

**THE INFLUENCE OF IDENTITY:  
AN EXAMINATION OF DIVERSITY IN INDIA'S  
SECURITY FORCES**

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**ABSTRACT:**

A focused examination of the performances and practices of Indian domestic security forces during operations is warranted, given the rise in cross-border terrorism and emergence of internal security matters. These issues are further compounded by the conflicting demographics laden within the country. This analysis seeks to determine if differing caste, religion, or ethnicity in the composition of security forces affects adherence to duty in a multi-ethnic society. Comparing the demographics of the regular military to the paramilitary service members, I will seek to determine if differing caste, religion, or ethnicity in the composition of security forces affect adherence to duty in a multi-ethnic society. Using evidence based on eyewitness accounts and detailed post-operation reports, this study will argue that a caste-based reservation policy for the paramilitary forces does alter the behavior of service members. Compared to service members, who do not have a reservation system for recruitment purposes, conduct of paramilitary soldiers during internal security matters is found to be biased. These findings will help shape how national governments will evaluate future domestic military actions.

The modern armed forces of India date their origin to the British Raj, when the first major reform of the military occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> century after the Presidency Armies were abolished in 1857. Since then, based on number of troops, the Indian military has developed into the second largest military in the world. Organized under the Ministry of Defence, the armed forces of India are composed of the Indian Army, the Navy, and Air Force. However, defending a landmass of 1.2 million square miles with one of the most diverse populations requires special attention by the government. To govern the population, the Union Government has developed a significant auxiliary service of the military: agencies that make up the Indian Paramilitary Forces. The three largest organizations by number of personnel are the Border Security Force (BSF), the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), totaling about 450,000 service members. These forces are specialized for a variety of security details, ranging from border protection to riot control. Paramilitary forces provide a significant bridge between central and state policing powers for the Union Government.

Comparing the demographics of the regular military to the paramilitary service members, an essential question is raised: Do differences of caste, religion, or ethnicity in the composition of security forces affect adherence to duty in a multi-ethnic society? Examining the recruitment policies and the results of representation in both the Indian regular army and the paramilitary forces with the limited unclassified data available, this paper will demonstrate that caste-based reservation policies for the paramilitary forces does alter the behavior of service members, whose conduct during internal security matters is biased, contrasted to the conduct of soldiers in the regular military, which does not have a reservation system for recruitment purposes. There are several reasons why reservation policies lead to performance issues that are not apparent in the ethnic-based regiment system of the regular military: First, since reservations are caste-based and not determined by ethno-religious identity, there is an increase in soldiers from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, but not Muslim or Sikh soldiers. Since a great number of major communal violence in India involves conflicts between the ethno-religious majority and minority, the one-sided make-up of the paramilitary forces lends itself to partisan performance. Second, societal prejudices are sustained in the workplace, due to hierarchical organizational procedures based off of Hinduism and the absence of minority colleagues. Finally, the ruling political parties in both the Union and respective state governments are, at times, reluctant to deploy paramilitary forces to

deal with riots, despite being able to utilize specialized battalions such as the Rapid Action Force. If deployment of troops is delayed or otherwise impeded because of a political party's desire to see a certain outcome of a civil disturbance, then the soldier's role during these incidents is rendered nonexistent, regardless of the social composition. Use of paramilitary forces for internal security requires paying attention to the composition of the greater population: paramilitary forces constantly encounter and work with the citizenry as part of their duties, and in particular contentious circumstances, such as response to riots and pogroms.<sup>1</sup>

The adherence to duty by service members from paramilitary forces, who fulfill a similar mission to that of the Indian regular army, may be analyzed to determine the influence of these social structures on performance. Paramilitary organizations serve as a heavily armed police taskforce for the Union Government. Historically, the regular military has been used on the home-front for various tasks such as combating insurgency, controlling riots, and monitoring political demonstrations. However, maintaining regular army regiments to be wielded as instruments of coercion on domestic soil creates a set of legal and logistical issues in a democratic society. As an alternative response, at various times throughout India's post-independence history, when a need for internal security force manifests, new paramilitary organizations are created. Today, these paramilitary forces are the first responders to unique security issues, such as terrorism,<sup>2</sup> and are the primary security forces operating in Punjab and Kashmir, regions that border Pakistan.<sup>3</sup> These missions and assignments are heavily affected by cultural and ethnic biases. Paramilitary forces operate domestically; therefore the service members' understanding and tolerance of local culture, languages, and customs is much more important than for the soldiers of the regular military in such a diverse country, where religion is a significant staple of Indian society. During the Constitutional Emergency of 1975-1977, the political role of paramilitary forces increased, as did its manpower, reaching half a million members.<sup>4</sup> Today, the seven central police forces under the Ministry of Home Affairs have seen a 30% growth in personnel from 1997 to 2007,

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, the terms military and army are used interchangeably, referring to the Indian Army. While the Indian Navy and Air Force do have a presence on the homefront, these branches have played a less significant role in internal conflicts.

<sup>2</sup> Kirpal Dhillon, *Police and Politics in India: Colonial Concepts, Democratic Compulsions – Indian Police 1947 – 2002* (New Delhi, India: Manohar Publishers, 2005), 249.

<sup>3</sup> Raju G. C. Thomas, *Democracy, Security, and Development in India* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 115.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: Indian and its Armies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 207.

now totaling 746,878 service members.<sup>5</sup> The founding logics of the three organizations examined here (the Border Security Force, the Central Industrial Security Force, and the Central Reserve Police Force) differ, though the strategic outlook from each of these forces take into consideration the ethno-religious and socioeconomic backgrounds of its active duty soldiers.

Operating under the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Border Security Force (BSF) was established on December 1, 1965, as a direct response to Pakistan's invasion of the Rann of Kutch during the Second Indo-Pakistani War. The Government of India realized that the country's borders were not properly monitored after Pakistani troops easily infiltrated into India-controlled Kashmir. The BSF is presently assigned to police India's land border areas, a country with about 8,800 shared border miles, hosting Pakistan on the northwest, China, Afghanistan, Bhutan and Nepal to the north, and Myanmar and Bangladesh to the east. However, because the existence of the Assam Rifles paramilitary force stationed in India's northeast has allowed the government to reallocate personnel, one-third of BSF battalions have been transferred to the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. Largely in recent years, assignments in Jammu and Kashmir have led to additional duties, due to increased terrorist activities. Tasked with light combat missions, BSF service members are expected to engage insurgents that commit cross-border crimes. However, despite being organized into the same structure as an army infantry battalion,<sup>6</sup> the BSF is not detailed to fight skirmishes; that duty lies with other paramilitary border forces such as the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. As a result, the expansion of BSF duties requires specific patterns of personnel recruitment that reflect the demographics of J&K in order to adapt to rapid changes in insurgents' strategies.<sup>7</sup>

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) also falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Its primary role is to protect key public industrial sectors such as nuclear power plants, space installations, and oil fields/refineries. While these facilities are still serviced by the CISF, after the 9/11 attacks in the United States the organization's role has expanded into other arenas, such as VIP protection and airport screening/security. Created by an act of Parliament in 1968, the impetus was provided by a disastrous fire on a public, industrial facility under the inattentive watch of the ward

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<sup>5</sup> "Annual Report 2007 – 2008." 11 April 2008, Government of India - Ministry of Home Affairs. <http://mha.nic.in/pdfs/ar0708-Eng.pdf> (accessed 27 April 2008), 151.

<sup>6</sup> S.V.M. Tripathi, *State of Armed Police Battalions in India* (New Delhi, India: Institute of Social Sciences, 2001), 26.

<sup>7</sup> H. Bhisham Pal, *Central Police Forces of India* (New Delhi, India: Bureau of Police Research and Development, 1997), 69.

staff. Rapidly expanding as the country's industrial sectors grow, the CISF is the most militant of the three paramilitary forces examined here, measured by the type of operations it performs.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is another of the seven paramilitary forces operating under Ministry of Home Affairs, and is a descendant of the Crown Representative Police Force. Founded in 1936, the CRPF was created to provide a national police force that would have authority in both princely states and areas controlled by provincial governments.<sup>8</sup> After Independence, the Union Government maintained the agency to task it with defending the shared borders with Pakistan. After the creation of the BSF, the CRPF then took on traditional operations of investigation on behalf of the central government. The CRPF today focuses on cases related to wide-level disturbances, such as insurgency, food riots, and communal violence. The Rapid Action Force (RAF) is a specialized branch of the CRPF that is assigned to deal with riots. In 1992, ten battalions were created to serve as a strike force in situations of communal violence, and each RAF battalion is stationed at ten different communally sensitive areas across the country.<sup>9</sup> As of late, members of the CRPF have also undergone specialized training in counter-terrorism. Taking over some areas of jurisdiction from the BSF, personnel are now being placed on shared borders with Pakistan. The CRPF is the only central police organization that has capability as both an unarmed civil police service and an armed combat force.<sup>10</sup> CRPF soldiers have unique all-India police authoritative powers, such as the ability to arrest citizens and to search private property without a warrant.<sup>11</sup>

These new assignments developed for the BSF, CISF, and CRPF after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the 2002 Kargil conflict speak to the need for diversity in paramilitary forces. The paramilitary forces, unlike the Indian military, employ a reservation policy in their recruitment. Adoption of a reservation policy follows in line with other civil services, whereas Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes are granted quotas in these organizations. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are recognized by the Constitution of India as communities that have historically experienced prejudices, while Other Backward Classes are a group of communities also recognized under the Constitution as a categorization that is continuously and dynamically altered, depending on current social and economic factors. Scheduled Castes,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>9</sup> "Annual Report 2007 – 2008," Ministry of Home Affairs, 74.

<sup>10</sup> Tripathi, *State of Armed Police Battalions*, 26.

<sup>11</sup> Kuldeep Mathur, "The State and the Use of Coercive Power in India," *Asian Survey* Vol. 32, No. 4, (April 1992): 345.

Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes are not a homogenous group and is made up of many castes and sub-castes, but this categorization excludes non-Hindus such as Muslims and Christians. There is no overarching reservation policy as dictated by the Ministry of Home Affairs; rather, each agency is available to recruit for positions as needed, considering quotas to be fulfilled with regards to these three groups. Data is difficult to come by regarding these quotas, as defense officials are reluctant to provide information on the specifics of the recruiting process, citing the same reasons for refusing to record information on the status of Muslims in the military. Officials state that it “may convey the wrong message to the troops, adversely affecting the well-established cohesion, regimental spirit, and morale”.<sup>12</sup> Closer examination of public recruitment advertisements calling for applications will show quotas for paramilitary positions, varying by each state.<sup>13</sup> Vacancies for these positions have numerous reservation-reserved spots available for interested applicants. Other notices for careers in the paramilitary forces do not list vacancies, but rather, request proof of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes membership.<sup>14</sup> Flyers for assistant commandant positions in the Central Police Forces (an umbrella term for the various paramilitary organizations) state that special consideration will be made for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes candidates, with respect to “vacancies as may be fixed by the Government”.<sup>15</sup>

It is worth noting that Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes reservation policies do not include quotas for Muslims, in the paramilitary forces or in any other Union service that employ a reservation policy. Muslims have had a historically strong presence in the military before Independence, and currently have a relatively notable appearance among army soldiers due to the warrior, or martial, race theory. Stephen Cohen suggests that in forming the British Indian Army, the colonial power gave credence to the warrior, or martial, race theory: certain races are meant for fighting and soldiering, and they were to comprise the

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<sup>12</sup> Sandeep Dikshit, “Muslims and the Indian Army,” *The Hindu*, February 20, 2006. <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2006/02/20/stories/2006022006591100.htm> (accessed 11 April 2008).

<sup>13</sup> “Directorate General - Central Industrial Security Force,” date unknown, Government of India - Ministry of Home Affairs. [http://cisf.nic.in/RECRUITMENT\\_files/EnglishNotificationofConstable08.pdf](http://cisf.nic.in/RECRUITMENT_files/EnglishNotificationofConstable08.pdf) (accessed 22 March 2008).

<sup>14</sup> “Directorate General - Border Security Force,” date unknown, Government of India - Ministry of Home Affairs. <http://bsf.nic.in/recruitment/r51.pdf> (accessed 04 April 2008).

<sup>15</sup> “Central Police Forces (Assistant Commandants) Examination,” 23 June 2003, Government of India - Ministry of Home Affairs. <http://employment.tn.nic.in/pdf/crpf.pdf> (accessed 23 February 2008).

infantry units.<sup>16</sup> These [ethno-religious] groups included Dogras, Gurkhas, Kumaonis, Pathans, and Rajputs, to name a few.<sup>17</sup> The warrior race theory did not apply for officer appointments in the military; consideration for these posts was based on social hierarchy and loyalty to the Crown. In contrast to infantry regiments, recruitment for combat support units (engineers, logistics, etc.) in the Indian Army during peaceful times drew from all ethno-religious groups, excluding Dalits [the Untouchables]. However, the warrior race theory took a backseat due to the need for manpower after the outbreak of the Second World War, and the British enlisted infantry soldiers from “non-martial races,” employing a fair number of Dalits and those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.<sup>18</sup> Shortly after the Pacific was secured, the policy of infantry recruitment reverted to the original scheme. Therefore, one would assume that Muslims would also have a relatively notable appearance in the paramilitary forces due to the similarities as security services.

However, minorities have a significantly lower presence within the paramilitary among the many different forces. In the BSF, CISF, and CRPF, the ethno-religious composition ranges from 3.8% for Muslims and 3.2% for Sikhs in the CISF to, at most, 5.5% for Muslims and 3.8% Sikhs in the CRPF.<sup>19</sup> Examining the other services, it will be found that promotions and prestigious assignments are reserved for only upper-caste Hindus. To illustrate, there are virtually no Muslims working at the Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing, two agencies within the Ministry of Defence, because Muslims are implicitly excluded from sensitive security services as a matter of practice.<sup>20</sup> Another example: in the state of Assam, 31% of the population is Muslim,<sup>21</sup> but the Assam Rifles organization consists of only 1,275 Muslims, or about 2.5% of the personnel.<sup>22</sup> It is bewildering that a paramilitary taskforce assigned to a region that has the second largest proportional Muslim population (after J&K) would have such few Muslim personnel in its ranks.

The reason for such low numbers of Muslims in these

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, “The Untouchable Soldier: Caste, Politics, and the Indian Army,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 28, No. 3, (May 1969): 456.

<sup>17</sup> Omar Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India: Army, Police and Paramilitary Forces During Communal Riots* (New Delhi, India: Three Essays, 2003), 5

<sup>18</sup> Cohen, “The Untouchable Soldier,” 458.

<sup>19</sup> Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India*, 64.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>21</sup> “Census of India - Religious compositions,” date unknown, Government of India - Registrar General & Census Commissioner. [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_Data\\_2001/Census\\_Data\\_Online/Social\\_and\\_cultural/Religion.aspx](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Social_and_cultural/Religion.aspx) (accessed 03 March 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India*, 64.

security positions is the historical “Muslim loyalty” question, revived in recent years by Hindu nationalist political organizations. Parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Shiv Sena, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are decidedly and similarly anti-Muslim in their ideologies. Prejudice against Muslims still thrives in India, where there is an atmosphere of deliberate misinformation and intolerance against the Islamic faith. Additionally, Muslims in India are claimed to be Muslims before they are Indians; that is, they are accused of supporting Muslim countries such as Pakistan over India. Reports indicate that Border Security Force units have used excessive force in dealing with Kashmiri Muslims, due to the belief that these people are loyal to Pakistan.<sup>23</sup> This societal norm translates into a low level of trust for Muslims, a reduction in assignments related to national or internal security, and determines how paramilitary troops behave during incidents of communal tension.

Communal violence is defined as violence against an ethno-religious community by another such community. In the Indian context, communal violence has generally come to be understood as violence against Muslims by the Hindu majority, although there have been significant civil disturbances among the many ethno-religious groups across the country. In 2009, India experienced 826 communal incidents that claimed 125 lives and caused injuries to 2,424 persons,<sup>24</sup> while during the preceding year, 943 communal incidents occurred where 167 persons were killed and 2,354 persons sustained injuries.<sup>25</sup> The country has witnessed an average of 40 major communal riots each year since 1990.<sup>26</sup> Hindu-Muslim violence has formed a large portion of these major incidents. The three disturbances that will be examined here for paramilitary partisanship are the 1987 Meerut riots, the 1992 Babri Mosque destruction and the subsequent riots in Bombay, and the 2002 Gujarat riots.

On May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1987, members of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), an armed reserve police force, were dispatched to city of Meerut to enforce a curfew that was imposed in response to preliminary rioting exasperated by religious militants that had

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<sup>23</sup> Verghese Koithara, *Society, State & Security: The Indian Experience* (New Delhi, India: Sage Publications, 1999), 113.

<sup>24</sup> “Annual Report 2009 – 2010.” 18 March 2010, Government of India - Ministry of Home Affairs. [http://www.mha.nic.in/pdfs/AR\(E\)0910.pdf](http://www.mha.nic.in/pdfs/AR(E)0910.pdf) (accessed 20 June 2010), 65.

<sup>25</sup> “Annual Report 2008 – 2009.” 09 July 2009, Government of India - Ministry of Home Affairs. [http://www.mha.nic.in/pdfs/AR\(E\)0809.pdf](http://www.mha.nic.in/pdfs/AR(E)0809.pdf) (accessed 20 June 2010), 48.

<sup>26</sup> K.S. Subramanian, “Police and the Minorities: A Study of the Role of the Police during Communal Violence in India,” in *Minorities and Police in India*, ed. Asghar Ali Engineer and Amarjit S. Narang (New Delhi, India: Manohar Publishers, 2006), 123.



already killed 53 within a week.<sup>27</sup> 44 miles north of New Delhi in Uttar Pradesh, PAC officers were given authorization to shoot-on-sight any threats that arose during the riots. What transpired was discrimination that resulted in murders: Amnesty International reported that the PAC had accumulated 117 extra-judicial killings of young Muslim men during the Meerut riots.<sup>28</sup> The relatively high presence of Muslims in the reserve police force did nothing to resolve the mounting tensions in Meerut: Muslims composed about 6.7% of Uttar Pradesh's PAC during the 1987 riots.<sup>29</sup> Muslim paramilitary officers were ordered to surrender their weapons and take a leave of absence of duty. By demobilizing the Muslims members of the taskforce, the window for biases in paramilitary performance had been opened. By the fifth day, paramilitary troops totaled 6,400 and the police about 10,000 in Meerut as they began door-to-door searches to quell the sporadic rioting, looking for violence inciters and materials that had been used to create explosives. It is during this time that the majority of shootings by the PAC occurred,<sup>30</sup> and when both Hindu civilians and the troops deployed to the area to defend citizens committed the many atrocities against the Muslim minority.<sup>31</sup> The partisanship displayed by the PAC officers is possibly due to the lack of authoritative positions held by Muslims to ensure impartiality. As stated above, there are few Muslims in the paramilitary forces and those that have been inducted as soldiers lack equal opportunity for promotion or prestigious assignments. The balance of power is weighted against Muslims, where Muslims officers are often transferred to insignificant posts.

On December 6, 1992 in the city of Ayodhya, 150,000 militants were led by leaders from the Hindu nationalist parties Bharatiya Janata Party and Vishwa Hindu Parishad on an alleged organized plan<sup>32</sup> to tear down the Babri Mosque, which was

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<sup>27</sup> Michael Hamlyn, "Troops patrol Delhi as four are killed in Hindu-Muslim clashes." *The Times* (London), 23 May 1987 [newspaper online]; available from LexisNexis, [http://www.lexisnexis.com:80/us/lnacademic/results/docview/docview.do?docLinkInd=true&risb=21\\_T3764128498&format=GNBFI&sort=BOOLEAN&startDocNo=126&resultsUrlKey=29\\_T3764125347&cisb=22\\_T3764136046&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=10939&docNo=128](http://www.lexisnexis.com:80/us/lnacademic/results/docview/docview.do?docLinkInd=true&risb=21_T3764128498&format=GNBFI&sort=BOOLEAN&startDocNo=126&resultsUrlKey=29_T3764125347&cisb=22_T3764136046&treeMax=true&treeWidth=0&csi=10939&docNo=128) (accessed 28 March 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India*, 75.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>30</sup> Richard M. Weintraub, "Death Toll Hits 93 as Hindu-Moslem Violence Continues in India." *The Washington Post*, 26 May 1987 [newspaper online]; available from LexisNexis, <http://www.lexisnexis.com:80/> (accessed 28 March 2008).

<sup>31</sup> Stanley J. Tambiah, "Presidential Address: Reflections on Communal Violence in South Asia," *Journal of Asian Survey* Vol. 49, No. 4, (November 1990): 743.

<sup>32</sup> "Babri Masjid demolition was planned 10 months in advance." *New India Press* 31 January 2005. <http://www.newindpress.com/NewsItems.asp?ID=IEH20050130092611&Page=H&Title=Top+Stories&Topic=>

accomplished in less than five hours.<sup>33</sup> The existing controversy over the 464-year-old mosque stemmed from the belief that the first Mughal emperor of India, Babur, destroyed an existing temple dedicated to commemorate the birthplace of Rama in 1528 to build his own.<sup>34</sup> With the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in the mid-1980s, the issue became much more prevalent in the years following, with a previous attempt to destroy the mosque in October 1990,<sup>35</sup> until the issue came to a head two years later. Accepting the assurance by Kalyan Singh, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (the state in which the ancient city of Ayodhya is located), that the Bharatiya Janata Party would not take any unauthorized action against the mosque, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's administration had then relied on political and legal constraints to prevent harm to the mosque; however, these could not ease the tensions mounting on the ground.<sup>36</sup> As Hindu militants approached the mosque under the cover of a religious ceremony, New Delhi posted CRPF units in nearby Faizabad and deployed RAF regiments to the mosque. However, paramilitary units took 40 hours to even start a security perimeter at the heart of the site, after the three domes of the mosque had already been taken down. This apathy shown on the part of the soldiers, who have sworn oaths to fulfill their duties of protecting the society, was not an isolated matter. However, it has been revealed in independent studies that the blame cannot be solely placed upon the paramilitary units: RAF soldiers were caught between upholding their role in protecting the mosque, and fulfilling contradictory orders from the Union government which sought to resolve the issue peacefully and the state government of Uttar Pradesh which was committed to aiding the Hindu militants.<sup>37</sup>

Shortly afterwards, the same paramilitary forces who were passive spectators in Ayodhya were reassigned to Mumbai and became agitators of violence, siding with Hindu rioters in what are commonly referred to as the Bombay Riots. Reports detailed that the casualty count ranged as high as 1,700 fatalities and 5,500 injuries.<sup>38</sup> In December of 1992, after stories spread regarding the destruction of the Babari Mosque, a Muslim backlash took place in the city of Mumbai. This was followed in January 1993 by a Hindu counter-

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<sup>33</sup> Mark Tully, "Tearing down the Babri Masjid." BBC News – South Asia, 05 December 2002. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/2528025.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2528025.stm) (accessed 09 February 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Ramesh Thakur, "Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism: A Double-Standards Discourse," *Asian Survey* Vol. 33, No. 7, (July 1993): 654.

<sup>35</sup> Koithara, *Society, State & Security*, 116.

<sup>36</sup> Manju Parikh, "The Debacle at Ayodhya: Why Militant Hinduism Met with a Weak Response," *Asian Survey* Vol. 33, No. 7, (July 1993): 673.

<sup>37</sup> Thakur, "Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism," 658.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 645.

backlash against the Muslim community, sparked by a stabbing of two Hindu dockworkers<sup>39</sup> and resulted in attacks where Muslim casualties far outnumbered those of Hindus.<sup>40</sup> Reports indicate that paramilitary forces stationed in Mumbai abetted Hindu rioters during the Hindu-led phase of the civil disturbance. Extra-judicial killings by paramilitary forces increased to an unprecedented scale, where the majority of victims were Muslims.<sup>41</sup> Statements by witnesses in the area claim that troops were complicit in the attacks against the minorities; one merchant recalled that a sergeant helped break into a Muslim's shop and allowed angry militants to storm inside.<sup>42</sup> This active hostility is possibly due to a low Muslim presence in the paramilitary forces assigned to the Mumbai region.

The casual linkage between these two variables is the paramilitary policing and regulation policies that first, undermines principles of secularism and second, sustains prejudices. The low level of respect for Muslims among paramilitary members is reflected by the double standards in the workplace: Hindu idols of worship are evident at paramilitary stations and camps, but religious images of Islam are not allowed for Muslim colleagues.<sup>43</sup> Interviews with Hindu CRPF officers ask what comes to mind when the word "Muslim" is uttered. The answer: "criminals."<sup>44</sup> Muslim community localities are mapped as "criminal zones" by paramilitary regiments in their deployment stations.<sup>45</sup> A large majority of soldiers that are placed on fronts with high percentages of Muslims (Assam, J&K) are Hindus, who lack the ability to relate with the identities of the citizenry there. This intolerance for non-Hindu religions sustains sentiments among troops that Muslims are not citizens, but rather infiltrators from Pakistan.

The early 2002 riots in the western state of Gujarat take special notice, due to their unconventional nature and size: 151 cities and 993 villages in sixteen of Gujarat's twenty-five districts were occupied by well-armed, organized mobs for three days between

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<sup>39</sup> Edward A. Gargan. "Police Complicity in Bombay Riots," in *Communal Riots: The State and Law in India*, ed. Iqbal A. Ansari (New Delhi, India: Institute of Objective Studies, 1997), 196.

<sup>40</sup> Dhillon, *Police and Politics in India*, 405.

<sup>41</sup> M.B. Chande, *The Police in India* (New Delhi, India: Atlantic Publishers, 1997), 262.

<sup>42</sup> Gargan, "Police Complicity," 197.

<sup>43</sup> Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India*, 103.

<sup>44</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer. "Making and Unmaking of Muslim Stereotypes," in *Minorities and Police in India*, ed. Asghar Ali Engineer and Amarjit S. Narang (New Delhi, India: Manohar Publishers, 2006), 22.

<sup>45</sup> Arshi Khan. "Police Prejudice Against the Muslims," in *Minorities and Police in India*, ed. Asghar Ali Engineer and Amarjit S. Narang (New Delhi, India: Manohar Publishers, 2006), 143.

February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 2<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>46</sup> The riots continued until May, with the period of the most concentrated violence occurring in mid-March. The riots commenced on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002 when a coach train occupied by 58 Hindu pilgrims (or Hindu fundamentalists, by other accounts) was engulfed in flames near the Godhra Railway Station in the Panchmaghal District. All the passengers (23 men, 15 women, and 20 children) were killed in the train burning, where an investigation into the origin of the fire has been attributed to a cooking accident.<sup>47</sup> An altercation between a Muslim mob and local Hindus present at the scene generated stories that the Muslims had deliberately set the coach train on fire during the dispute. News of this version of the incident quickly spread throughout Gujarat, and fundamentalists organized mobs of angry Hindus to assault the Muslim community. Among the violent acts that occurred were the selective targeting of Muslims for brutality, destruction of property owned by Muslims, and widespread sexual violence against both Muslims and non-Muslims women and female children.<sup>48,49</sup> Reports indicate that the Union and State Government of Gujarat failed to deploy paramilitary forces in a timely manner to deal with the crisis, and that members of the police and paramilitary forces that were on active duty during this incident were either held back or apathetic once on the ground during these attacks, if not complicit in some.<sup>50</sup> On night of February 27<sup>th</sup>, immediately after the Godhra train incident, curfew was imposed on twenty-seven cities across the state. In neighboring Rajasthan, several thousand troops were ready to be ferried to Ahmedabad, the state capital city, by the evening of the next night. However, only 1,000 paramilitary troops were deployed and once they were on the ground, soldiers were not provided with transport or information on communally sensitive areas, evoking memories of the same issues during the 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms.<sup>51</sup> In addition, two battalions of CRPF's Rapid Action Force (RAF) were deployed the nearby city of Godhra, but these soldiers were ordered to stay in police headquarters, rendering them useless.<sup>52</sup> The total number of armed forces (including regular army, paramilitary forces, and specialized police regiments) in Gujarat during these riots totaled

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<sup>46</sup> Subramanian, "Police and the Minorities," 126.

<sup>47</sup> "India train fire 'not mob attack.'" BBC News – South Asia, 17 January 2005. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/4180885.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4180885.stm) (accessed 26 March 2008).

<sup>48</sup> Subramanian, "Police and the Minorities," 127.

<sup>49</sup> "Genocide: Gujarat 2002," 22 April 2002, Communalism Combat. <http://www.sabrang.com/cc/archive/comapril2002.pdf> (accessed 24 March 2008).

<sup>50</sup> "Genocide: Gujarat 2002."

<sup>51</sup> Rahul Bedi, "Soldiers 'held back to allow Hindus revenge.'" The Telegraph, 03 April 2002. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/1386725/Soldiers-%27held-back-to-allow-Hindus-revenge%27.html> (accessed 19 February 2008).

<sup>52</sup> Subramanian, "Police and the Minorities," 131.

about 11,000.<sup>53</sup> Many reports indicate that security forces stood by and watched as Hindu mobs tore through Muslim areas, or even encouraged rioters to continue.<sup>545556</sup>

Political interference has played a role in the effectiveness of the assigned duties of paramilitary forces. Anticipating this, Prime Minister Rao dismissed the Bharatiya Janata Party from all its leadership positions in state governments (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh) shortly after the party's collaboration with militants in the destruction of the Babari Mosque.<sup>57</sup> The Union Government has not acted in the same manner in all cases, though: during the Gujarat riots, the state police headquarters in Ahmedabad were occupied by Bharatiya Janata Party political leaders, ministers, and party officials who issued orders to paramilitary forces, telling soldiers to ignore the attacks against Muslim citizens. The discrimination by paramilitary forces in these cases, therefore, was influenced by two elements: soldiers' loyalty to partisan government leaders during times of crisis and the negative dynamics of ethno-religious identities. In 2000, Justice G.T. Nanavati was commissioned to investigate the 1984 Anti-Sikh pogroms. Although it has not yet been made public, newspapers have reported that in his 185-page record, the ruling members of the Congress Party, H.K.L. Bhagat, Sajjan Kumar, and Jagdish Tytler, played key roles in inciting the attacks, making the notable charge that Hindu nationalist parties are not the only political organizations that harbor intolerances for the Muslim community.<sup>58</sup> Sikh members of the RAF faced the same fate as Muslim officers in the PAC did during the Meerut riots: they were ordered by party leaders to turn in their weapons and were dismissed during the duration of the riots.<sup>59</sup>

In contrast to Indian Paramilitary Forces, the Indian Army is often portrayed as a secular, non-discriminatory organization by its military officers and civil service leaders. As a national service, the military organization is intended to mirror the demographics of the citizenry. The Indian military as it stands today, however, is not representative of the population by any sort of metric: ethno-

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<sup>53</sup> Celia W. Dugger, "Hindu Rioters Kill 60 Muslims in India." *The New York Times*, 01 March 2002. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B03EEDD1031F932A35750C0A9649C8B63&sec=&spon=&agewanted=all> (accessed 19 February 2008).

<sup>54</sup> "Genocide: Gujarat 2002."

<sup>55</sup> Dugger, "Hindu Rioters."

<sup>56</sup> Subramanian, "Police and the Minorities," 127.

<sup>57</sup> Thakur, "Ayodhya and the Politics of India's Secularism," 658.

<sup>58</sup> Vinay Kumar, "Credible evidence against Tytler: Nanavati." *The Hindu*, 09 August 2005. <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2005/08/09/stories/2005080911440100.htm> (accessed 25 April 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India*, 97.

religious, socioeconomic, or even geographical. During the British expansion of the military during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Indian army recruited from all major ethnic and religious groups, including Christians and Muslims. Nevertheless, the ethnic and socioeconomic make-up of the Indian Army was deliberately constructed, establishing three legacies that influence the structure of the army today.

While today there are no reservations based on religion or socioeconomic identity, there are specific regiments comprised of a single ethno-religious group, discussed in detail below. The British employed preferential recruitment policies for elite and upper-caste Hindus because they believed these were the most educated and economically stable areas of the population.<sup>60</sup> The reasoning was twofold: those at the top of the social hierarchy were generally considered loyal to the crown and less likely to challenge their British superiors, and the military would have to spend less time to educate recruits if they had already come from a highly-educated background. Today, after the economic liberalization of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the military has been hard pressed to recruit upper-caste men, who now seek positions in the growing central bureaucracy or within the rapidly growing private sector. The second reason was that the British heavily recruited from certain regions of India, believing that even within groups, the soldiers that hail from particular areas, such as the Northwest, would be better soldiers. From 1862 to 1914, soldiers from Punjab constituted almost half of army personnel,<sup>61</sup> being favored over those that came from the south, and officers commissioned in the military mainly hailed from the northwest.<sup>62</sup> Continuing the legacy of the British to embrace certain sectors of society, the Union government has divided India into six recruiting zones (Western Himalayan, Eastern Himalayan, Western Plains, Eastern Plains, Central, and Southern).<sup>63</sup> In 1984, the military reformed its regional recruiting policies, stating that it would then base its personnel recruitment priorities upon the proportion of males within a given state that are fit for service (ages 17 – 25). States such as Punjab recorded a significant decrease of its hometown soldiers as a result.<sup>64</sup>

#### Implementers of recruitment policies for the Indian military

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<sup>60</sup> Veena Kukreja, *Civil-Military Relations in South Asia: Pakistan, Bangladesh and India* (New Delhi, India: Sage Productions, 1991), 195.

<sup>61</sup> Apurba Kundu, "The Indian Armed Forces' Sikh and Non-Sikh Officers' Opinions of Operation Blue Star," *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 67, No. 1, (Spring 1994): 48.

<sup>62</sup> Rosen, *Societies and Military Power*, 243.

<sup>63</sup> Indian Army, "Official Website of the Indian Army," Government of India - Ministry of Defence, [http://indianarmy.nic.in/rtg/rtg\\_other\\_ranks.htm](http://indianarmy.nic.in/rtg/rtg_other_ranks.htm) (accessed 21 April 2008).

<sup>64</sup> Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India*, 19.

recognize that the force is an all-volunteer service; there has never been conscription, even during the Indo-Pakistani conflicts or the Sino-Indian War. Despite retaining, to some degree, these legacies from the British regarding the structure of the military personnel organization, the army does not endorse or enforce a reservation policy, unlike in the paramilitary forces or virtually every other public sector and the Union civil service. The Indian military does have a quota system for a few of its seats in officer academies,<sup>65</sup> an important route to receive a commission as an officer. Military leaders have been vocal critics of applying reservations, stating that the performance of the military has been exemplary thus far, and that applying a reservation policy is no longer necessary after the 1984 changes in the recruiting approaches. Calls in the Parliament for the military to implement a reservation policy have all been unsuccessful. Again, data regarding the ethnic or religious composition of the military is difficult to come by because defense officials refuse to record such data, similar to approaches by the paramilitary officials. Political parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party argue that seeking data on the status of certain groups in the military, such as Muslims, would serve to “weaken” and “communalise”[sic] the armed forces.<sup>66</sup> The opposition fails to realize that this data is valuable, as it may be employed to analyze the behavior of personnel; in particular, the conduct among the officer corps. It also would provide a level amount of information on the social, economic and education status of the Muslim community overall in India. In 2005, the closest the civilian government has ever gotten to force military leaders to record data on Muslims was when the Sachar Committee mandated it. The military was asked to provide information on how many Muslims are enlisted and commissioned, their ranks, and the role played by some Muslims in key operations such as in the Kargil War. The army complied with only one request, releasing data on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006 that 29,093 Muslims (under 3% of the entire Army personnel) were in the Army in 2004.<sup>67</sup> No repercussions were inflicted on the army’s top-ranking officers for ignoring the remainder of the request.

The “maintaining the regimental spirit” reasoning, as a counter to providing minority data in the armed forces, comes from how the military has historically been constructed. Both the police and military have retained similar selective recruitment and deployment practices that were inherited from the British. Following

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>66</sup> Praful Bidwai, “Uproar over Muslims in Indian Army,” *The News International*, February 25, 2006. [http://www.tni.org/detail\\_page.phtml?page=archives\\_bidwai\\_uproar](http://www.tni.org/detail_page.phtml?page=archives_bidwai_uproar) (accessed 14 April 2008).

<sup>67</sup> Shishir Gupta, “How many Muslims do you have, Govt asks armed forces,” *The Indian Express*, February 12, 2006. [http://www.indianexpress.com/india-news/full\\_story.php?content\\_id=87764](http://www.indianexpress.com/india-news/full_story.php?content_id=87764) (accessed 05 April 2008).

a linear arrangement from a sub-unit up to a larger unit, the Indian Army is organized into regiments of single- (or pure-), mixed-class units of soldiers, where ‘class’ refers to ethno-religious group. These regiments are then categorized into battalions consisting of fixed-class, where there are two or more single-class regiments, or all-class, constructed from mixed-class regiments. Thus, while a fixed-class battalion may include soldiers from different ethno-religious groups, they remain segregated at the regiment level.<sup>68</sup> There are many single-class units such as the Kumaon Regiment or the Dogra Regiment, but the most prominent is the Sikh Regiment. The Sikh Regiment of the Indian Army is the most combat-successful regiment, and is the most highly decorated. As stated before, unlike the Union Government’s approach to recruiting Muslims, Sikhs are not only encouraged to join the military; government officials actively recruit them.<sup>69</sup> Making up only 2% of the Indian population, Sikhs comprise of about 20% of the Army Officer Corps and 11% of the entire regular army.<sup>70</sup> The Sikh Regiment illustrates a case where a particular ethno-religious group is overrepresented in the military, when many others are underrepresented. However, even Sikhs are discriminated among themselves as they are further divided into two regiments based on socioeconomic standing: the Sikh Regiment for elite Sikhs, and the Sikh Light Infantry, consisting of members of the community occupying a lower position within the social and economic hierarchy.

Diversity in military service is not only a concern for examining differing behavior, but in India the demographic of the army is undoubtedly linked to the organization’s ability to provide social mobility for its personnel. Military service fills an occupation void in a country where the unemployment rate stands at 7.2% and a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line.<sup>71</sup> For Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, comprising about a quarter of India’s population, the lack of a reservation policy for army recruitment does not appear to impede the social advancement for the soldiers from this lower socioeconomic group. Members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes community do not generally have access to the private sector, so military service provides clear benefits: leadership experience, educational opportunities, and skill training, to name a few. This phenomenon not unique to India: in the United States, African-Americans, a historically discriminated ethnic group that has not possessed the same economic access, are represented in the military at a proportionally higher rate than

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<sup>68</sup> Rosen, *Societies and Military Power*, 206.

<sup>69</sup> Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India*, 13.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>71</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “CIA - The World Factbook – India,” Central Intelligence Agency. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html> (accessed 16 March 2008).



Caucasian Americans.<sup>72</sup> Certain regiments are comprised of a large number of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes members, such as the Bihar Regiment where almost half of the personnel are members of Scheduled Tribes.<sup>73</sup> In addition to the rank-and-file soldiers, there remains discrimination in the recruitment of army officers. After independence, Indians from differing socioeconomic backgrounds – including members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes – were recruited as officers. However, the corps did not become ethno-religiously or geographically diverse; officers still came from privileged military families of the categorized “warrior races” that hailed from the northwest.<sup>74</sup>

In dealing with an army that stretched across many ethno-religious, socioeconomic, and geographical cleavages, the Union Government developed particular policies to physically and psychologically isolate soldiers from society to enforce the loyalty of soldiers to their regimental units.<sup>75</sup> Isolation from society was an integral part of the British’s strategy to fragment the military and discourage unity between soldiers and citizens [subjects]. During the British Raj, the Indian military was used in operations to protect the Crown, even if missions required using army troops against Indian nationalists. This was only possible due a policy to effect a prolonged separation of soldiers from the rest of society. The British strategy to quell violence was to send in “alien” regiments to deal with internal conflicts – these regiments would be either geographically or ethnically separate from the people they would be deployed against. This would condition the Indians into believing that they could not even trust their fellow citizens. Suppressing demonstrations through this method would cause tension between ethnic groups and limit the ability of pro-independence groups from different backgrounds to unify. For example, at the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in April 1919, the British ordered Gurkha regiments to fire upon unarmed Punjabi demonstrators.<sup>76</sup> Despite this incident and others, current government approaches to anticipate tensions between the ethno-religious groups remains the same: soldiers are isolated from Indian society for an extensive time during their active service. This policy has been preserved in order to reduce the discrimination among soldiers that is created by the recruitment and structure of the army, and to foster relationships among peers that traverse socioeconomic and ethnic boundaries.

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<sup>72</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “Population Representation 2005,” U.S. Department of Defense. [http://www.defenselink.mil/prhome/poprep2005/appendixb/b\\_03.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/prhome/poprep2005/appendixb/b_03.html) (accessed 02 April 2008).

<sup>73</sup> Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India*, 19.

<sup>74</sup> Rosen, *Societies and Military Power*, 239.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas, *Democracy*, 110.

One modern adaptation of the policy is the extension of boot camp: recruit training now lasts fifty-two weeks, up from thirty-six, to include a sixteen-week basic education program that brings recruits up to a “third class certificate of education and map reading”.<sup>77</sup> This policy was enacted to combat discrimination against the underrepresented members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; these communities historically have had relatively lower literacy levels. Remedial training for all soldiers in basic training aims to reduce minority soldiers from being singled out and discriminated against. In addition, this yearlong boot camp is also conducted in isolation, with camps in distant, mountainous regions of the county to separate the soldiers from typical Indian society and place them in situations where they have to depend on contemporaries from all ethnic-religious and socioeconomic groups. Additionally, habitual trainings after the completion of boot camp consist of postings in the same mold, being at bases distant from the portions of the country from which the soldiers hail. Officers assigned to military units are often available to stay for up to 20-year assignments to a regiment or battalion, reinforcing the notion of cohesion regardless of background. The argument for all these policies is that soldiers who live in an environment where it is more appropriate to empathize with members of their army unit would be better prepared to serve the diverse society of India.<sup>78</sup>

To assess the usefulness of the current military policies regarding their approach to diversity, we may examine Operation Blue Star. In early June of 1984, Operation Blue Star was executed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as a response to the occupation of the Golden Temple and other nearby facilities in Amritsar by Sikh militants. On June 2, the Indian Army entered the religious center of Sikhism and after securing control of the city and creating a perimeter, an assault on the temple commenced three days later. Led by then-Lt. Gen. K. Sunderji, the army deployed elements of the Sikh Regiment (within a larger battalion) to storm the entrance to the Golden Temple.<sup>79</sup> Subsequent political ramifications notwithstanding, the mission was an operational success and the temple was largely undamaged, though reports emerged stating that atrocities were committed by both the army units and militants, among them the destruction of the temple’s sacred library.<sup>80</sup> The army leadership did not use alien regiments in this situation, as the British would have, instead choosing to send Sikh military units that represented the same demographic as the militants to control the situation. Post-

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<sup>77</sup> Rosen, *Societies and Military Power*, 210.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>79</sup> Kundu, “The Indian Armed Forces’ Sikh and Non-Sikh Officers’ Opinions of Operation Blue Star,” 52.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

operational reports detail that the behavior of the soldiers in Sikh regiments did not differ from those in other non-Sikh units. While this is not to claim that the sole reason for success was the diversity among the regiments, clearly the factor of varied ethno-religious, socioeconomic, and geographical backgrounds was present, and served as a significant element in determining the favorable completion of the operation. If anything, diversity has not been a negative factor: poor performance by the Indian army in the Sino-Indian War of 1962 has been attributed to inconsistent intelligence and weak planning, and not to the different ethno-religious identities.<sup>81</sup>

The social construction of the Indian military remains unique, in that segregation is not only still occurring, but also that it has been accepted as beneficial for dealing with security matters in a country that is undoubtedly diverse. The success of Operation Blue Star and favorable reports of other regular army operations speak to the need for specific ethno-religious regiments, rather than a caste-based reservation system. The lack of paramilitary recruitment reservation policies for groups other than Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes does little to help reduce bias against minority ethno-religious communities, in particular Muslims. Without the opportunity to overcome language barriers and the widening education gap, the influence of Muslims in internal security forces is minimized, developing paramilitary soldiers that are more comfortable to remain the protectors of the interests within his/her community only.<sup>82</sup> Ethno-religious imbalances in security forces threaten the ability for fair and just performance when responding to riots and pogroms. Intolerance for different cultures translate to prejudices and misunderstandings held by soldiers, affecting their adherence to duty to protect all citizens, including minorities. Finally, with the civilian-military relationship in India, by allowing political parties in both the Union and the state governments to play a role in deploying paramilitary forces, the ability for soldiers to receive and carry out non-biased orders is compromised. The internal security incidents examined here demonstrated that partisan performance by soldiers against members of a minority community is prevalent in the paramilitary forces, and that caste-based reservation policies have not done anything to overcome the problems and tensions imported from Indian society.

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<sup>81</sup> Rosen, *Societies and Military Power*, 240.

<sup>82</sup> Vibhuti Narain Rai, *Combatting Communal Conflicts: Perception of Police Neutrality during Hindu-Muslim Riots in India* (Allahabad, India: Anamika Prakasha, 1999).