This book traces the origins, and provides the most complete account, of the insurgency that has racked the Indian-controlled portion (about two-thirds) of Jammu and Kashmir since 1989. The first theoretically grounded account, it is based on extensive interviews with government officials, Kashmiri activists, journalists, members of nongovernmental organizations, and military personnel in India, Pakistan, and the United States.

Ganguly’s central argument is that the insurgency can be explained by the linked processes of political mobilization and institutional decay. In an attempt to woo the citizens of India’s only Muslim-majority state, the national government in New Delhi dramatically helped expand literacy, mass media, and higher education in Jammu and Kashmir. These processes produced a generation of politically knowledgeable and sophisticated Kashmiris. Simultaneously, the national government, fearful of potential secessionist proclivities among the Kashmiris, systematically stultified the development of political institutions in the state. Unable to express dissent in an institutional context, this new generation of Kashmiris resorted to violence.
WOODROW WILSON CENTER SERIES

The crisis in Kashmir
The crisis in Kashmir

Portents of war, hopes of peace

Śumit Ganguly
To Stephen P. Cohen and Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr.—
teachers, supporters, and friends
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Writing a book on an insurgency entails reliance on a spectrum of sources. Some of these sources, understandably, wish to remain anonymous. As much as I would like to acknowledge the contributions of many individuals in India, Pakistan, and the United States, I must respect their preference for anonymity.


I also wish to acknowledge the extraordinary support of the staff of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C. We are unfortunately living in an era when it is popularly believed that all government support for intellectual endeavors is of questionable merit. My year at the Woodrow Wilson Center certainly belied that assumption. My fellowship there in 1993–4 provided an unparalleled milieu for intellectual endeavor; without that year, this book would not have material-
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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

This book is an attempt to trace the roots of the insurgency in the portion of Kashmir that is juridically deemed to be a part of India. It also examines what might be done to manage and even resolve the insurgency.

My interest in Kashmir stems from a long-standing concern with ethnic mobilization, the relationship between domestic and external conflicts, and political violence in South Asia. The insurgency raises questions about managing ethnic tensions in a poly-ethnic, plural, democratic, and secular state. The manner in which the unrest in Kashmir is eventually handled will have vitally important effects on two of the most significant features of the Indian polity, namely, democracy and secularism.

This study is also important from the standpoint of larger, theoretical considerations. The “first wave” of modernization scholarship, which was profoundly influenced by Weberian ideas, postulated the declining significance of ethnicity, contending that it was a remnant of traditional societies. The “second wave” of scholarship not only challenged such notions but also pointed out how traditional forms of social organization might successfully adapt to modern forms. Other scholars pointed to the difficulties of fashioning nation-states out of “old societies and new states.”

Still others developed taxonomic explanations for ethnic mobiliza-


tion. One scholar drew a useful dichotomy between “primordial” and “instrumental” bases of ethnic mobilization. Yet there is a paucity of sound, theoretically informed literature on specific cases of ethnic separatism. My hope in writing this book on the Kashmir dispute is that a study explicitly guided by theoretical premises may help our understanding of Kashmir and, at the same time, refine current thinking on ethnic separatism. In bridging international relations and comparative politics, this book is also intended to expand the existing theoretical and case-study literature on ethnonationalism, irredentism, and international relations, literature that is currently extraordinarily slim.

My initial work on Kashmir was an attempt to trace the origins of the Kashmir dispute to the process of British colonial withdrawal; the differing ideological commitments of the two principal nationalist parties, the Congress and the Muslim League; and the subsequent Pakistani irredentist claim on Kashmir. I concluded, after my study of the three Indo-Pakistani wars, that conflict was most likely when the ideological commitments that formed the basis of the two states started to disintegrate. In a related article I explored in more detail the origins of the 1965 war over Kashmir. I argued

5 One important exception is Frederick L. Shils, *Ethnic Separatism in World Politics* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984).
that the apparent threats to India’s secular credo following Jawaharlal Nehru’s death, manifested in anti-Indian agitations in the Kashmir valley, reinforced Pakistani irredentism and led to the second Kashmir war. But in both cases I failed to anticipate the renewal of ethnic mobilization in Kashmir. In fact, I contended that although some ethnic and separatist sentiment did exist in Kashmir, it was not likely to expand significantly in the future.⁹

In this book, I shall explore three dimensions of the insurgency in Kashmir. First, I shall deal with the process of ethnic mobilization and the emergence of Kashmiri separatism in the 1980s. As I have argued elsewhere, I believe that the rise of separatist sentiment in Kashmir, as well as in other portions of India, is part of the second wave of ethnolinguistic assertion.¹⁰ The first wave was concerned with the creation of linguistically based states under the aegis of the States Reorganization Act of 1956. The long-term survival of the Indian state depends on its ability to reaffirm its commitments to secularism. It must also fashion a new compact with the recently mobilized minorities, one that will accommodate their demands for political participation and social justice. How will this be accomplished? What strategies will be adopted, leading to what new political practices and arrangements?

Second, I shall examine the bilateral dimensions of the Kashmir crisis. Pakistan’s irredentist claim to Kashmir has led some of its key decision-makers to provide support to the insurgency. Although this is understandable, it could entail substantial costs for Pakistan in the longer term. Most dangerously, India may pursue a similar strategy in the Pakistani province of Sind, where there is considerable disaffection with the Punjabi-dominated Pakistani regime.

Third, I shall relate this case to the larger body of literature on ethnonationalism. A widely accepted hypothesis in this literature

⁹ Ganguly, *Origins of War.*
Introduction

suggests that differential rates of modernization in ethnically plural societies frequently ignite ethnic conflict. Modernization offers the possibility of socioeconomic mobility and threatens long-existing bonds of kith, kin, and community. In the Kashmir case, I shall argue, modernization exposed young Kashmiris to the possibilities of alternative futures, but the political process largely choked off such opportunities. With democratic dissent curbed, violent and separatist sentiments came to the fore. I shall be concerned here with why the asymmetry between mobilization and accommodation caused disaffected Kashmiris to take an ethnic and violent turn.

Writing this book on Kashmir has proved to be a revealing experience from both personal and scholarly standpoints. From a personal standpoint, it brought home the extraordinary dangers of conducting research on an area racked by violence and unrest. Informants, ranging from journalists covering the insurgency to political leaders with connections to the insurgents, were often wary of speaking with an American professor of Indian origin. Yet many of them overcame their misgivings to share a trove of information and analysis. Government officials were on some occasions exceedingly forthcoming and candid and on other occasions extremely reticent and downright disingenuous.

Two issues encountered in this research enterprise are particularly noteworthy. First, reliable statistical information in the public domain, although it may putatively be unclassified, is virtually impossible to obtain, whether in the United States or in India. Consequently, lacunae remain in building accurate statistical portraits of particular themes. These gaps should be filled as time passes.

Second, although my intellectual moorings remain firmly entrenched in the canons of positivist social science, on occasion I wish that I were an adherent of postmodernism. In the course of

my research, I found that seemingly reliable accounts of specific incidents frequently turned out to be wildly inaccurate and partisan. Eventually, only multiple attempts at reconstructing events yielded what I hope is a reasonably accurate picture of what transpired.