official plans are top secret. My colleague Malkani Sahib (R.K. Malkani, RSS leader) told a so-called Pakistani scholar, that officially we insist now on only three mosques. But these things have a logic of their own. The truth is that about half of India's historical monuments are Muslim, stolen from Hindus or built on holy Hindu sites. They should all be reclaimed or demolished. Then, there are the Muslims themselves, India's most coddled minority, a thorn in our heart. They must be straightened up. The Sikh and dalit problems shall come later.

What are the consequences? You are asking too many questions, dear jee. I don't trust your sincerity. I am wondering if you might be circumcised. Okay, last question! My name? Name, says the Purana, suggests a state of mind. Call me Ayodhya.

Salaam Alaikum. Recent developments have diminished my role in politics. Therefore, I shall introduce myself only briefly. I live in an ironically named country which refuses, despite my best efforts, to conform fully to the highest ideals of Islam. As a result, things are not so good in my country. Petty thieves run around swinging both arms, wrists and all. Women march side by side of na mahram males demanding Western-inspired human rights, and against the Hadood ordinances which were imposed under General Zia Sahib Marhoom. Hijab is violated with impunity. Dupatta is recklessly worn, and sometimes audaciously slips down from women's head even on Pak TV.

Anti-Islam forces supported by the Indo-Jewish-American lobby are strident in any country, making the most outrageous demands of the government. Right now, they are protesting and blocking the issuance of national identity cards with religious affiliation of

owners. They say it will cost government lots of money. But what is money for if it cannot be spent on differentiating Muslim from non-Muslim in an Islamic state? They say it will lead to discrimination against minorities. But Islam protects minorities; so the word discrimination is not admissible in our context.

Our following is small, which is one reason why we do not do too well in elections unless they are organised properly by an IslamPasand dictator like Zia marhoom. But our organisation is excellent and it proves itself in times when there is crisis and public emotions are high. Our people are poor. Few are as homeless as your followers; but we have more illiterates than you do. Blood runs truly fast into their brains.

In crisis they are great; you should have seen them when the Americans attacked Makkah Sharif and they burned Americans with their embassy. You should have seen their sacrificing jazba when renegade Rushdie wrote his Satanic book. And just like you kafir leaders, we are smart. We are additionally self-sacrificing in that we let our followers attain shahadat. Ever heard of one of us Islamic leaders usurping this privilege from the common man? Wallah! there were the anti-Qadiani campaign, the Badr and Shams Jihad, the American Embassy affair, the Rushdie deaths, plus eleven years of victorious jihad in Afghanistan, and none of us attained shahadat.

Our detractors do nifag against us. Right now they are saying that we disgrace Islam in the name of Islam; that we gave Pakistan a bad name and we hurt the interests of Muslim brethren in India by arousing the people to burn temples and kill Hindus. That is a calumny and shows their ignorance of haqiqi Islam. Like Mahmud Ghaznavi marhoom, I am a but shikan, not a but farosh. Temples are to be demolished, as mosques are to be preserved, especially when badla has to be taken, and there is opportunity to mobilise masses.

Last but not least, mind you Janab, that in the moments of opportunity I am never alone, for sensitive politicians of all parties eagerly join me. What's my name? Under the circumstances, you may call me mouqa parast Somnathi.

EQBAL AHMAD [Dawn: 13th December, 1992]

BJP's Challenge to Pakistan

In an early gesture as Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee underlined the importance he attaches to India's relations with Pakistan: he turned up at the India-Pakistan hockey match, greeted the players, and watched the game just long enough - eight minutes - to see his team score a goal. That's quintessential Vajpayee. He likes to be friendly and gracious, and loves to win.

He leads a shaky coalition of 19 parties and an obese team of 42 ministers to which he anticipates additions. A cat with nineteen tails may not survive very long. If it does, it will not run efficiently. Mr. Vajpayee has been wise and bold, nevertheless, in assigning jobs. For the finance portfolio, he bypassed Murli Manohar Joshi, a ranking BJP leader and economic nationalist favoured by the RRS, for Yashwant Singh, a relative newcomer to the party and economic liberal, a clear signal of moderation to capitalists both domestic and foreign.

As Home Minister, BJP president L.K. Advani has the responsibility of keeping order which is quite a challenge for one given to disturbances of peace. The irrepressible Mr. George Fernandes leads the Defence Ministry. He is likely to make media-waves and follow the brass the best he can. The Prime Minister has kept the foreign affairs portfolio to himself, which is an indication of his interest and also of the importance he attaches to India's foreign relations.

If Vajpayee's government lasts even half its legal tenure, its domestic impact is likely to be ideological while he accords substantive attention to India's foreign relations. At a conference in Sri Lanka last week several Indian scholars, including Ashish Nandy who is among India's most original thinkers, emphasised BJP's evolution toward moderation and secularism, and also its dependence on allies whose agendas can only dilute its own. They were convincing up to a point, insofar as hard policies are concerned, BJP's government is likely at best to yield continuity rather than change. "They shall make symbolic changes, agrees Ashish Nandy.

The impact can be harmful nevertheless. Symbolic gestures and events invariably make substantive differences in the lives of nations and peoples. Often the effects of concrete events and policies are more easily reversed by antidotal policies than are symbolic influences. Symbols shape culture, outlook, attitudes and identities. Pakistanis who have lived through the hollow opportunism of Z.A. Bhutto's populist posturing and Mohammed Ziaul Haq's 'Islamisation' process will recognise the truth of this observation. The one was as serious about the people's interests as the other was about Islam. Each, in his own way, was a 'moderate', given to opportunity rather than principle. Yet, the legacies of their symbolic engagements continue to distort Pakistani political and cultural life.

As a party, the BJP runs the dual jeopardy of carrying both the populist and the sectarian germs. Unable to deliver an effective and purposeful government, it is likely to compensate for its failures with symbolic gestures towards its rhetorical promise of 'one nation and one culture.' As Rabindranath Tagore had feared seven decades ago, symbolic gesticulations of this sort can have devastating effects upon the multi-caste, multi-cultural and multi-religious country.

A sense of anxiety prevails among India's neighbours, especially in Pakistan. Their concern has been augmented by BJP leaders' statements that they might induct nuclear weapons in its military arsenal. There are ambiguities in those statements; there is no certainty as to what they actually intend. India's neighbours - none of whom wish to live in shadow of India's nuclear bomb - should nevertheless take this threat seriously and

make, as vigorously and quietly as possible, what effort they can to dissuade Delhi form so dangerous a course. There are greater risks in it for Pakistan than for other countries, as it alone has unresolved disputes with India. Moreover, Pakistan's security environment will be affected by the activation of the Prithvi and Agni missiles programmes, an inevitable consequence of inducting nuclear weapons, and it alone will have to weigh its nuclear options.

The need to build pressure on India against the induction of nuclear weapons is urgent. But if it is to be effective it ought to be quiet and systematic. Recent statements of Pakistani officials once again underline our officials' proclivity to disregard the relationship between sound and effect, and ignore the distinctions between diplomacy and propaganda, polemic and politics. To the great powers we need to convey a sense of concern and resolve which are best conveyed by quiet diplomacy and tactical silence. Bluster and threats suggest panic and pugnacity. A momentous issue is then reduced to a South Asian squabble.

Without underestimating its importance to Pakistan's security, we ought to understand also that Pakistan is not the target of BJP's quest for nuclear power. In fact BJP's leaders are among the few in India who are genuinely content over the creation of Pakistan. Authentic communalists, they are happy to be rid of no less than 250 million Muslims, now divided between Pakistan and Bangladesh. In retrospect India's partition was an RSS dream come true, and they would not want to undo it. As for India's quest for hegemony, it is well known that hegemony is not achieved by possessing the nuclear or any other bomb. BJP leaders wish to declare their nuclear weapons because they view it as a passport to the 'great power club', and they are obsessed with formally entering the club. Dangerously silly but true!

The BJP has long been committed to inducting nuclear weapons in India's arsenal, and may actually do so. There are few domestic constraints. In India, as in Pakistan, public opinion does not oppose nuclear weapons. Differences exist within the establishment only on the degree of ambiguity concerning its possession, differences which governments have easy ways of resolving. Moreover, BJP's is likely to remain a shaky coalition, hence unlikely to deliver desperately needed bread and butter to the people. Governments which do not deliver seek refuge in patriotic fervour. Hence the need to neutralise the BJP's inner compulsions with external stimuli. This is better achieved by quiet diplomacy than public warnings and confrontations.

Over the years, Mr. Vajpayee has taken interest in Pakistan. He believes that normal and stable relations with it are essential for India to become a successful player in international politics. "The great powers exploit our differences," he said to me many years ago. As India's Foreign Minister, his enthusiastic efforts to improve relations had surprised Pakistani officials. He is likely again to make vigorous gestures to improve trade and cultural exchanges.

Yet, he is not likely to negotiate Kashmir on Pakistani or even Kashmiri terms. His government cannot repeal Article 370 of the Indian Constitution even if it wants to. But it can harden its military posture in Kashmir, and escalate the ongoing covert warfare with Pakistan. Given the current composition of our establishment, Pakistan's response may be symmetrical. Indo-Pakistan relations shall become then highly susceptible to miscalculations. In Islamabad, as in Delhi, it is time to let analysis prevail over instinct.

Pakistan should weigh its alternatives in case India does weaponise. A number of questions arise; among them the following. What strategic or political benefits accrue from renouncing Pakistan's posture of ambiguity? Security being the objective, why will open - as against understood / assumed - possession of nuclear weapons enhance its security? Will the pressure of great power on Pakistan be comparable to their pressure

on India? Are we willing to bear those pressures? What kind of arms race shall become inevitable as a result of two-way weaponisation? Is Pakistan in a position to enter such an arms race against India? What, if any, are the strategic, political, and economic advantages in continuing to keep a posture of ambiguity? There is a taboo of sorts on this subject. Officials could do citizens the favour of initiating the needed discussion.

There is a crying need also to review our Kashmir policy. Ground realities have changed in the valley. I have argued this case repeatedly and at length in this space. Quotations from General Sunderjee and citations of Indian human rights violations cannot change those realities. If the national interest is to be served, they ought to be confronted. But nothing is more central right now to Pakistan's security than peace in Afghanistan and improvement in relations with Iran. They are neighbours with long borders with Pakistan and share with us the affinities of culture, history and faith. Since Pakistan's founding, Iran had been a loyal friend and a source of security because our interests were complementary. Harmony is our geopolitical imperative. In recent years, our policy or the perception of policy, particularly as it concerns Afghanistan, has soured relations between us. It must be restored to its natural, collaborative state. There is no place more central to starting this process than Afghanistan.

Not long ago our officials used to claim kudos for bleeding the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The Soviets departed. The Americans left also having cashed in their investments. A decade later, Afghanistan's Mujahideen are continuing to make mince meat of the country and its hapless people. Our officials deny responsibility with impressive ingenuity and zero effect.

Two facts about this ugly civil war are incontrovertible: Pakistan is the dominant power in relation to Afghanistan, the strongest, most retrograde, and anti-Shi'a warring faction enjoys its support. Iran, along with Uzbekistan and Russia, is aiding the Taliban's fractious opponents. Thus external factors have become organically linked to Afghanistan's warrior culture, and its economy of drugs, guns, and smuggling. If peace is a goal, those links must be broken. There is no point in apportioning guilt. The problem and opportunities can be identified.

Afghanistan has lost its centre. The people that were known in traditional Muslim societies as ahl al-hall wal aqd have vanished from it. There are no peacemakers left in Afghanistan. That possibility lies outside of it. That responsibility rests with Pakistan and Iran, with the United Nations serving as a facilitator. Only when a peace process starts in earnest can one persuade the United States, European powers, and Japan to provide the incentives of a meaningful aid package for Afghanistan's reconstruction. Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, a highly respected Algerian diplomat, arrives in Islamabad today seeking peace for Afghanistan in the United Nations' behalf. The time to begin the high game of peace is now. May one hope that Prime Minister Vajpayee will have the pleasure of watching Pakistan score this time?

EQBAL AHMAD [Dawn: 22nd March, 1998]

When Mountains Die

I SAW on television a picture more awesome than the familiar mushroom cloud of nuclear explosion. The mountain had turned white. I wondered how much pain had been felt by nature, God's most wondrous creation. The great mountain in Chagai will turn in time to solid ash! And we, who are so proud of our mountains?

India's mindless right-wing leaders who started it all and then proceeded to goad Pakistan into baring its nuclear capabilities may never acknowledge that they have committed a crime against India and its neighbours, and that not one good - strategic or tactical, political or economic - can accrue from their blunder. An Indian scientist, Dr. Vinod Mubayi, rightly says that the RSS has now Killed Gandhi twice: his body in 1948, and his legacy 50 years later.

India shall suffer for some time to come from the effects of these killings. It had enjoyed what the French call a prejuge favourable in world opinion, a mystique of being uniquely ancient and pluralistic, a land of Hindus and Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Zoroastrians, the spiritual home of Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu, Father Daniel Berrigan, and Martin Luther King. In a single blow, the BJP government has destroyed India's greatest asset. And more:

After decades of bitter squabble, India's relations with China, the world's most populous country and a fast growing economic giant, had been improving for the last six years. The Sino-India amity had reached a level significant enough for Chinese leaders to counsel Pakistan, their old ally, to resolve its disputes with India. In a conversation with e a few weeks ago, former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral cited Sino. Indian cordiality as a model for Indo-Pakistan relations. A high-level Chinese military delegation was in India when Prime Minister Atal Behari Wajpayee proudly announced his first three nuclear tests. These had preceded and followed anti-China rhetoric. India's greatest single foreign policy achievement of the last two decades was thus buried away like nuclear waste.

For nearly four decades, India's rate of growth had remained low at around four per cent per annum. Economists the world over dubbed this mysterious consistency as the 'Hindu rate of growth'. Then a decade ago, the curve began to move upward reaching a whopping 7.5% last year. Hope had never prevailed so widely in India since independence, and international capital had begun to view it as a grand investment prospect. Economists expected that in the next decade India will maintain a 7% rate of growth, just about wiping out the abject poverty that so assails its people. This expectation too has been interred in the Pokhran wasteland. International economists now estimate that in the financial year that ended on March 31, India's growth would show a decline from the projected 7.5% to 5%; these estimates are based not on the effects of sanctions but on the adverse turn in the investment climate.

Excepting a few interregnums, such as the short-lived government of I.K. Gujral, India's governments have not been very sensitive toward their neighbours. At regional and international conferences, a participant is often astonished at the antipathy delegates from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives and Bangladesh express towards India's policies. But I believe nothing had shocked and angered its 3+2nuclear tests, thus starting a spiral of nuclear arms race and open the way to potential holocaust in South Asia. They have a right to anxiety and anger as nature has so willed that they are no more safe than Indians and Pakistanis are from the nuclear fallout.

It is commonplace in Pakistan to hear that India seeks regional hegemony. A reminder is necessary perhaps that hegemony requires a recognition of superiority by consent more than coercion. Delhi's latest actions deny rather than affirm the premise of hegemony. Pakistan does not have hegemonic ambition, yet I hope that Mr. Nawaz Sharif's government had been gracious enough to at least inform our neighbours before the tests in Balochistan.

Each historical time has had its own temper. But one factor has been common throughout history to the attainment of progress and greatness. Historians of culture describe this one factor variously as syncretism, openness, pluralism, and a spirit of tolerance. Where ideas do not clash, diverse influences, knowledge, viewpoints, and cultures do not converge, civilization does not thrive and greatness eludes. The rightist environment of religious chauvinism and intolerance which the BJP and its allies promote in India - it pervades Pakistan for other reasons - is deeply harmful to India's future. Nuclearization of nationalism has further degraded this environment. The tests have worsened the xenophobia of Hindutva supporters. Reaction no less than a habit of emulation among fundamentalist adversaries, will undoubtedly reinforce right-wing sentiments and excesses in Pakistan. In recent weeks BJP supporters stormed a meeting of anti-nuclear scientists, attacked artist M.F. Hussain's home and destroyed his paintings, in retaliation of US sanctions, assaulted trucks carrying Pepsi and CocaCola, disrupted a concert by Pakistani musician Us tad Ghulam Ali. "The atmosphere of intolerance has been gaining ground recently", says an editorial in the Hindustan Times. "Such actions will break up the very fabric of this country" warms Ambika Sen, a leader of the Indian National Congress. In Pakistan, government-owned television darkly and repeatedly suggested that opponents of a nuclear test were foreign agents.

India's leaders have long viewed nuclear weapons as a currency of power. They will soon realize that this is a counterfeit. I had pointed out earlier (Dawn, May 17. 1998) that Hiroshima and Nagasaki had shown the nuclear to be non-usable weapon morally. Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam proved it to be unusable politically and militarily. By the mid-1960s, nuclear weapons had ceased to be a significant component of power. The rise of such non-nuclear giants as Germany and Japan and the collapse of the Soviet Union, a nuclear superpower, rendered the possession of nuclear weapons quite incidental to the equation of power in world politics. No advocate of nuclear tests has refuted me either in Pakistan or abroad. Then what in heaven's name were India's rulers seeking by detonating five nuclear devices? And why do we insist that Pakistan had no option but to follow India into the dumb pit?

I am many others, had argued that Pakistan's best option was to let ambiguity served for a decade. There is no way to prove now whether we were right or wrong. The deed is done. A mountain is dead. But history demands that it be noted now that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's initially good instincts were overwhelmed by forces in and out of Pakistan. Our knowledge of the factors that led to Pakistan's decision to carry out the tests is not complete, but enough is known to identify the main factors: the most important was the provocation of BJP leaders.

There were too many to recount here. These included a warning by L.K. Advani, India's interior minister, that Pakistan should note a change in South Asia's strategic environment; Prime Minister Vajpayee's statement that his government might forcibly take Kashmiri territory under Pakistan's control; the handing over of Kashmir affairs portfolio to the hardline home minister who had so enthusiastically overseen the destruction of Babri Mosque; and actually heating up of a limited but live conflict along the Line of Control. Pakistan's chief of army staff returned fro the front line with an assessment that we may in fact be witnessing the slow beginning of a conventional war. To may knowledge, Delhi did little to reassure Islamabad. These developments greatly

reinforced among Pakistani officials a sense of foreboding. This was accentuated by what a decade of embargo under the Pressler Amedment had done the weapons sustainability of Pakistan's armed forces. During the decade of Mohammed Ziaul Haq, our defence forces reverted to heavy reliance on US arms. In the last decade these have suffered not merely fro obsolescence but also from a paucity of reliable spare parts. Pakistan could find itself unable to sustain a war with India without soon running into serious supply problems. In a military environment such as this, army leaders are likely to put a high premium on an assured deterrent capability. This much is known to interested military analysts the world over.

It is astounding that under these circumstances, and after testing their nuclear device, India's leaders would engage in provocations, verbal and military. Officials and legislators in Washington might also note that their anti-nuclear sanctions actually compelled a speedier development and testing of nuclear arms.

In an environment so fraught, the government needed political support. Instead, Pakistan's opposition leaders - all except Ghinwa Bhutto, Air Marshal Asghar Khan, and Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari - were in the streets taunting Mr. Sharif to 'explode' a nuclear bomb. The pack was led first by Jamaat-i-Islami leaders who were soon overtaken by Benazir Bhutto. She seems to have sensed in this national crisis an opportunity to restore her flagging fortunes. I know of few gestures in the ugly repertoire of Pakistani politics as revolting as her demagogic toss of bracelets at Mr. Nawaz Sharif. The G-8 responded mildly and in a divided fashion to India's tests, signaling a soft response to the menace at hand and enhancing the Pakistani sense of isolation and risk. Finally, like the Indian tests, Pakistan's response was a tribute to he hegemony of the nuclear culture and notions of deterrence so assiduously promoted by the West during he cold war.

The leaders of India and Pakistan have now appropriated to themselves, as others had done before, the power that was God's alone - to kill mountains, make the earth quake, bring the sea to boil, and destroy humanity. I hope that when the muscle-flexing and cheering is over they will to on a retreat, and reflect on how they should bear this awesome responsibility.

EQBAL AHMAD [Dawn: 4th June, 1998]

Nuclear Gains and Losses

PAKISTAN'S nuclear tests are having an impact on the domestic environment more profound than on its defence or foreign relations. The phenomenon was to be expected but its scope is greater than one could have imagined. It is too early to examine the import of Prime Minister's June 11 blockbuster. It has been unloaded upon the country only in the outline.

Moreover, there is as yet no indication as to how the government proposes to bridge the ever widening national chasm between intent and implementation. Necessarily then, this is a tentative assessment of our gains and losses since the nuclear tests.

Rhetorical flourishes and emotional highs notwithstanding, the change in Pakistan's security environment is no substantive. While the shape of what some politicians and analysts grandiosely call the strategic balance between India and Pakistan has changed, the reality remains largely unchanged. There was for nearly a decade an implicit threat that conventional war could result in the use of nuclear weapons, in particular by the party lacking comparable conventional capability. This threat is now explicit. It is debatable whether Pakistan's security interests were best served by maintaining that ambiguity or by following India in the open. I still believe that, notwithstanding Delhi's provocative muscle flexing, Pakistan's security interests have not been served by matching India show-for-show-plus-one. There is no way now to prove or disprove that proposition. The older verities remain:

One is that there exists a balance of mutual destruction which renders irrational, therefore unlikely, the pursuit by either adversary of a decisive conventional war. This fact can redefine the parameters of conflict between them in the following ways: (i) Both sides may decide that the new risks are much too great to continue with old resolve them. (ii) They may continue the conflict at a low level of intensity by proxy warfare, and by bleeding each other by violent and not-so-violent sabotage operations. (iii) Tensions resulting from (ii) may result in the threat or actuality of conventional warfare of limited scope and/or duration. The Indian troops mobilization and Pakistani riposte in 1987 and 1990 are example of threats which did not materialize. (iv) All three options require a sophisticated system of management of the nuclear arsenal in each country, until such time as the parties agree to mutual disarmament.

In case of India and Pakistan, there has also existed a certain concentration of international monitoring of whether or not the two adversaries are reaching a level of confrontation that risks becoming nuclear. It was this phenomenon that produced the United States' forceful diplomatic intervention in summer 1990.

This paradigm has not significantly changed since India and Pakistan conducted multiple nuclear tests. The conflict remains, and neither side has shifted from of positions to make possible a meaningful peace process. The struggle in Kashmir continues with Pakistan's help, and so does India's harsh military effort to suppress it. Since the nuclear tests India has beefed up its military presence there. Covert warfare continues. Since the eleven nuclear tests, Pakistan has blamed India for two bloody acts of sabotage - a bomb explosion in a cinema hall and the blowing up of a railway train. There is no evidence to suggest that the covert warfare between the two countries will not any more bring them close occasionally. To conventional confrontations such as the ones that occurred in 1987 and 1990. There is evidence, however, that the great powers are more cognizant than before of the risks in the simmering Indo-Pakistan conflict.

Pakistani officials and several commentators have been emphasizing this to be a major

gain from the tests. They say that the question of Kashmir has now been placed on the from burner of international politics this is true. But we need inquire into the political value - political, economic or military - of this achievement.

Obviously, the recognition by the United States, the P-5, the G-8, and the UN Secretary General that Kashmir is a core issue that ought to be addressed has not led them to soften their sanctions against Pakistan which welcome their interest, or harden it against India which spurns it.

In contrast to India, Pakistan has exhibited a sophisticated diplomatic posture in recent weeks. The Foreign Office's submissions to the big power's meeting in Geneva and to the Security Council were excellent drafts, carefully worded and admirably nuanced. Similarly, Islamabad's unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing is a wise, no-cost gesture liable to favourably impress international opinion. Yet, these commendable actions are unlikely to affect a meaningful change in great power behaviour. The reason is that no significant shift has occurred in the South Asian equation of power, and in the relative importance of India and Pakistan in the world economy and politics.

When a nuclear balance of terror - in the Pakistan-Indian context this ought to be distinguished from such concepts as 'strategic parity' and 'military balance' - exists between two adversaries, the focus of conflict remains on the conventional capabilities of each. It is for this reason that during the cold war the United States and USSR maintained huge conventional forces and deployed them in each other's proximity in Western and Eastern Europe. This rule applies more strongly in the unique situation of India and Pakistan, as never before had two enemies so close and environmentally integrated possessed nuclear arms.

The tests have not improved Pakistan's conventional capability, actually or potentially. To the contrary, in this respect at least the sanctions are likely to hurt Pakistan much more than India which has a much larger, broad and diversified industrial base. It is a significant indicator that in its recent budget India increased its formal defence spending by 14% while the informal increase - i.e., if one counts allocations to its R&W and military-industrial complex - amounts to a estimated 33%. Pakistan, by contrast has increased defence spending by 8% which barely meets the inflationary costs. It is most likely that in the coming years, the military disparity between the two countries will continue to grow.

The one aspect in which a substantive change may have occurred in Pakistan's favour is its standing in the Middle East. The region's governments and people are living under the frightening shadow of Israel's nuclear arms. Israel is not, by any definition of the word, a peaceful power. It is still committed to an expansionist agenda of achieving Eretz Israel. It is still colonizing what remains of Palestinian land in the native Arab's possession. A significant portion of its political society still aims at destroying the holy Muslim sites of Jerusalem. It still occupies, in violation of the United Nations Charter, the territories of three sovereign Arab countries. It is still diverting and draining the water so essential to the survival of millions of Arab people.

And yet, it still enjoys the wholehearted support and protection of the United States. It is only natural that the beleaguered Arabs should welcome the emergence of a potential nuclear balance in their vicinity. Yet the truth is that Pakistan is not in position to benefit significantly from this favourable Middle Eastern disposition. Pakistan's ruling establishment knows that at the slightest hint of it he wrath of the United States shall fall on us; only then shall we experience real sanction. It is a risk that con not be taken, and our officials have been vowing not to take it. So this too is an unrealizable gain.

Beyond the change in atmospherics, which rarely endure, Pakistan's passage from

having been an explicit nuclear weapons country has not substantially changed its strategic position. By contrast, the fallout has so far been considerable at home. A state of emergency was imposed almost simultaneously with the announcement of the tests in Chagai. The fundamental rights granted by the Constitution are suspended. The President, reads the proclamation which was later approved by the parliament was pleased t declare that the right to move to any court, including a High Court and the Supreme Court, for the enforcement of all the fundamental rights conferred by chapter 1 of part 2 of the Constitution shall remain suspended for period during which the said proclamation is in force.

Nothing, except the goodwill of executive authority, stands between the citizens' manifold rights and their violation. It is an extreme, draconian measure which democracies rarely if ever employ in the exceptional circumstances of total war or complete anarchy. Ironically the state of emergency was imposed in Pakistan just when the highest authorities in the land were claiming that Pakistan had achieved strategic balance with its adversary, and national security was firmly assured. Are we to assume then that citizens' rights shall deteriorate in this country in inverse proportion to officially proclaimed improvements in its security environment and national power?

The foreign currency accounts held by citizens ad expatriates were seized and converted into local currency, arbitrarily and in violation of pledges made by the Prime Minister himself. It is true that these accounts had to be frozen in order to prevent a panic flight of capital and hard currency. But what justifications is there for converting them into rupees, hurting large numbers of middle class citizens, expatriates and investors, and ruining above all the credibility of the state. Unless the government rectifies this injustice soon, the consequences of this amoral opportunism will be felt by the state and society for a long time.

On June 11 the Prime Minister addressed the nation, and was promptly entitled a revolutionary. I shall not now comment on his extraordinary speech. Yet, four simple reminders are in order. One is that to date revolutions from above have failed, every where and at all times. Two, what succeeds from above are reforms, provided they are seriously conceived and methodically enforced. Three, enforcement of reforms requires a streamlined, clean, efficient, cooperative, and rule-based administrative machinery. That is in shambles here - obese, corrupt, insecure, and sullen. Four, there is a cardinal rule of reform, revolution, warfare and all such struggles: do not fight on too many fronts simultaneously; make not too many enemies at the same time. Will someone close to him examine eh Prime Minister's otherwise commendable agenda in the light of these principles, shut up the yes-men around him, and tell the truth? That one person will do Mr. Nawaz Sharif ad Pakistan a very great favour indeed!

EQBAL AHMAD [Dawn: 14th June, 1998]

The Signals Soldiers Pick

When and why do soldiers stage coups d'etat? Ironically in Pakistan, which has been the scene of multiple attempts at both successful and bungled attempts at coups, this complex question has not been fully addressed. It is impossible to answer it in a newspaper column. So what follows are a few observations:

Military intervention in politics definitively ends only when the civilian polity has tamed the warrior class. That happens when the legitimacy of the civilian system of power is established over a period of time; when the principles of governance as embedded in the constitution, laws, and conventions of contemporary statehood are observed by governments and politicians; and when the civilian system of power is regarded by citizens normatively as just, appropriate, and authoritative.

It is precisely this process that has not taken its due course in Pakistan. We have been lacking both the political framework and leaders capable of investing the civilian system of government with authority, and taming the warrior class. Our first decade after independence witnessed the early death of the founding father, disintegration of the founding party (the Muslim League), disputes and confusion over the constitutional framework, squabbling among politicians, isolation of the majority province (East Bengal), and the alignment of West Pakistan's landed elite with the military-bureaucratic oligarchy.

Ayub Khan's coup was a product of this distorted environment. Hence, despite his initially moderate and modern instincts, his regime did not institute the reforms which this country had so badly needed. The relationship of land, labour and capital remained what it was in the colonial times. The state continued to function without meaningful links or accountability to civil society. Typically, the oligarchy intervened in 1953, 1954, 1958, and 1977 to offset an actual or imminent affirmation of popular power. Each time, Pakistan's feudal elite applauded and collaborated with military rule. This state of affairs contributed decisively to the alienation of East Pakistan.

A new beginning was possible after East Pakistan's separation. The army's role in politics was discredited. Under Z.A. Bhutto, a popular and avowedly reformist leader, the country reached a rapid consensus on the 1973 Constitution. The army yearned for and was provided rescue and rehabilitation under civilian rule. But then Mr. Bhutto proceeded to systematically squander his assets, turning the parliamentary into an autocratic government, enfeebling the constitution with harmful amendments, rendering the bureaucracy vulnerable to political and personal manipulation, hounding and alienating his parliamentary opposition, weakening the judiciary, making a mockery of rule of law, and using the army to suppress the resulting discontent. Tragically, he was executed by his creature, a disloyal putschist who inflicted lasting damages on this country. These included another 'constitutional amendment' which infected also sections of the officers corps.

Only once before, during 1972-73, since its founding had the promise of Pakistan appeared greater than it did in 1988. Before the restoration of civilian government there had been a sustained period of resistance to military rule led bravely by Begum Nusrat and Miss Benazir Bhutto. A significant number of citizens had demonstrated their commitment to democracy by taking risks, bearing harsh punishments and prison terms to resist military rule. When parliamentary government was finally restored its legitimacy appeared finally secured. Hope had returned to this land, and it was linked to the promise of constitutional rule and reformist policies under a leadership which had paid its dues in a struggle for democracy.

The powers of Ms. Bhutto's first government were limited under a diarchic arrangement; and her tenure was cut short by a dubious presidential intervention. Hence, the public deemed her failings as forgivable. In 1993, she returned to office with enhanced powers, her term secured by the election of a party member as president. Yet, at mid-term her government drifts as the country drowns in violence and corruption, and sinks deep in economic crisis. Rule of law has receded further as such extreme violations as torture and murders in government custody continue to take place without attracting judicial action. The window of hope is being shut on us again, and simple folks in villages and towns are starting to talk of authoritarian alternatives. What should worry us is that the men who were apprehended last month had merely picked up the signal which soldiers do when civilians fail.

Sense of failure in war or protracted frustration in achieving a strategic objective often induces military officers to blame the political system and leadership. Occasionally, resentment transforms into revolt. The officers who staged coups d'etat in Egypt and Iraq in the 1950s had deeply resented Arab defeat in the 1948 war with Israel and blamed the corruption and mismanagement of their civilian governments for the loss of Palestine. The French generals who revolted in 1960 were frustrated by their inability to defeat the FLN in Algeria, deemed the government responsible for their failure, and envisioned a perfect conduct of war under their own government. The colonels who overthrew the government of Salazar in Portugal were similarly frustrated by their inconclusive engagement in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissao. But they had wanted to make peace, not more war, and did negotiate their way out of those colonies.

The first officers' conspiracy in the Pakistan army, discovered in 1951, was caused by their frustrations in the 1948 Kashmir war. Humiliation in East Pakistan is said to have inspired the conspirators of Attock. And Kashmir is reported again to have contributed to this latest unrest. The prognosis for Kashmir - caught between Indian brutalities and Pakistani blunders - remains grim.

An environment of ideological confusion is hospitable to putschist tendencies. The characteristics of such an environment are fluidity of values, confusion over institutional norms, and opportunistic styles of politics. The mix can induce ideological zealotry no less than political adventurism. Pakistan has been a textbook example of an ambivalent ideological environment. We have yet to resolve, in theory and practice, such fundamental questions as the relationship between state and religion, authority and accountability is the executive and the judiciary. The resulting instability greatly augmented by the behaviour in power of civilian leaders no less than military usurpers. Thus, successive governments have tampered with the judiciary; by executive fiat changed rules and violated the conventions of the civil services, and manipulated promotions and transfers in the bureaucracy and the army. Cynicism and contempt of civilian order is also promoted when power is exercised not merely opportunistically but also without regard to rules, the national interest, and outside a moral framework. Similarly, a chief executive who publicly opposes sectarian politics and enters into partnership with sectarian groups does long-term harm to country and government.

Several politicians have remarked in recent weeks that a military putsch is a thing of the past. Invariably they have mentioned an 'unfavourable international environment', meaning primarily American disapproval, as the decisive inhibition against coups d'etate. This line of thinking reflects the deep sense of dependency which invests the United States with an omnipresent interest in shaping Pakistan's future and an omnipotent ability to do so. America is a great power. Where its interests so require Washington is still friendly with dictators; Suharto and Mubarak are but two prominent examples. Moreover, in the past internal conditions, not foreign preferences, were the decisive stimulant to warrior ambitions in Pakistan. Worst yet, our politicians have had an uncanny ability to reproduce those conditions.

I do not wish to be misunderstood as arguing the imminence of another military adventure in Pakistani politics. On the contrary, an overwhelming majority of military officers are wary of getting into power again. They recognise that military governments have failed at least as badly as civilian ones, and that the exercise of power damaged the army more than it benefited the country. Many of them know also that professionalism and politics do not mix and armies in power almost always lose wars. On the few occasions that I have met military officers, a certain yearning has been noticeable for civilian leaders of integrity and stature, men and women a good soldier can salute with pride and honour. Only when these latter appear on the national scene shall the menace to men in uniform riding into power become a nightmare long past.

EQBAL AHMAD [Dawn: 12th November, 1995]

Pakistan Portents (Editorial)

Brief Summary: The Pakistan People's Party, under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, won a plurality in the Oct 1993 elections. Bhutto will now attempt to form a coalition government. Pakistan is finding that fundamentalist party powers decrease as democracy increases.

Benazir Bhutto, whose Pakistan People's Party (P.P.P.) won a plurality but nor a majority in parliamentary elections here last week, will return as the country's Prime Minister if her efforts to patch together a coalition succeed. But the vote was notable mostly for what it said about the losers, and for the lessons it suggests to other Muslin countries and to policy-makers in the United States.

Any People's Party government is bound to be shaky. The party's dominance in the National Assembly and possibly in Punjab, the most populous state and home to Pakistan's politically powerful army, depends on a coalition with Islamic and conservative groups--allies given to changing sides for petty personal gains. Even in Sindh, Bhutto's home province, where the party has a clear majority, danger looms. During Bhutto's first stint as Prime Minister, strife there contributed greatly to the dissolution of her government in 1990, and old rivalries remain. The Sindhi scene is further complicated by two other Bhuttos: Cousin Mumtaz and brother Murtaza--the latter running in absentia from exile in Syria--entered the fray in opposition to their female kin, and both were elected to the Sindh assembly. In a feudal environment such as exists in the Bhutto provincial stronghold, it would be a mistake to understimate their potential for mischief-making. (It is believed that Murtaza, who is wanted for terrorist assaults, was allowed on the ballot in order to give the bureaucratic-military establishment additional leverage over Benazir.)

Intrigue aside, there is anxiety that the politics of squabbling and horse trading, which has marked Pakistan's return to parliamentary democracy since 1988, will continue. If instability increases, the consolidation of democratic order will become difficult, perhaps impossible. Yet most observers agree that this was an important election; and for the trends it revealed, perhaps historic.

First, a two-party system is emerging. Never before, from its founding in 1967, has the P.P.P. been outpolled in a fair vote by the Muslim League, a secular party that's been either moribund or severely compromised since the 1950s.

Second, contrary to expectation, the P.P.P. lost decisively in urban areas, where the population is increasingly rapidly; and for the first time the working class, middle class and significant numbers in the intelligensia switched to the rival party. Large landowners, who shape voting patterns in rural areas, made the difference for Bhutto, whose nominations to the party's tickets have always favored them. In this election the People's Party began to look like the landlord's party, as several prominent families traditionally behind the Muslim League shifted allegiance. This assured the P.P.P. success in rural areas, but the cost of victory may be high. The Party's populist reputation is dented; a reversal of images has occurred. The conservative Muslim League, long an elite-sponsored grouping of fractious landowners. has

taken on a relatively urban, middle-class and modern look, while the P.P.P. appears wedded to the old feudal order. Bhutto's electoral alliance with a religious party has added to this impression.

In many respects, in fact, Nawaz Sharif, the Muslim League's leader, is the real winner in this election. Once a creature of Gen. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq and the intelligence service, and an opportunistic ally of Pakistan's fundamentalists, he has remade himself as a neoliberal reformist and revived the party of Pakistan's founding fathers. Above all, he has inadvertently exposed the religious parties to be like drums: loud and hollow.

Which suggests the third, and most far-reaching, trend. In a close P.P.P.-Muslim League contest, Jamaat-e-Islami, vanguard of theocratic statehood and lead party in the Pakistani Islamic Front, had expected to emerge as kingmaker. Instead, it is totally marginalized; in its first real test of electoral strength the Islamic Front was routed, polling no more than 3 percent of the vote. Religious parties outside the front fared even worse, unless they piggybacked on the P.P.P.; but these face other embrassments, as they will have to trim their ideology to survive in coalition with a woman.

Such results indicate that, among Muslims at least, the fundamentalist alternative loses appeal in a democratic environment. In places like Pakistan under Zia and Sudan under Gen. Mohammed Jaafar el-Nimeiry, the Islamic parties gained from alliance with pro-American dictatorships. In other places--Iran, Egypy, Algeria, Afghanistan--they found legitimacy as adversaties of pro-Western or pro-Soviet dictatorships. Yet in Bangladesh, Yemen, Morocco and now Pakistan the power of fundamentalist parties recedes as democratic freedoms are partially or fully restored.

For all its talk of the Islamic threat, America cannot find satisfaction in this development. Democracy entails some exercise of popular power. Public opinion in postcolonial societies, meanwhile, does not encourage clientelism. That is the trade-off--a bad one for great powers that need clients. This is the fifth year of the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Pakistan, and the second since the United States cut off aid to this country. To most Pakistanis, these two facts are not coincidental.

EQBAL AHMAD [The Nation: November 1st, 1993]

Islam as Refuge from Failure

HIS picture in the New York Times, August 29, shows Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif surrounded by admiring political colleagues of the religious right. Shaking hands with a bearded Maulana he too appears pleased and triumphant. Neither the admiration nor the feeling of triumph is likely to last. In our time, dragging Islam into politics invariably produces internal dissension and civil strife, risks to which Pakistan is more vulnerable than most countries.

The occasion for the celebratory scene is the proposed amendment to the Constitution. It is likely to push Pakistan toward the totalitarianism and the darkness of a narrowly imagined past. Whatever happens to Mr. Sharif, his yes men and cheerleaders, the country and its people may not return from it in a single piece. Throughout Muslim history the infusion of religion into politics has been a mark of weakness and decline. For his many Islamic measures and his war on Sikh and Hindu chiefs, Aurangzeb (1618-1707) has been a revered figure in the Islamist circles of South Asia. In addition to ignoring his excesses, his killing of brothers and imprisonment of father, they disregard a central fact of Aurangzeb's long reign: he inherited a strong state and left behind a tottering one. This enormous failure was attributable largely to his theocratic disposition.

The admiration for Aurangzeb is a symptom of a deep ailment. It suggests a widespread psychological disposition to throw religion into politics as a reinforcement mechanism. Hence, in Pakistan Islam has been a refuge of troubled and weak leaders. As the country has suffered - increasingly over five decades - from a crisis of leadership, the promise of an "Islamic state" has recurred as the core symbol of failure.

Mohammed Ali Jinnah was perhaps the only secure leader in Pakistan. However much his former detractors and new-found followers attempt to distort his views on the issue, Jinnah was a modern Muslim, with a secular outlook, contemporary life-style, and a modernist view of Islam's relationship to power and politics. He believed those Islamic values of justice, equality, and tolerance ought to shape power and politics without the formalistic imposition of structures and strictures of centuries past. His August 11, 1947, speech to the Constituent Assembly should be seen for what it was - his last testament to his vision for Pakistan. We are witnessing yet again the betrayal of this notion of statehood, and to avoid becoming accomplices, we must say No to Mr. Sharif's amendment forcefully and collectively.

Jinnah's successors were less sure of their political roots in the new state. They were also competing with each other. Yet they were saddled with the task of defining the constitutional dispensation of this diverse and divided nation state that lacked most attributes of nationhood. The Objectives Resolution was a product of their ambivalence, an attempt to apply the cement of Islam to secular purposes. To them 'amr bil ma'ruf wa nahi anil munkar' was a call to good government, not a prescription for re-inventing the past.

Thus, they deployed the Resolution to legitimize governance under the 1935 Act, and eventually to produce the 1956 Constitution of which the only 'Islamic' provisions were that the head of state shall be a Muslim and the parliament shall enact no laws repugnant to the Quran and Sunnah. Their constitutional acrobatics disregarded the fact that given the uneven

development of Muslim society and the revelling in past glories which is so common to people in enfeebled civilizations this Objectives Resolution and Islam itself shall be subject to distortions and misuse. The riots of 1953 were an early warning sadly ignored. Their formal commitment to "'amr bil ma'ruf" did nothing to discourage their squabbling and other indulgences in "munkar". The drafters and votaries of the Objectives Resolution set the stage for Pakistan's first military take-over.

Ayub Khan's coup d'etat was a welcome change from the misgovernance of Pakistan's Islam pedalling opportunists. Feeling politically secure and confident of his ability to govern, Ayub adopted what has been to date the most enlightened posture on the relationship between Islam and politics. He enacted fairly progressive family and marriage laws, and removed the adjectival 'Islamic' from the Republic of Pakistan, thus honouring Islam by delinking it from venality, opportunism, and mismanagement - features which have characterized government and politics in Pakistan.

In his early years in power Ayub Khan had, nevertheless, cared enough about the 'reconstruction of religious thought in Islam' to have invited back to Pakistan Dr. Fazlur Rahman, by far the finest Pakistani scholar of Islam, to lead an Institute for Islamic Studies. The 1965 war marked the decline of Ayub Khan's power. Hence, the end of his enlightened outlook on the relationship between religion and power. Already before Ayub's government had fallen the religious parties had hounded Dr. Fazlur Rahman into exile. As trouble mounted and desperation set in Ayub Khan too made feeble attempts to deploy religion as a political weapon.

Islam rarely figured in Z.A. Bhutto's anti-Ayub campaign. His focus was on betrayal - in Tashkent, of national security, our valiant armed forces - on imperialism and America, and on poverty as in the slogan roti, kapra aur makan. He was a master rhetorician. At the height of his power he silenced his critics with that memorable line "mein sharab peeta huun, awam ka khun to naheen peeta" (I drink wine, not the blood of the masses.) His career presents nevertheless a textbook case of Islam-as-a-refuge-of-the-weak-and-scoundrel regime. His first bow to 'Islamism' - declaring Ahmedis a non-Muslim minority - occurred after he had dismissed the government of Balochistan, that of the NWFP had resigned in protest, opposition leaders were imprisoned, and an insurgency was ignited. His last bow to Islamism was made as he struggled to hold on to power in the summer of 1977. Z.A. Bhutto had promised then, much like Mr. Nawaz Sharif today, to introduce the Shari'a and turn Pakistan into an Islamic state on the model of Saudi Arabia.

Mohammed Ziaul Haq, Bhutto's protege and executioner, gave the country his 'solemn promise' to hold elections in 90 days as the Constitution required. The self-styled "soldier of Islam" lied then and repeatedly thereafter, and never ceased to invoke Islam. He was an isolated dictator aided by right-wing 'Islamic' parties. So he proceeded on a programme of "Islamization" and Jihad in Afghanistan. We are still reaping his bitter harvest.

And now, with tragic familiarity and despite the hair-raising models of Islamism in Sudan and Afghanistan before him, Mr. Nawaz Sharif is proposing to further divide, embitter and, possibly, destroy this unfortunate country. Unlike Ziaul Haq he is an elected prime minister, not an isolated dictator, and unlike Z.A. Bhutto he is not facing a do-or-die challenge to his power. On the contrary, he commands an overwhelming majority in parliament while his

brother safely rules Punjab. Then why has he so panicked as to put in jeopardy both the faith and the country?

The answer lies perhaps in a sense of failure, and the fear one feels when things appear out of control. Mr. Nawaz Sharif was elected with a large parliamentary majority, which he interpreted as an unprecedented mandate. He inaugurated his prime ministerial term with a stirring address to the country, full of all the right promises, this amendment not being one of them. He has not fulfilled one, even one-half, of those pledges, and is unlikely to do so. Rather, in every respect the reverse of what he had promised has happened, and the people are suffering from a rising excess of want. So now Prime Minister Sharif wishes to compensate by giving them the gift of God, the Shari'a, five enforced prayers a day, and a fully empowered Amirul Momineen. He must be feeling very feeble indeed.

EQBAL AHMAD [DAWN: Opinion; 06th September, 1998]

Pakistan's Endangered History

It is a great privilege for me to be speaking on this very unique occasion. It is rare among us Pakistanis to honour the Quaid-i-Azam beyond rhetoric, and in a substantive way. Professor Zaidi deserves our gratitude for compiling two volumes of the Jinnah Papers. These are but the tip of Mr. Jinnah's fragmented archieves, for these 3,000-plus pages cover only four months and ten days of his eventful life, from Feb 20, 1947, to June 30. A total of 50 volumes are projected in this series to be published by the Quaid-i-Azam Papers Project.

I know Professor Zaidi to be a driven man who has devoted more than three decades of his life to gathering, restoring, compiling, and editing this national treasure. I am sure that you will join me in wishing him the good health he needs to complete this truly noble mission. I know that his spirit and dedication will not wilt as long as his body holds out. So may you live long, and remain immersed for years to come in the life and times of Pakistan's founding father.

Professor Sahib, as a historian and archivist you have reached the fulfillment of a life-long dream. You have rescued from dire neglect and the dungeons of dictatorship the private papers of Mr. Jinnah. You have been persistent in getting them preserved, catalogued, and published. And today you have the unique pleasure of seeing two of your former students - one at the helm of the state and the other a humble teacher - speak at the launching of the volumes you have compiled. Few historians and fewer teachers can hope to achieve more in lifetime. Our heartiest thanks and congratulations to you.

But before I make a final bow to a man's remarkable accomplishment, I should underline that it is shared with a woman. During the months that became years Parveen Zaidi patiently bore the burnt of professor Zaidi's highly articulated frustrations with Pakistan's versatile foot draggers. And she actually helped with the difficult task of restoring and preserving the decayed archives. In the process, she became Pakistan's first and so far only internationally recognised restorer of manuscripts. Her services have since been sought by international organisations such as UNESCO and governments as far apart as Turkey, Iran, and Malaysia. During the decades of toil with these papers she nursed the good professor through - two heart operations, and shared with him the very tragic loss of the younger of their two sons. I hope you all join me in offering them both our heartfelt thanks and deepest sympathies.

I should say a word about the quest for excellence and our people's response to it. Sadly, there is paucity of excellence in this country. It was not always so in the land of Mohammed Iqbal, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Saadat Hasan Manto, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Professor Abdus Salam whom we have all but formally banished from our midst. Hence ordinary citizens are wistfully engaged when they notice someone striving for excellence with a sense of purpose other than getting rich. And they support the endeavour with an enthusiasm that defies expectation. Men like Abdul Sattar Edhi and Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan will testify to this gratifying phenomenon of civil society in Pakistan.

I recall how anxious professor Zaidi had been about finding the people who could help him in organising, collating, and editing the enormous piles of the Quaid-i-Azam's papers. This is back-breaking work Eqbal, and it requires perseverance and skill, I recall Professor Zaidi worrying aloud soon after he had returned to Pakistan three years ago, I can teach the skill but where shall I find the people with discipline of work and the will to persist? Well, they appeared, men and women, young and old, determined to help, eager to learn. Learn they did, and help they gave with dogged determination. In the

end the Jinnah Papers is as much their achievement as it is Professor and Mrs. Zaidi's. They are here in this hall deserving of our warmest hand of appreciation.

Therein lies an insight which I should underline for the benefit of this and the future leadership of Pakistan: The heart of this country, its people, is clean like spring water, solid as rock, and poetic in its yearning for goodness, justice and enlightenment. Mohammed Ali Jinnah's greatness lay in sensing this simple truth. He led them with unassailable integrity along a path that promised economic justice, liberation from a constricting past, and an enlightened future. They followed with enthusiasm and dedication, without fear or misgiving, and conferred upon this unlikely barrister the historic honour of becoming the founder of an important state. It is a tragic fact that since his passing this great people, like the Quaid's material legacies, has suffered from negligence and breach of faith.

One price, and by no means the greatest, of this neglect is that neither Mr. Jinnah, nor the movement he led has been accorded serious scholarly attention. Of the four biographies so far published on him, only one, by Stanley Wolpert has scholarly merit and views its subject in the larger context of colonial and nationalist politics. And apart from Dr. Saleem Ahmed's book which covers the years 1906-1921, no serious work has been done on the Muslim League and the Pakistan movement.

Archives are the memory bank of a nation; and works of history articulate that memory in organised, meaningful ways. It is truly tragic that our archives suffer from neglect and fragmentation, and historians are nearly extinct in Pakistan. To make matters worse, we are bringing up ill-informed generations who are being taught in schools poisonous and ideologically loaded distortions as history. An early exposure to this phenomenon was provided in a pioneering essay entitled 'Rewriting the History of Pakistan' by Pervez Amirali Hoodbhoy and Abdul Hameed Nayyar which appears in 'Islam, Politics and the State', edited by Air Marshal Asghar Khan. A greater service was rendered later by Professor K.K. Aziz's 'The Murder of History in Pakistan.'

The process of polluting the sources of knowledge in this country had begun earlier; it climaxed in the dictatorship of Ziaul Haq who obviously perceived educational institutions as an important instrument of consolidating his tyranny in the name of Islam and an invention labeled the Ideology of Pakistan. The General declared as compulsory the teaching of Pakistan Studies in degree colleges, including engineering and medical institutions. The rewriting of history proceeded then on a grand scale. The University Grants Commission issued a directive informing prospective textbook writers that the aim of the new course is to induce pride for the nation's past, enthusiasm for the present (sic), and unshakable faith in the stability and longevity of Pakistan. Lest this leaves some ambiguity, therefore room for accommodating some canons of historiography, authors were given the following guidelines:

To demonstrate that the basis of Pakistan is not to be found in racial, linguistic or geographical factors, but, rather, in the shared experience of a common religion. To get students to know and appreciate the Ideology of Pakistan, and to popularise it with slogans. To guide students towards the ultimate goal of Pakistan - the creation of a complete Islamised state.

I do not know of any country's educational system that so explicitly subordinates knowledge to politics. Teaching and writing of history, always in jeopardy in Pakistan, has now passed from historians to hacks. They have invented a history that historians, of whom only a handful are left in Pakistan, shall not recognise. The Quaid-i-Azam was among their first victims: he underwent a metamorphosis becoming a man of orthodox religious views who sought the creation of a theocratic state and the Ulema, who with rare exceptions had opposed Jinnah and the Pakistan movement, emerged as heroes and

founding fathers of Pakistan. The Jinnah Papers are rebuke and reminder of the distortions to which our history has been subjected. They also ensure that future historians shall have easy access to the real Jinnah and the movement he led.

Professor Zaidi has ideas on how to preserve and consolidate our sorely neglected and fragmented archives. I beg for a national effort to review and revise the curricula and textbooks of history and Pakistan Studies in our schools. To no do so is to condemn future Pakistani generations to ignorance and obscurantism.

EQBAL AHMAD [Dawn: 4th June, 1995]

The Betrayed Promise [Dawn, 18 June 1995]

Before I recall Mr. Jinnah and the aspirations which inspired the subcontinent's Muslims to seek separate statehood, it is relevant to underline the price nations pay when the values and expectations on which a state is founded are systematically betrayed.

Since Plato's time political theorists have acknowledged the centrality of legitimacy in the consolidation and continuity of states. Legitimacy refers not to the popularity of a government or given institutions thereof; rather it entails the title to authority which a system of power enjoys among citizens. A subjective attribute, legitimacy issues forth largely from objective factors - the values which shape state or government policies, predominance of the rule of law and prevalence of distributive justice in society and, above all, the degree of coincidence between promise and fufilment in terms of the rights of citizenship. It is for the lack of these attributes that Pakistan has been suffering from a growing crisis of legitimacy. The separation of East Pakistan was but the most dramatic outcome of this crisis. At the heart of this crisis has been our collective failure to resolve the central issue of the nature of the Pakistani state, and the sources of laws which govern it.

During the decade which preceded India's partition politics of the Congress no less than the Muslim League had become greatly laden with the language of religion and communal symbols. Mr. Jinnah too partook of it, most prominently when he enunciated the two-nation theory. Yet, two facts stood out: one was that the Ulema in their overwhelming majority opposed him and he made scant effort to placate them. The other was that he remained uncompromisingly opposed to theocracy. Thus, in the year of communal frenzy, and high point of religious fervour - 1946 he said: “What are we fighting for? What are we aiming at? It is not theocracy, not for a theocratic state. Religion is dear to us. All the wordly goods are nothing when we talk of religion. But there are other things which are very vital- our social life and our economic life, and without political power how can you defend your faith and your economic life.” Need I explain the relevance of this passage in these tormented times of blasphemy laws, Hudood and Qisas ordinances, and Shariat Bills?

Jinnah did invoke Islamic ideals often as informing the policies and practices of the state and its governments. Always, this was to emphasise the congruence of democracy, social justice, and rule of law to Islamic values. Thus to the Sibi Darbar in 1948, he said: Let us lay the foundations of our democracy on the basis of truly Islamic ideals and principles. Our Almighty has taught is that our decisions in the affairs of the state shall be guided by discussion and consultations.” And again, “Islam and its ideals have taught us democracy. It has taught equality of man, justice and fairplay to every body. In any case Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic state, to be ruled by priests with a divine mission. We have many non-Muslims - Hindus, Christians, and Parsis - but they are all Pakistanis. They will enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other citizens as any other citizens and will play their rightful part in the affairs of Pakistan.”

This is a sort of pledge given to all citizens, has been honoured in the breach. In less than three decades we had four “minorities', each a little less Pakistani than the so-

called Muslim majority. During this year alone Christian citizens had to take asylums abroad because even after a court had acquitted them of blasphemy charges, their safety was not assured; an Ahmadi was beaten to death inside a government building, and scores languish in prisons without trial. If he were to appear in my dream how shall I convey our shame to the lean old man whose life and work we celebrate year with much fanfare and enthusiasm.

Or hear him on the question of women: ﷺIt is a crime against humanity that our women are confined within the four walls of their home like prisoners. Women are our companions and you should take them out with you to work shoulder to shoulder in all spheres of life.ﷺ I have not asked but Professor Zaidi may have been in the audience that day in 1944 when the Quaid spoke thus to students at Aligarh University. Four decades later a dictator promulgated in this country the Zina and Hadood Ordinances. Among their contributions to national progress is that one law provides a licence of sorts to actual and potential rapists, and the other reduces the worth of a woman's witness to half of a man's. So far three elected governments have failed to remove this stain on our society and the state.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah had been anxious from the outset over the persistence of sectarian and exclusionary tendencies in our social and political life. In speech after speech, he warned of their menace to society and beseeched: ﷺFor God's sake give up this provincialism. Provincialism has been one of the great curses, and so is sectarianism, Shia, Sunni, etcﷺ. You should live, act and think in terms that your country is Pakistan and you are Pakistani.ﷺ As I read this I wondered if he might have foreseen that the country he founded shall break up from an excess of sectarian practices by those in power, his successors shall engage in creating minorities, upholders of law shall dark, citizen in streets, offices, and mosques, and terrorist factions shall be allies of the state!

Civilizations are built on the rule of law as are states and nations. There is ample evidence that the Quaid-i-Azam die not lose sight of this civic principle even in the darkest hours of 1947. He made no distinction of class, ethnicity and religion when it came to the enforcement of law in defence of people and society. There is a rare note of admiration in Lord Louis Mountbattan's confidential memo of June 24, 1947, to Evan Jenkins: ﷺI talked to Jinnah last nigh and he begged me to be utterly ruthless in suppressing trouble in Lahore and Amritsar. He said ﷺI don't care whether you shoot Muslims or not, it has got to be stopped.'/*TN/ﷺ The death count mounts these days in the civil war born of sectarianism, terror and crime. Tragically, politicians and governments are so enmeshed as part of the problem that they can-not be even a small part of the solution.

Who then is responsible? And where do we go from here? Frankly, we have no one to blame but ourselvesﷺme and you who are in this hallﷺmembers of all of the national intelligentsia. I am tempted one last time to quote Jinnah: ﷺCorruption is a curse in India, and amongst the Muslims especially in the so-called educated and intelligentsia.

Unfortunately, it is this class that is selfish, and morally and intellectually corrupt.

This straightforward estimation encapsules our ultimate failure. It has been a failure of conscience not intelligence, of will not comprehension, of courage not imagination. We could read a long length of time the writing on Bengali walls. But we read in selfish silence with an indifference seeped in self-absorption. Acquiescence prevailed as the Pakistani establishment dealt blow after blow at our body politics, made a mockery of citizenship rights, turn murder and mayhem into a mission, and finally surrendered to a conquering adversary. A simple insight is alien to us: that power is prone to excesses, corruption, and miscalculations; that it is moderated only by a dissenting and assertive civicl society, and that critical mass is constituted, at all except the revolutionary moment, by the intelligentsia. Inertia is ever immune to experience. So horrors follow upon horror. And so we survey every day the killing fields of Karachi as we did those of Dhaka and Noakhali. This must end. It will not until our complicity comes to an end and our silence is broken.

POSTSCRIPT: Learned people have argued that the roots of the confusion which underlie Pakistan's crisis of ideology and statehood lie in its formative experience. Thus commenting on my last article in this space, Dr Akbar Naqvi, (Dawn, June 15, 1995. Letters To the Editor) argues that it is not true that the Muslim masses instinctively chose progress and democracy against theocracy, because the 1946 election, which was a referendum for Pakistan, was won on the cry of Islam in danger. He writes further on that: The Dilemma of two horns, one represented by the liberal and the other by Ulema was Mr. Jinnah's contribution to Pakistan. He needed it as an ambiguity which served well to make Pakistan a popular cause. Most historians would regard his argument about the 1946 election as much too moot. After all, the election served to confirm rather than to create broad-based Muslim support for the League. Also, to the best of my knowledge the Quaid never himself used the Islam in danger' slogan. Dr Naqvi's more analytical argument over Mr. Jinnah's contribution is, nevertheless, worthy of reflection and debate which I hope shall be joined by others.

(Note: This is the last of three articles adapted from an address at the launching of Jinnah Papers, edited by Dr Z.H. Zaidi)

Religion in Politics

A decade ago I spent a couple of hours with Morarji Desai, a well known politician and one-term prime minister of India. I was researching the campaign by Hindu religious parties to build a shrine to Lord Rama on the spot where then stood the 16th century Babri mosque. They claimed that the site was the birthplace of Rama, an avatar who lived, according to traditional Hindu belief, sometime in the years 3000 B.C.

During an earlier visit to Prime Minister Desai in 1977 I had been impressed by his traditional style and his devotion to Hinduism. So I thought he will be a good man to interview on the subject of Hindu 'fundamentalism'.

Mr. Desai was critical of the BJP and its allies. He worried that they would inflict damage to India's fragile unity and its secular dispensation. As he fulminated in particular against the RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Shiv Sena, l was startled at one point when he said: "They are distorting Hinduism out of shape. In effect, they are un-circumcised Mussulman fanatics." What do you mean? I asked, and he proceeded to talk about the imitation of monotheism in their singular focus on Rama, their cult of violence, and their mobilization of a virtual. Jihad over 'Ram Janam Bhoomi' as un-Hindu attitudes and activities.

At the time l had felt uncomfortable with this remark as it smacked of a communal outlook. Later, as l continued to research the Ram Janam Bhoomi movement, I appreciated his comparison between contemporary Muslim and Hindu militancy. But Moraji Desai was wrong in one respect. The similarities were not an outcome of the parivar imitating their Muslim counterparts. Rather, the distortion of a given religious tradition and other shared patterns of attitude, behaviour and style are products of common roots in the modern times and its unique tensions. I have argued this point in an earlier essay. Here l discuss how these so-called fundamentalists, in particular the Islamist variety, relate to the religious tradition they claim to cherish and represent.

The religious idiom is greatly favoured in their discourse, its symbols are deployed and rituals are observed. Yet no religio-political movement or party has to my knowledge incorporated in a comprehensive fashion the values or traditions of Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism in their programmes and activities, nor have they set examples of lives lived, individually or collectively, in accordance with the cherished values of the belief system they invoke. What they do is to pick out whatever suits their political purposes, cast these in sacred terms, and invest them with religious legitimacy. This is a deforming though easy thing to do.

All religious systems are made up of discourses which are, more often than not, dialectically linked to each other as in light and darkness, peace and war, evil and goodness. Hence, it is possible to detach and expropriate a part from the whole, divest it of its original context and purpose, and put it to political uses. Such an instrumentalist approach is nearly always absolutist, that is, it entails an absolute assertion of one, generally de-contextualized, aspect of religion and a total disregard of another. The phenomenon distorts religion, debases tradition, and twists the political process wherever it unfolds. The idea of Jihad is a case in point.

It is an Islamic precept with multiple meanings which include engagement in warfare, social service, humanitarian work, intellectual effort, or spiritual striving. The word is formed from an Arabic root jehd which denotes an intense effort to achieve a positive goal. Jihad entails then a striving to promote the good and overcome the bad, to bring light where there is darkness, prosperity where there is poverty, remedy where there is sickness, knowledge where there is ignorance, clarity where there is confusion. Thus

mujahada (as also jihad) in early Islamic usage was an engagement with oneself for the achievement of moral and spiritual perfection. A mujtahid is a religious scholar who does ijtihad, i.e. strives to interpret religious texts in the light of new challenges and circumstances.

In early Islamic history when the need to defend and also enlarge the community of believers was deemed paramount, Jihad became widely associated with engagement in warfare. Following a prophetic tradition, some early theologians divided Jihad in two categories: The 'physical jihad' participation in religious wars of which the rules and conditions were strictly laid down - was assigned the "Lesser Jihad" category. Its premises were strictly defined.

As Muslim power and numbers increased and pluralistic patterns of life and outlook emerged, there were clashes between points of view no less than personal ambitions. Similarly, wars and dynastic conflicts frequently involved convergences of interests and alliances between Muslims and non-Muslims, and battles were fought. Traditionally, these were described variously as harb, Jang, qital or muqatala but not as Jihad, a tradition which has been all but jettisoned by contemporary Islamists.

The Greater Jihad was that which one undertook within the self and society - to conquer greed and malice, hates and anger, ego and hubris, above all to achieve piety, moral integrity, and spiritual perfection. The great sufis invested in the concept an even deeper meaning of striving to subjugate the Self (Jihad bi nafsihi) to the service of the creator and His creation. Many of them dedicated their lives to the service of the weak and needy, by their example attracted millions to embrace Islam, and in such places as India continue to be revered by Muslims and Hindus alike.

It is a rare Islamist party today that devotes itself meaningfully to the mission of helping peoples and communities. To the contrary contemporary Islamists view with disfavour those who would follow the example of the sufi saints who in their time had waged the Greater Jihad. Two such figures in Pakistan today are Dr. Akhtar Hamid Khan and Maulana Abdul Sattar Edhi. Both are deeply influenced by the Sufi tradition, both are continuing to build social institutions that assist millions of people, and both have been persecuted by those who claim to be champions of Islam.

Without a hint of doubt, contemporary Muslim ideologues and militants have reduced the rich associations of jihad to the single meaning of engagement in warfare, entirely divested of its conditions and rules. Thus the war against a Marxist government in Afghanistan and its Soviet ally became the most famous jihad of the 20th century even though it was armed and financed by the United States, a non-Muslim superpower. Today, such activities as terrorism, sectarian strife, and the killings of innocent people are claimed as holy warfare. This reductionism is by no means unique to the Muslim world.

Next door in India, Hindu militancy is doing much the same despite their very different religious tradition. They have cast Hinduism as a religion of violence, warfare and force. There are of course elements of violence in the Hindu tradition. Mahatma Gandhi was a reformer who recognized that violence had a part in India's religious and cultural tradition but also viewed ahimsa as the essence of Hinduism. In his study on Gandhi, Rajmohan Gandhi mentions that when his friend C.F. Andrews observed that "Indians had rejected' bloodlust' in times past and non-violence had become an unconscious instinct with them, Gandhi reminded Andrews that 'incarnations' in Indian legends were 'bloodthirsty, revengeful and merciless to the enemy'." (The Good Boatman. P35)

But Gandhi was a humane and imaginative leader. So he understood the essential lesson of the Mahabharata, which ends in a handful of survivors, differently - that "violence was

a delusion and a folly." By contrast, in the discourse of militant Hindu parties one scarcely finds a mention of ahimsa as a Hindu value while the emphases abound on violence, force and power. The same obsessions occupy the Jewish and Christian variants of religious-political movements. Not long ago, a ranking rabi of Israel ruled that in the cause of expanding Israeli settlements in Palestine the killing of Arabs was religiously ordained.

In the Islamist discourse I am unable to recognize the Islamic - religion, society, culture, history, or politics - as lived and experienced by Muslims through the ages. The Islamic has been in most respects a pluralistic civilization marked with remarkable degrees of diversity and patterns of antagonism and collaboration. The cultural life of the traditional Muslim was formed by at least four sets of intellectual legacies. Theology was but one such legacy. The others were philosophy and science, aesthetics, and mysticism.

Contemporary Islamists seek to suppress all but a narrow view of the theological legacy. Professor Fazlur Rahman was arguably the most eminent scholar of Islamic philosophy in our time. I knew him to be a devout Muslim who was more knowledgeable about classical Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish than any Islamist scholar l have known. When Mohammed Ayub Khan proposed to establish an Institute of Islamic Studies in Pakistan, he resigned his position at McGill University to lead this institution and make it into a world class academy. A few years later, a sustained campaign was launched against him and he was forced to leave the country.

Religious scholars, artists, poets and novelists, including Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz, have suffered persecution and assault at the hands of self-appointed champions of Islam. Complexity and pluralism threaten most - hopefully not all - contemporary Islamists, because they seek an Islamic order reduced to a penal code, stripped of its humanism, aesthetics, intellectual quests, and spiritual devotion. Their agenda is simple, therefore very reassuring to the men and women who are stranded in the middle of the ford, between the deep waters of tradition and modernity.

Neither Muslims nor Jews nor Hindus are unique in this respect. All variants of contemporary 'fundamentalism' reduce complex religious systems and civilizations to one or another version of modern fascism. They are concerned with power not with the soul, with the mobilization of people for political purposes rather than with sharing or alleviating their sufferings and aspirations. Theirs is a very limited and time bound political agenda.

EQBAL AHMAD [Dawn: 31 January, 1999]

Kashmir and its Challenges

Eqbal Ahmad

I have been to India twice in the last two months, which is to say that I have spent one entire month of my last two months in India, where I spoke to nearly anybody other than Mr Jugmohan whom I really avoided. I spoke to a lot of others, including Mr Gujral, the Foreign Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the opposition and former Prime Minister, and Mr George Fernandes, who until a week ago was the Minister for Kashmir Affairs in the cabinet of V.P. Singh.

The Kashmir uprising is unquestionably indigenous and unusually powerful. In its sheer power it compares with the Algerian uprising of 1954, the Palestinian Intifada of 1987, and perhaps the Vietnamese uprising of 1944. Apparently it has the unanimous support of the people of the Kashmir Valley. I will give you an example of the unanimity of the support that the Kashmiris seem to be giving to the uprising. In Delhi, four or five weeks ago, the local community of foreign correspondents, mostly American and a few Europeans, invited me for discussion. All these were people who had covered the Kashmir Valley. Three of them were friends of mine from the Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Vietnam wars. Like me, they had seen other wars of liberation and I asked them: 'How does it look in Kashmir? I can't go there.' They all said that they had never seen anything like it. I asked them, 'What do you mean?' They said, they had never been in an uprising or revolution in which they could not find a single person who supported the incumbent government. They could not find one person in the Kashmir Valley who, in private talks or in public meetings, was willing to say that we would like to stay in the union with India. They said this

From an address delivered by Dr Eqbal Ahmad, Senior Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, and Five College Professor of International Affairs and Middle Eastern Studies, Amherst, Massachusetts, at the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, on 7 June 1990.

unanimity is unique.

Yet the painful conclusion is that while the people of the Kashmir Valley are almost unanimously united in their aspirations to achieve freedom or *azadi*, the movement which leads them is not at all united. I started making a count of the number of organisations which are now there, not all, but many of them competing with each other. I had to stop at twenty-three. The patriotic Kashmiris, who were giving me information, said 'We have more information; there are altogether forty-three.' I said to them that they had already given me twenty-three, which was good enough. It seems like a movement in terms of leadership and organisation, three times worse than the Afghan Mujahideen's movement. However, what I have just said is a little misleading because one does not count numbers only. There is a primary fundamental divide which appears to be ideological, between the more or less Kashmir independence seekers led mainly by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, (JKLF) and those who seek a state organically linked to Pakistan. The primary grouping there is the Jamaat-i-Islami of Kashmir whose military wing is known as 'Hizb- ul-Mujahideen'.

Among the Kashmiri people and among foreign observers with whom I talked, there is a perception, a very strong impression, that Pakistan favours the Islamic wing of the movement. Impressions in these kinds of wars carry at least as much weight as realities do. Whether it is true or not cannot be justified because I have not been there. But the impression is strong and clear and impressions are weighty things in wars of liberation.

My next point is that the Indian government's policy proceeds from the assumption that the root causes of the Kashmiri uprising lie in the failure of the Indian government to satisfy the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Everybody said that to me. Mr Gujral said that, Dr Fernandes said that, the others said that. Mr Rajiv Gandhi too said that they had not held one free election in Kashmir. Rajiv Gandhi cited a different one that was free, while the others cited 1977, because that was the election which brought the Janata Dal to power. It was said that they put Sheikh Abdullah in jail, that they

ruined Farooq Abdullah by forcing him to make a coalition with the Congress and thus destroying the National Conference hegemony in the Valley, and so on.

So Indian officials and analysts are talking a lot about the failures of their policies in Kashmir. At the same time, they add that these would not have led to so strong an uprising if it were not for the Pakistani role in Kashmir. What follows from the Indian perception, which we found very hard to disabuse them of, was that 'we have to make reforms, and do things differently now. But we can't do this until we have brought an end to the uprising, brought peace and gotten rid of Pakistani interference.' In other words, whatever their admission of failure, their prescription is something else.

What is their prescription? They have a four-pronged strategy. The first is the strategy of repression, the use of sheer brute force. I do not want to hurt you by giving examples, but the sheer use of brute force has been horrible. Kashmiris have been suffering not only from shooting and killing but much more importantly — shooting and killing at least gives you martyrs, strengthens your cause — they have been suffering from curfew and torture. And a total decline of Kashmiri economy, which was already poor. The repression is through which they want to bring the Kashmiri people and the movement which is leading them, to heel. In carrying out their repression, there is a method in their madness. You would not believe it, but it is very much like the Israeli methods. You will remember that in the first year and a half of Intifada, and for two years before Intifada, the Israelis cracked down on the PLO wings Al Fatah particularly — and quietly they gave encouragement to the Islamic wing, the Al-Hamas. The same thing is happening here. If you merely look at the list of the people who have been killed, the number who have been arrested, and the houses which have been burnt down, eighty to ninety per cent of them are JKLF militants. You can argue that the Islamic wing of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen are so efficient that they do not get caught, arrested, get their houses blown or killed, and on the whole are a much better organisation and, therefore, they escape the Indian secret service. The other is that they are being spared for the time being and it is certain that

they will not be spared forever the worst repression of the Indian state.

The Indian government's second strategic ploy is interdiction. You basically know that they have mined certain routes which people take from Azad Kashmir, and a portion of the Shakargarh-Sialkot area, to come to Jammu. Because Jammu is also seen as a possible route for people to reach the Valley. The other interdiction is that nearly anything, including refugees, women and children who move across the border, are shot at. The Indian intervention of the frontier is total and almost brutal.

There is a third strategy which is subversion. Subversion also has many parts. Of this, I think Karachi is also one. I am unable to debate with you because I do not know the facts. But the Indians have a perception that Pakistan has a big role in the subversion and it is not only Jamaat-i-Islami but the Pakistan government as well. These are their perceptions and they keep throwing these words at us. Once they have this perception, they have a second perception 'as you have been doing in Punjab.' At one meeting which was with the editors, people like Prem Bhatia who have otherwise been very liberal, someone stood up and said, 'Kashmir is not the only question; in fact Punjab is a bigger question for us. We might be able to negotiate with you on Kashmir, but we can't on Punjab.' So I asked them, 'You say that our government is doing this in Kashmir and that in Punjab. What does it mean, that you are innocent? Governments are governments. If you perceive me to be doing some subversion in your country, you are going to do it in my country. These masked men who seem to be killing without regard to which community they hit must be doing your dirty job.' I got a very cruel and cynical smile, followed by the following words: 'Our two countries must understand that stability is in our mutual interest. If one country stabilises, it destabilises the other and the other destabilises the next one. We must stop it mutually. This can be a matter of discussion.' This is the line you are getting.

Now I will elaborate a little on the logic or possibility of war between India and Pakistan. The logic is that the Indian government is suffering from the classical historic syndrome of incumbency.

What is the syndrome of incumbency? When an incumbent government faces a popular revolt, it does not want to admit to itself — if that revolt persists, if it becomes protracted for months and years — that this revolt is carried out by ill-clad, half-starved, hungry and poor people. They cannot believe pyjama or shalwar wearing guerillas, whom they always call terrorists, can tie down one or two divisions of their armies.

So what do they do? They start saying that this whole thing has been sponsored, organised, and logistically supported by a foreign power. The next step is to start telling some foreign power 'stop doing it or we will hit you.' Therefore, if the insurgency continues, their first step is to start hitting the training camps and arms depots, what they call sanctuaries. Their next step is to go for the country as well.

If you want an example, take that of France in Algeria. France called Algeria a province and not a colony, just as Kashmir from the Indian point of view is not a colony. But from the Algerian point of view it was a colony, we considered France an imperial power. After one year and a half they could not put down the uprising any longer. They put it down so much that nearly two thirds of the Algeria population had died. After that they could not manage it. Then they put out the theory that this is all being done by Abdel Nasser who has trained them, armed them and supplied them. If they stop Abdel Nasser, the Algerian uprising will end. In the quest for beating Nasser, they joined the Israelis and the British in invading the Suez Canal in 1956. It did not solve their problem. Further frustrated, in 1958 the French invaded Tunisia and destroyed the entire qasbah of Sakiet Sidi Youssef. India led the protest at the United Nations and Krishna Menon's speech, which will be remembered by Algerians for a long time, followed by our own Ahmad Bokhari's, argued cogently that countries have the right to provide sanctuary to guerillas but the incumbent power does not have the right to invade the sanctuary and the United Nations General Assembly, as well as the Security Council, condemned France.

The Security Council could not condemn France formally,

because France was a member and voted against the resolution but all the other members of the Security Council, including the temporary members, voted against France. However, it did not solve the problem. In 1958, France invaded Sakiet Sidi Youssef and then waited for two years. In 1960, they came into Bizerta and totally destroyed this major city of Tunisia. It did not solve the problem. Similarly, in Vietnam, the Americans ultimately ended up saying that the whole problem was in North Vietnam and so they invaded the whole of North Vietnam and bombed it to bits but this did not solve their problem. Then they invaded Cambodia and nearly totally destroyed it. So this is the logic of incumbency.

The Indians have already talked themselves into believing that the whole problem is with Pakistan. If this problem persists for them for another five to six months, then we should start expecting and preparing ourselves for war. Until then they will go on with their three-pronged strategy: interdiction, subversion, and repression. If it does not work, we face the threat of war. Will India really go to war? Is the Indian public ready for war? I would say, not the public. But there is an awfully powerful logic of war within the Indian establishment which, in some respects, is independent of Kashmir.

I returned to India after eleven years. In the last ten years India has changed. In 1979 and 1980, I went there to give a series of lectures at a university. In those lectures I had argued that India was standing at a crossroads in its history. India looked very much like Japan looked in the 1870s and 1880s, a hundred years ago. First, Japan had an infrastructure ready for fast industrial growth. Second, Japan had capital ready to go for massive growth. Third, it was a centralised state where people were ready for massive growth. Fourth, there was an infrastructure of skills: engineers, doctors, scientists, technicians, etc. So I said then, you have the same things now for a big take off, for fast growth, like Japan had in the 1870s and 1880s. But you have to make a big and crucial decision whether to choose the path of military Keynesianism and make a common alliance between state and capital. If you go that way, you will have to leave out at least forty per cent of your population because this strategy of growth is capital intensive. It is heavy industry, it is armaments prone, even if you

are using the language of dual technology, which is what the Indians are doing.

Your other route is to go for social, not military Keynesianism. That normally means that you grow by expanding your internal market but if you are going to expand your internal market you have to give purchasing power to the people. This will slow down your growth rate but you will be less dangerous to your neighbours. Now, when I returned to India this year, it seemed to me that they had made the first choice. India is changing very fast. The economy is burgeoning, there are obstacles but it is burgeoning. If you travel around Delhi alone, from one's naked eye thirty miles around Delhi, there is more high tech industry in India than you will find in the whole of this country. Cars are plentiful and there are various models. There is no waiting list. You can just walk into a showroom and buy one of their luxury cars, and there are three or four models in the streets. The cars and everything else is made in India and nothing is imported.

The economy is clearly burgeoning but this is the economy of a military industrial complex. They have put in almost sixty-five billion dollars on high tech dual purpose industries in the last eight years. The result is that both the public and private industrial class, for the past eight years, for the first time is hooked on to a national security state. Behind this growth is an ideology. The ideology of India as a major power, as a strong power. Which means an ideology of national security and to this ideology is hooked now the top business elite of India.

Secondly, there is a whole lot of academic institutions. The centre for this research, that centre of strategic research. It seems that we are at least 200 years behind them in all these things. There appears to be an intellectual establishment connected to the national security state. Then, of course, you have defence, the military, navy, air force. Further, you have the national security bureaucracy, the bureaucrats who are involved in national security matters. Together they make up a very strong aggressive national security establishment, committed to the idea of India as a great power.

In 1979, after my lectures were over, I had made some nasty statements about the Indian military build up. After that I was invited to lunch by the then Prime Minister, Morarji Desai. He was an aged man and he started telling me that he had read my speech and wanted to assure me that India had no designs on its neighbours and wanted peace and friendship with them. I said I had merely raised the question as to why does India, half of whose people are below the poverty level, wish to spend six billion dollars on building deep penetration aircraft? (At that time they were talking about building deep penetration aircraft). At this, Mr Desai got angry and said: 'You have been living for so long in America that you don't understand the realities of this region.' I asked him to tell me what the realities were. He said that out of the three or four major powers in the world, India was the only one which did not produce its own deep penetration aircraft. I started counting under my chair, USA, China, the Soviet Union and India. There went Japan, Germany, Britain, France, all gone.

The next day I called upon Mrs Indra Gandhi. I asked her, 'What do you think of the state of affairs as the leader of the opposition?' She said, 'The affairs are very bad the prices have gone up.' I asked her, 'What do you think about the deep penetration aircraft?' She said, 'I am terribly opposed to it. I think it is horrible.' I said, 'Please say something more, why do you think it is horrible?' She said they are giving this contract to Jaguar which we had already looked into and it is not qualified to build those planes. We wanted to give it to a French company. I asked her 'Why do you want the damn thing? You said the economy is low and prices are up and the people are poor.' She said, 'You have to recognise that of all the four great powers, India is the only one not manufacturing its own deep penetration aircraft.' I was not even counting this time. You have a consensus on a national security stature which, by the way, is being challenged by another section of Indian society which we are doing nothing to reach. There is a national security sector which has now found a new partner, a development which is frightening.

The BJP, the 86 members in the Lok Sabha, do not worry me. There were 92 in 1977. It does not bother me that behind the

BJP is the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal and the Rastriya Sevak Sangh. Because ultimately the Indian people may show more intelligence, as they showed in Faizabad, the district where Ayodhya lies, where they defeated the Congress and Janata and elected a communist member. My real fear about these people is that they are chauvanists, and this national security sector which I have talked to you about, sees in these people an ally. They are finding ears in many important places in very powerful corridors of the government. For this reason, if there is a failure on the part of the Indian government, by fall their compulsion to start a war will be very high. In other words, the possibility of war is premised on the failure of the Indian policy in Kashmir. Will it fail?

I did not find anyone among the high officials of India who was willing to acknowledge that India has violated the basic rights of the Kashmiri people, the right of self-determination, and that a plebiscite is the only one possible option open to them. We found a number of people, including some influential people, who showed a great deal of courage in recognising reality. The Indians have produced two very powerful reports on human rights violations in Kashmir. One was led by a former Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, Justice Tarkunde, with whom we spent a lot of time and members of his team who went with him to Kashmir seemed terribly open to discuss it honestly. It included a number of influential columnists, like Dilip Mukerjee, Niki Chakarbarti, these are very influential people and the openness of their minds is very striking. They do not represent a majority but a critical minority. India is a more polarised country today than it was 15 years ago and that polarisation is evident by the choices it has made. With that polarisation, the critical minority may soon have a larger constituency than we imagined. The lessons of our past are not to interfere or take ideological sides in Kashmir.

The uprising in Kashmir has been viewed by some people in Pakistan as an opportunity to help Kashmir free itself of Indian occupation; an opportunity to force India to fulfil its commitments made to the United Nations to hold a plebiscite and let the Kashmiris exercise their right to self-determination. I see it more as a challenge

than an opportunity, a challenge much greater than most people seem to be recognising.

David Barsamian Interviews

Eqbal Ahmad was born in the village of Irki in Bihar in 1933.During his early childhood his father was murdered as a result of a land dispute. His father was involved in India's pre-independence nationalist movement and in the gifting of lands. During the partition of India in 1947, Eqbal Ahmad and his elder brothers migrated to Pakistan.

Eqbal Ahmad was Professor Emeritus of International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. He taught world politics and political science at Hampshire College from 1982 for around 15 years. Upon retirement in 1997, he moved to Islamabad was involved in efforts to establish *Khaldunia* - an independent institution for higher education.

For many years Eqbal Ahmad was managing editor of the quarterly *Race and Class*. A prolific writer, his articles and essays have been published in The Nation(USA), Dawn (Pakistan), among several other journals throughout the world. Eqbal Ahmad's views on Kashmir are excerpted from two interviews (1993, and 1996) he gave to **David Barsamian** of Alternative Radio. He died on May 11, 1999 at Islamabad.

December 1996
The legacy of partition lives on in the subcontinent with wars and an arms race and the ever-vexing issue of Kashmir.

Three wars: 1948, 1965 and then again in 1971-72. Continued conflict over Kashmir, which is costing the Kashmiri people enormously. It's heartbreaking what their costs are and nobody notices. Continued arms race, which is now also nuclear. It's a nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. And worse. We are both now engaged in missile development. The logic of proliferation and the arms race becomes much worse with missiles. Because you can produce one family after another of more advanced, more powerful, longer ranged, blah, blah, blah missiles. So it's pretty nasty. It's very serious. But you know, something else is not being recognized. That is, what these migrations did on such a large scale to internal conflicts in each country. The worst massacres that in India have happened in Delhi itself in 1982. When nearly 2,000 Sikhs, descendants of migrants, many of them from what is now Pakistan, were murdered in Delhi.

This is in the wake of the Indira Gandhi assassination.

Two thousand Sikhs were simply wiped out in the capital city. That's a conservative estimate. Or take a look at what has been going on for two years in Karachi. The mohajirs, the Muslims who migrated from India to Pakistan, heavily concentrated in Karachi, have been at war with the state. So these migrations have produced communities which are still struggling to settle and come to peace, make peace with their new surroundings. Not so new now, but still it has created an environment of social conflict.

The Indian government steadfastly refuses to acknowledge the right of Kashmiris to self-determination. They say that issue was settled in 1947, when the Maharaja of Kashmir acceded to the Indian Union.

That's the official position of India. Pakistan has a similar one, but with much less lethal effect. The Pakistan government's position is that the Kashmiris were given the right to exercise their self-determination by choosing between India and Pakistan. This right was written into the U.N. Security Council resolution of 1948. So Pakistan is insisting that there should be a referendum or a plebiscite on the basis of the U.N. resolution, which would force the Kashmiris to choose between India and Pakistan. It looks like fifty years later the Kashmiris are more interested perhaps in choosing either maximum autonomy from these two countries or independence from them. Pakistan is not conceding that. The difference in the Pakistani and Indian position is that India is occupying the Kashmir Valley, whose people we are discussing. There is a revolt, since 1989. So far about 50,000 people have been killed, mostly at the hands of the Indian military. India's denial is costing lives and properties, while Pakistan's old position is not quite as costly but is still outdated. I've been arguing in favor of both India and Pakistan coming to an agreement to give the Kashmiris a chance to decide their future. It can be done in such a way that it does not hurt the interests of either Pakistan or India.

Nehru agreed to hold a plebiscite but then never followed through. There were delays and delays and then it never happened.

Under the prime ministership of Pandit Nehru India had committed itself to holding a plebiscite and carrying out the U.N. resolution. That promise India has reneged on.

Comment on the issue of linguistic nationalism in Pakistan and India. In Pakistan there has been the introduction of more Persian and Arabic words and terms. In India the common language is being replaced by a more Sanskritized Hindi.

Less and less so. But what you have observed is absolutely correct for the first twenty years. Nationalism was trying to create new realities, and it has not succeeded very well. It succeeded partially already, but I don't think it could go on succeeding. First of all, Pakistani nationalism identified Urdu as its national language. There were two problems with this. This first was that while the Pakistani nationalist leaders identified Urdu as its national language, this definition of national language was not quite acceptable to the people of Pakistan. For example, at the time, 1947-1970, more than half of the country was Bengali-speaking, in East Pakistan. Bengali was a developed language, at least as developed as Urdu. It produced such great poets as Tagore and such great novelists as Chatterjee. Bengalis wanted to keep their own language. As a result, when the Pakistan government dominated by mohajir Urdu-speakers, tried to impose Urdu as the national language of Pakistan, Bengal resisted. So far from strengthening Pakistani nationalism, the imposition of Urdu as a national language actually divided the country. It broke up the unity of Pakistan. It contributed to the separation of Bangladesh as an independent country.

Similarly, in India, Urdu has been identified as a Muslim language and therefore an effort has been made to use more and more Sanskrit words in the old Hindustani. It doesn't work either, because the absolute truth about Urdu is that it is not a Muslim nor a Hindu language. It developed in response to the necessity of two people to discover a common language. It developed out of an honest, genuine, meaningful, creative encounter between Islam and India. Out of that multicultural, multi-religious encounter, has developed a language that is our common heritage. We call it Urdu in Pakistan. It is called Hindustani in India. What I find interesting is that this language has suffered deeply from the patronage of the state in Pakistan, witness the resistance of Sindhis to Urdu, of Bengalis to Urdu to the point where they have actually separated, and in India it is rooted in the creation of an official language which doesn't appeal to the hearts of people. The result is that in both countries it has suffered. In India it has suffered from official hostility. In Pakistan this language has suffered from official patronage. And at the base this language is now going through a certain transformation in both India and Pakistan.

For example, Urdu is more widely spoken in Pakistan, but it is different from Radio Pakistan's Urdu. Its genius being that of a syncretic structure. It has now taken on Punjabi, Sindhi, Baluchi and a huge number of English words and absorbed them within itself. Thus it is now functioning as the language of the Pakistani market. While it is dying as a literary language in schools and universities, it is expanding as a dialect, as a spoken language among common people. In India, Urdu is making a massive comeback through Bombay, so-called Bollywood films. Bombay films, looking for markets, use Urdu. The songs are all in Urdu. The dialogue is in Urdu. Or it is in Hindustani that we are used to identifying fifty years ago as Urdu. So in a very genuine sense, while officials have created myths of nationalist languages, the people are once again creating languages that are more common between India and Pakistan.

Aug 1993 (On the uprising of 1989 in Kashmir)
What is your analysis of the situation there? It's been reported by a number of human rights organizations that there have been massive violations going on.

An uprising began in 1989. The Indian forces intervened. The uprising has continued. Violations by Indian forces have escalated to unimaginable degrees. But this is not saying very much. I should quickly recapitulate that Kashmir is a disputed territory. It's one of the first issues the United Nations took up after its founding. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India at that time, committed to the United Nations that India and Pakistan should hold a plebiscite to allow the Kashmiris to determine their future. That plebiscite has been denied to the Kashmiris. That is a cause of great anguish to the people of Kashmir. It has also been a cause of two wars so far, between India and Pakistan. Pakistan occupies about a third of Kashmir and India two thirds. The Pakistanis say, at least formally, that they are willing to hold the plebiscite. India is the one which is now refusing to do so. The uprising is on the Indian side of Kashmir.

Is there a communal factor at work? Is there a Hindu-Muslim issue?

It is a Hindu-Muslim issue to the extent, although it must not be exaggerated, that the majority, about sixty five percent, of Kashmiri population is Muslim and about thirty five percent is Hindu. I said it should not be exaggerated because my feeling is that had India had the courage to hold the plebiscite in 1949, when it

promised, or 1955, when it was scheduled, or even 1964, before the second major war between India and Pakistan over this issue, I think that the Muslim population of Kashmir would have voted to go with India. The people of Kashmir have become alienated from India for the reasons that you mentioned. It is a country now in which Muslims are being massacred, in which Sikhs are being massacred, in which Christians are in jeopardy. As Hindu fundamentalists rise and their demands exclude minority groups, obviously Kashmiris have become more and more alienated from India. Primarily because they are a majority Muslim population who find themselves threatened. What they want, I think, is not joining Pakistan, but probably independence.

December 1996
What solutions would you propose to the Kashmir question?

Most recently I have argued at some length that India and Pakistan must begin the process of finding a solution with the leaders of the Kashmiri movement. Having said that as a mechanism, we need to recall a little bit of the background. Kashmir, since 1948, has been divided between India and Pakistan. On the Pakistani side is primarily a Punjabi-speaking area which we call Azad Kashmir, Free Kashmir, with its capital in Muzaffarabad. It has its own autonomous government, and it does exercise autonomy over local matters. Pakistan almost totally controls its foreign policy, its defense and its commercial policies. So in a sense its autonomy is very severely compromised.

India controls all of the rest of Kashmir, which divides into three broad parts. There is the valley. Eighty to eighty-five percent of the valley's population is Muslim. They have over the last two centuries suffered great discrimination, injustice and oppression at the hands of the Maharaja of Kashmir, who was a Hindu ruler put in power first by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of Punjab, and then since the 1850s by the British. They were genuinely discriminatory, to the point where Muslims were really serfs. They couldn't join any government services. They were not allowed to study. It was very bad. Since 1948 the situation has improved. More Kashmiris have gone to schools and been educated. A sort of Kashmiri nationalism is centered in the valley with its population of about four million. The valley is one identifiable unique component of Kashmir which is the seat of Kashmiriat, Kashmirism, Kashmiri nationalism, Kashmiri aspirations.

Then you have Ladakh, which is predominantly Buddhist. Some portions of it are Muslim. India considers Ladakh to be terribly important for its defense because it is next to China. Then there is the large district of Jammu, where roughly sixty percent of the population is non-Kashmiri-speaking Hindus. I think religion is less important in this case than ethnicities. These are Dogras, the same people as the Maharaja. They have been favored. They speak a different language, Dogri. They feel much closer to India. They do not share the premises of Kashmiriat.

Now keep this division in mind. Kashmir is divided between Pakistan and India. The part under India is the most disputed at the moment. That's where the uprising is, and that divides into three parts: the valley, Ladakh, and Jammu. My proposal is that we seek an agreement which leaves the Pakistani part under Pakistani control. Jammu and Ladakh, which do not share the premises of Kashmiri nationalism, should be left under Indian sovereignty. The valley should be given independence. But the agreement among the three, Kashmiri leadership, Pakistan and India. must envisage uniting Kashmir with divided sovereignty. Unite the territory, keep sovereignties divided, which in our time is fairly possible. Remove the lines of control, remove border patrols, make trade free among these three, make India, Pakistan and the independent Kashmiri government jointly responsible for the defense of this mountain area.

Kashmir is at the moment is a bone of contention between Pakistan and India on the one hand, Kashmiri nationalism in India on the other hand, between Dogras and Kashmiris on yet another hand, and anxieties and fears among Buddhists and Kashmiris on still yet another hand. All this is removed to create here instead of a bone of contention a bridge of peace. Allow each community maximum autonomy with divided sovereignty.

Kashmir would then serve as the starting point of normalizing relations between India and Pakistan. And if India and Pakistan normalize relations, with free trade, free exchange of professionals and reduction in our arms spending, in ten years we will start looking like East Asia. We are competing with each other with so little money. Four hundred million people in India out of a population of 950 million are living below the poverty line. In India this means people who do not have a 2000-calorie intake in one day. These are people whose children are being born with defects. This condition has to be removed.

Do you think the resolution of the Kashmir dispute could provide that wedge to heal the wounds between Pakistan and India?

At this time nothing divides the two countries except Kashmir. And they have proved that they can reach

agreements on more important issues than Kashmir. Kashmir is more of an emotional issue.

But the division of water, of our rivers, was a much more central issue, because that's the lifeline of Pakistan and of the Indian part of Punjab and Haryana. But we have reached an agreement on water twenty years ago, and we have honored it. So whenever we have come to remove emotions and seen our mutual interest in reaching an agreement, and the international community has taken an interest in bringing about such an agreement, in the case of water, the Indus Basin water distribution agreement, it was the World Bank that played a very central role in bringing about the treaty, one of the few good things that the World Bank has ever done. Today we are not fighting over the water any more. So we have no water dispute left. Recently India and Bangladesh reached a water agreement on the Ganges.

So that is being reduced at least as a source of trouble. We have no other dispute. And sometimes just see what happens when I arrive in Delhi. People are flocking to see me. People are flocking to see Romila Thapar when she arrives in Pakistan. We don't have any rancor left. Except for the die-hard Hindu nationalists in India and the militant Islamic parties in Pakistan, there is no rancor among secular people or among common people between India and Pakistan. In fact, the longer we delay normalization of relations between India and Pakistan and the resolution of the Kashmir conflict, the more we are creating a climate, an environment for the spread of Islamic and Hindu militancy.

(Concluded)

April 2002

Eqbal Ahmad was born in the village of Irki in Bihar in 1933.During his early childhood his father was murdered as a result of a land dispute. His father was involved in India's pre-independence nationalist movement and in the gifting of lands. During the partition of India in 1947, Eqbal Ahmad and his elder brothers migrated to Pakistan.

Eqbal Ahmad was Professor Emeritus of International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. He taught world politics and political science at Hampshire College from 1982 for around 15 years. Upon retirement in 1997, he moved to Islamabad was involved in efforts to establish Khaldunia - an independent institution for higher education

"India's nuclear program is a devastating threat not only to South Asia but to the world. The basic India Pakistan conflict seems to me, to be over Kashmir. And until that's settled in some fashion - and we can imagine settlements. **Eqbal Ahmad had sensible proposals for settlement.** They could be pursued. Then maybe India and Pakistan could relax the military confrontation. And maybe, setting up **a nuclear weapons free zone**." - Noam Chomsky

Edited by Sarthak Tomar
for Bhopal Peace and Eco-Justice Action Committee
thecominganarchy.wordpress.com