Votes and Violence

ELECTORAL COMPETITION AND ETHNIC RIOTS IN INDIA

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The Electoral Incentives for Ethnic Violence

In the 1960s Richard Nixon, reflecting on race riots in America, tried to define the difference between riots and other types of violent conflict. "Riots," he said, "are spontaneous. Wars require advance planning."[1] My argument in this book, by contrast, is that ethnic riots, far from being relatively spontaneous eruptions of anger, are often planned by politicians for a clear electoral purpose. They are best thought of as a solution to the problem of how to change the salience of ethnic issues and identities among the electorate in order to build a winning political coalition. Unpleasant as this finding may be, political competition can lead to peace as well as violence, and I identify the broad electoral conditions under which politicians will prevent ethnic polarization and ethnic violence rather than incite it. I demonstrate, using systematic data on Hindu-Muslim riots in India, that electoral incentives at two levels – the local constituency level and the level of government that controls the police – interact to determine both where and when ethnic violence against minorities will occur, and, more important, whether the state will choose to intervene to stop it.

Pointing out that there is a relationship between political competition and ethnic violence is not in itself new. Ethnic violence has often been portrayed as the outcome of a rational, if deplorable, strategy used by political elites to win and hold power. Bates, for example, argued two decades ago that in Africa, "electoral competition arouses ethnic conflict."[2]

[1] Richard M. Nixon, "The War in Our Cities," address before the National Association of Manufacturers, New York City, December 8, 1967, quoted in James J. Kilpatrick, *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), December 26, 1967, p. A13.

[2] Robert H. Bates, "Modernization, Ethnic Competition and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa," in Donald Rothchild and Victor Olorunsola, eds., *State versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), p. 161.

And many scholars have since blamed the upsurge of ethnic violence in Eastern Europe in the 1990s on the strategies of ex-Communist politicians like Milošević who used ethnic nationalism to distract attention from their own past sins and their countries' present economic and social problems.[3] The organization Human Rights Watch even concluded, on the basis of a worldwide survey of ethnic violence in the 1990s, that ethnic riots and pogroms are *usually* caused by political elites who "play on existing communal tensions to entrench [their] own power or advance a political agenda."[4]

There are, however, at least three reasons why I find most "instrumental" political explanations for violence to be unsatisfying. First, because scholars who study ethnic violence generally look at political elites who *have* incited ethnic violence, they offer us little insight into why some politicians seem to do exactly the opposite and use their political capital and control of the state to prevent ethnic conflict. Why, for example, did President Houphouet-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire respond to attacks on traders from the Mauritanian minority in Abidjan in 1981 by sending police to protect Mauritanians and then going on national radio to praise Ivoirians who had guarded the traders' property while they were under police protection?[5] Why more recently in India was Chief Minister Narendra Modi of Gujarat so weak in responding to large-scale anti-Muslim violence in his state, whereas other chief ministers such as Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh or Digvijay Singh in Madhya Pradesh were successful in preventing riots in their states?[6] Second, many political explanations for ethnic violence fail to account for

[3] Claus Offe, "Strong Causes, Weak Cures: Some Preliminary Notes on the Intransigence of Ethnic Politics," *East European Constitutional Review* 1, no. 1 (1992), pp. 21–23; Tom Gallagher, *Romania after Ceausescu: The Politics of Intolerance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp. 3–5. For an examination of the role of elites in preventing compromise and exacerbating the security dilemma, see Stuart Kaufman, "The Irresistible Force and the Imperceptible Object: The Yugoslav Breakup and Western Policy," *Security Studies* 4, no. 2 (1994–95), p. 282.

[4] Human Rights Watch, *Slaughter among Neighbors: The Political Origins of Communal Violence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 2, 7, 65–66 (emphasis added).

[5] *FBIS* (West Africa), April 21–22, 1980, p. T4; *Tanzanian Daily News*, March 12, 1981; *West Africa*, September 30, 1985, p. 2064; *Le Monde*, September 6, 1985; *Economist Information Unit Country Report #1: Côte d'Ivoire 1992* (London: Economist Information Unit, 1992), p. 12.

[6] Steven I. Wilkinson, "Putting Gujarat in Perspective," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai), April 27, 2002, pp. 1579–83. For details of the Gujarat government response to the riots, see "'We Have No Orders to Save You': State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat," *Human Rights Watch* 14, no. 3 (C) (2002).

the variation in patterns of violence within states. In part because elite theories of ethnic violence focus on the strategies and actions of national-level political leaders such as Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević in former Yugoslavia or Daniel Arap Moi in Kenya, they cannot explain why, within a state, violence breaks out in some towns and regions but not in many others. Why, for example, when the 1969 riots in Malaysia were allegedly about national-level political issues, did riots break out in Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere in Selangor state but not in the states of Penang, Johore, and Kedah?[7] Why in India did riots over the "national" issue of the Babri Masjid–Ram Janambhoomi site in 1989–92 take place in some towns and states but not in others? Third, the role of political incentives in fomenting violence is generally "proven" from the simple fact that ethnic violence has broken out and that some politician gained from the outbreak; seldom are political incentives independently shown to exist and to be responsible for the riots.

My aim in this book is to understand why Hindu-Muslim violence takes place in contemporary India, which necessarily involves addressing three general problems in the instrumentalist literature on ethnic violence.[8] First, I want to account for interstate and town-level variation in ethnic violence in India: why do apparently similar towns and states have such different levels of violence? Second, when dealing with the role of the political incentives for ethnic violence, I want to understand the conditions under which the politicians who control the police and army have an incentive both to foment and to prevent ethnic violence. Third, I want to demonstrate that the political incentives I identify as important actually work in the way I suggest, by tracing through individual cases where politicians fomented or restrained violence.

[7] William Crego Parker, "Cultures in Stress: The Malaysian Crisis of 1969 and Its Cultural Roots" (Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, 1979), 1:183.

[8] I treat Hindus and Muslims as "ethnic groups" in the sense that Weber defines them, as having a "subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration." Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 1, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 389. For others who integrate a discussion of Hindu-Muslim violence into their general theories of ethnic conflict, see Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 50–51; John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 206–15; Ashish Nandy et al., *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. vi.

The Electoral Incentives for Ethnic Violence

My central argument is that town-level electoral incentives account for where Hindu-Muslim violence breaks out and that state-level electoral incentives account for where and when state governments use their police forces to prevent riots. We can show that these town- and state-level electoral incentives remain important even when we control for socioeconomic factors, local patterns of ethnic diversity, and towns' and states' previous levels of Hindu-Muslim conflict.

At the local level I begin with the constructivist insight that individuals have many ethnic and nonethnic identities with which they might identify politically.[9] The challenge for politicians is to try to ensure that the identity that favors their party is the one that is most salient in the minds of a majority of voters – or a plurality of voters in a single-member district system – in the run-up to an election. I suggest that parties that represent elites within ethnic groups will often – especially in the most competitive seats – use polarizing antiminority events in an effort to encourage members of their wider ethnic category to identify with their party and the "majority" identity rather than a party that is identified with economic redistribution or some ideological agenda. These antiminority events, such as provoking a dispute over an Orange Lodge procession route through a Catholic neighborhood in Ireland, or carrying out a controversial march around a disputed Hindu temple or Muslim mosque site in India, are designed to spark a minority countermobilization (preferably a violent countermobilization that can be portrayed as threatening to the majority) that will polarize the majority ethnic group behind the political party that has the strongest antiminority identity.[10] When mobilized ethnic groups confront each other, each convinced that the other is threatening, ethnic violence is the probable outcome.

Local electoral incentives are very important in predicting where violence will break out, though as I discuss in Chapter 2 they are not the only local-level factor that precipitates or constrains ethnic riots. Ultimately, however, there is a much more important question than that of

[9] For a survey of how "constructivist" research has affected the study of ethnic conflict, see the special issue of the American Political Science Association's comparative politics newsletter devoted to "Cumulative Findings in the Study of Ethnic Politics," *APSA – CP* Newsletter 12, no. 1 (2001), pp. 7–22.

[10] An important enabling condition here is the presence of some preexisting antiminority sentiment among members of the ethnic majority.

the local incentives for violence: the response of the level of government that controls the police or army. In virtually all the empirical cases I have examined, whether violence is bloody or ends quickly depends not on the local factors that caused violence to break out but primarily on the will and capacity of the government that controls the forces of law and order.

Abundant comparative evidence shows that large-scale ethnic rioting does not take place where a state's army or police force is ordered to stop it using all means necessary. The massacres of Chinese in Indonesia in the 1960s, for instance, could not have taken place without the Indonesian army's approval: "In most regions," reports Robert Cribb, "responsibility for the killings was shared between army units and civilian vigilante gangs. In some cases the army took direct part in the killings; often, however, they simply supplied weapons, rudimentary training and strong encouragement to the civilian gangs who carried out the bulk of the killings."[11] Antiminority riots in Jacksonian America were also facilitated by the reluctance of local militias and sheriffs to intervene to protect unpopular minorities.[12] And recent ethnic massacres in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Burundi were likewise possible only because the local police forces and armies refused to intervene against or even directly participated in the violence.[13] Finally, the worst partition massacres in India in 1946–47 took place in those provinces – Bengal, Punjab, and Bihar – in which the elected local governments, each controlled by the majority ethnic group, made it plain at various times that they would not intervene against "their" community to protect the ethnic minority from attack. In Bihar, for example, after anti-Muslim riots broke out in October 1946 the province's Hindu premier refused to allow British troops to fire on Hindu rioters, ignored Congress leaders' complicity in the riots, held no official inquiry, and made only a few token arrests of those who had participated in anti-Muslim pogroms that killed 7,000 to 8,000 people.[14]

[11] Robert Cribb, "Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in Indonesia," in Cribb, ed., *The Indonesian Killings, 1965–66: Studies from Java and Bali* (Melbourne: Centre for South East Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990), p. 3.

[12] Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 28, 111.

[13] See, e.g., René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 96–100.

[14] Vinita Damodaran, *Broken Promises: Popular Protest, Indian Nationalism and the Congress Party in Bihar, 1935–1946* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 354–56.

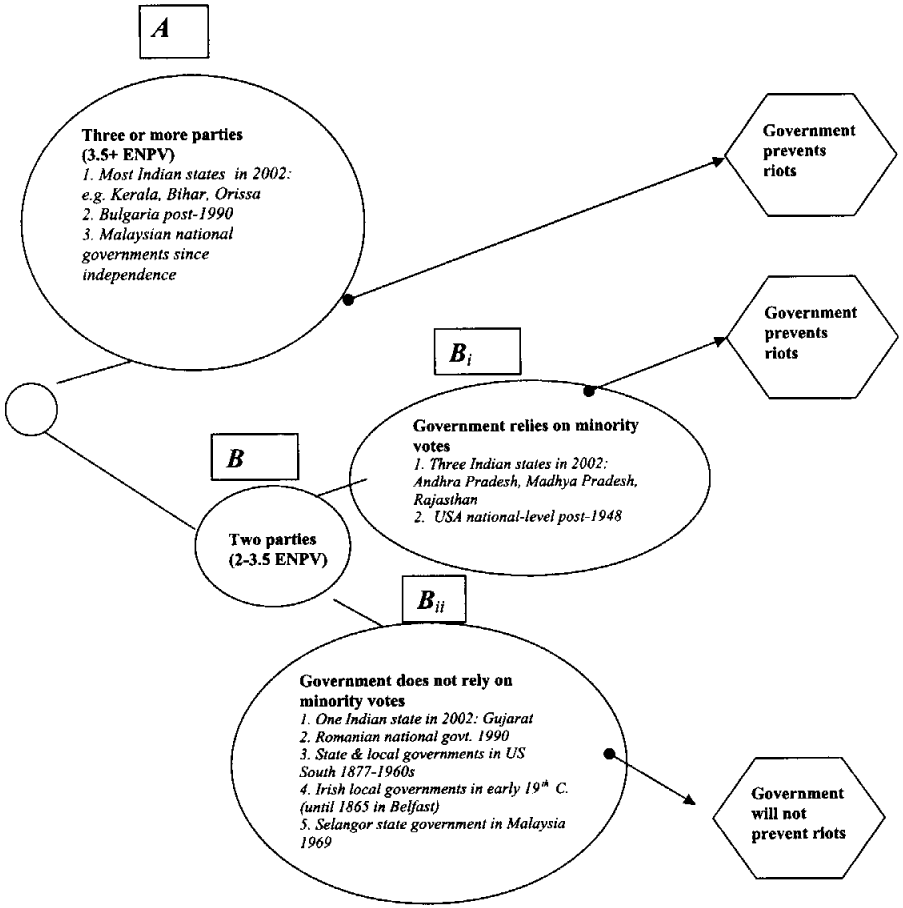

Figure 1.1 The relationship between party competition and a state's response to antiminority polarization and violence: Indian and non-Indian examples (ENVP = effective number of parties)

If the response of the state is the prime factor in determining whether ethnic violence breaks out, then what determines whether the state will protect minorities? My central argument is that democratic states protect minorities when it is in their governments' electoral interest to do so (see Figure 1.1). Specifically, politicians in government will increase the supply of protection to minorities when either of two conditions applies: when minorities are an important part of their party's current support base, or the support base of one of their coalition partners in a coalition government; or when the overall

electoral system in a state is so competitive – in terms of the effective number of parties – that there is therefore a high probability that the governing party will have to negotiate or form coalitions with minority supported parties in the future, despite its own preferences.[15] The necessity to engage in what Horowitz calls "vote-pooling" in order to win elections and maintain coalitions is what forces politicians to moderate their demands and offer protection to minorities. "The prospect of vote pooling with profit," as he points out, "is the key to making parties moderate and producing coalition with compromise in severely divided societies."[16] In India, vote pooling moderates even the behavior of nationalist parties that have no minority support, as long as these parties are forced to form coalitions with parties that *do* rely on minority votes. On the other hand, politicians in government will restrict the supply of security to minorities if they have no minority support and the overall levels of party competition in a state are so low that the likelihood of having to seek the support of minority-supported parties in the future is very low.

In addition to these three competitive situations, Figure 1.1, lists the Indian states in each category (as of February 2002). Most Indian states today fall into category *A*, where the presence of high levels of party competition (3.5–8 effective parties, using the effective number of parties or ENPV measure) forces politicians to provide security to minorities because to do otherwise would be to destroy present-day coalitions as well as future coalitional possibilities.[17] A handful of Indian states falls into category *B*, with bipolar party competition (which amounts to 2–3.5 effective parties using

[15] The formula for the effective number of parties is ENPV = $1/\Sigma v_i^2$, where v_i is the *vote share* of the *i*th party. This widely used measure weights parties with a higher vote share more heavily than those parties with a very low vote share, thus providing a better measure of the "real" level of party competition than if we were to simply count the total number of parties competing in a state.

[16] Donald L. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa: Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 177–83 (quotation from p. 177).

[17] The effective number of parties (votes) or ENPV is a measure that places higher weight on parties with high vote shares than parties with very low vote shares, thus providing a much better measure of the "true" level of party competition than if we were simply to count the total number of parties competing in a state election. For example if we were simply to count the total number of parties competing in the Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh state elections of 1998 (17 parties and 41 parties, respectively), we would have a misleading impression of the true level of party competition in these states, because both states in 1998 were in fact two horse races between the BJP and the Congress, with the BJP and Congress obtaining 93.4% of the total votes between them in Gujarat and 80% in Madhya Pradesh. The effective number of votes measure (ENPV) of 2.97 parties for Gujarat and 3.09 parties

the ENPV measure). In 2002 there were four large Indian states with such bipolar patterns of party competition: Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Three of these states – Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan – fall into subcategory B_i, in which the party in power in the state relied heavily on a multiethnic supportbase that includes substantial or overwhelming Muslim support. Only in Gujarat in 2002 did we have the worst-case scenario (subcategory B_{ii}) where there were both lowlevels of party competition in the state (2.97 effective parties) and a government in power, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), that did not have any minority support base and therefore had no incentive to protect Muslims. The reaction of state governments to violence in 2002 is predicted almost perfectly by their degrees of party competition and minority support, as I discuss in Chapter 5.

The basic electoral incentives model presented here can easily be extended to account for patterns of government riot-prevention in other multiethnic democracies as well (see Chapter 7).[18] In looking at patterns of state riot prevention in the U.S. South, for example, the key explanatory factor that explains greater federal government willingness to intervene to protect African Americans after World War II was the fact that black voters who had emigrated from the South between 1910 and 1950 became a vital constituency for the Democratic Party in several important swing states in the north, such as Michigan and Illinois. This shift (from category B_{ii} to category B_i in Figure 1.1) prompted northern Democratic leaders finally to intervene in the South to protect the civil rights of African Americans.[19]

for Madhya Pradesh represents this true level of competition much better than counting the total number of parties.

[18] Although the argument I develop in this book applies to democratic governments, in principle there is no reason why it could not also be extended to explain the conditions under which authoritarian governments will prevent antiminority violence. Authoritarian regimes need not be concerned about voters, but they still have to be concerned about constituencies that can offer financial, political, and military support. If an ethnic minority is well placed to offer such support to an authoritarian regime, then we would expect the regime to protect the minority even if it is very unpopular with the majority of the population. In Indonesia, for example, the Chinese minority did well under Suharto because it offered financial support, but the Chinese have done less well in a democracy.

[19] In India the day-to-day responsibility for law and order rests with the states, not with local or federal governments. Therefore explaining where and when antiminority violence breaks out and whether it is suppressed by the state in India is explicable by looking at electoral incentives at two levels. In cases where, as in the United States, local, county, state, and national authorities all have shared authority over local law enforcement, then

To give another example: in Ireland in the 19th century the high levels of Protestant-Catholic violence in Belfast in the early 1860s compared with that in other cities in Ireland can be explained by the fact that the police force in Belfast, unlike elsewhere in the country, was locally controlled by a Protestant-majority town council that did not rely on Catholic votes and therefore had no electoral incentive to intervene to protect Catholics from Protestants (situation B_{ii}). Only once the control of local policing was taken away from the Belfast council in 1865 and transferred to a national administration that was determined to prevent Protestant-Catholic violence do we see a significant increase in the state's degree of riot prevention.

Testing the Electoral Incentives Explanation

One general problem in testing theories of ethnic violence is that in most cases we lack systematic data on ethnic riots or their likely economic, social and political causes.[20] There is, for example, no equivalent for intranational ethnic violence of the massive "Correlates of War" project in international relations, which collects data on all international violence from 1816 to 1980.[21] In the past decade several scholars have tried to collect detailed data on ethnic violence in the former Soviet Union, where Western security interests, and hence foundation research funds, are substantial.[22] But political scientists have not yet matched the efforts of their colleagues in history in collecting basic information about each country's internal pattern

the model outlined here can simply be extended to incorporate electoral incentives and power asymmetries across different levels of governments.

[20] The United States is the obvious exception to this general statement. I have been able to identify only one study on ethnic violence in the developing world that collects systematic intranational data: Remi Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience* (New York: Nok Publishers, 1982).

[21] For a review of the research the Correlates of War project inspired, see John A. Vasquez, "The Steps to War: Towards a Scientific Explanation of Correlates of War Findings," *World Politics* 40, no. 1 (1988), pp. 109–45.

[22] Marc Beissinger at the University of Wisconsin has collected information on all reported "nationalist mobilization" and violence in the Former Soviet Union from 1987 to 1991. See Beissinger, "How Nationalisms Spread: Eastern Europe Adrift the Tides and Cycles of Nationalist Contention," *Social Research* 63, no. 1 (1996), pp. 97–146. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras provide a "Chronology of Ethnic Unrest in the USSR, 1985–92," in their edited volume *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 539–49.

of ethnic riots before putting forward theories to explain why they occur in one place and not another.[23]

A few pioneering collaborative projects have collected aggregate statistics on the largest incidents of ethnic violence reported by the Western media.[24] But for my purposes, these surveys underreport small and nondeadly ethnic riots, which account for the majority of incidents in most countries. In India, for example, press data suggest that most Hindu-Muslim riots lead to no deaths and 80% of those riots in which deaths do occur are much smaller in size (1–9 deaths) than would typically prompt a report in the international news media. Moreover, the aggregate data provided by such studies as the Minorities at Risk project, though good for interstate comparisons, do not provide the detailed town-by-town information on violence that would allow us to test many of the leading microtheories of ethnic conflict.

In this book I test my electoral explanation argument for ethnic riots using state- and town-level data on Hindu-Muslim riots in India over the past five decades.[25] To address the lack of good data on town- and state-level ethnic violence in India, I utilize a new dataset on Hindu-Muslim riots in India, jointly collected by myself and Ashutosh Varshney, now at the University of Michigan. The 2,000 riots in the database cover the years 1950–95. When combined with a separate database I collected independently

[23] For historical research in which systematic data collection on riots plays a major role in theory testing, see Manfred Gailus, "Food Riots in Germany in the Late 1840s," *Past and Present* 145 (1994), pp. 157–93; James W. Tong, *Disorder under Heaven: Collective Violence in the Ming Dynasty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); John Bohstedt, "Gender, Household and Community Politics: Women in English Riots, 1790–1810," *Past and Present* 120 (1988), pp. 88–122; Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence: The Liverpool Experience, 1819–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

[24] Notably the Minorities at Risk Project at the University of Maryland, which covers c. 300 ethnic groups. See Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994). For details, see the project's web site at <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/mar/indmus.htm>.

[25] Donald L. Horowitz defines a "deadly ethnic riot," as "an intense, sudden, though not necessarily wholly unplanned, lethal attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group, the victims chosen because of their group membership." Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 1. I define "Hindu-Muslim riots" in essentially the same way in this book, dropping only the "lethal" requirement in Horowitz's definition of "deadly riots." Hindu-Muslim riots often lead to deaths and injuries, but sometimes they do not. For alternative definitions, see Susan Olzak, *The Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 233–34; Richard D. Lambert, "Hindu-Muslim Riots" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1951), p. 15.

for the years 1900–49, the dataset represents the most comprehensive existing source on Hindu-Muslim violence (for full details, together with a protocol explaining how events were coded, see Appendixes A and B). Collecting these data on Hindu-Muslim riots involved reading through every single issue of India's newspaper of record from 1950 to 1995, as well as (for my 1900–49 data) hundreds of reports in other newspapers, official government reports, and archives in India, England, and the United States. Because the resulting data are town-level as well as state-level, and extend back more than a century (unlike Government of India aggregate figures on communal violence, which have only been published since 1954), they allow me to test theories of Hindu-Muslim violence much more completely than has been done before, which should increase confidence in my conclusions.[26]

In addition to this effort to gather material on Hindu-Muslim riots, I also spent several years gathering town- and state-level data in India and from Indian government documents with which to operationalize and test the main theories of ethnic violence. For example, to test institutional decay theories, which argue that a decline in the state's bureaucratic and coercive capacity leads to ethnic violence, I gathered data on politically motivated transfer rates, the changing ethnic and caste balance of the police and administration, and statistics on corruption. To test economic theories that focus on town-level Hindu-Muslim economic competition, I combined census data on employment with case studies, surveys, and government directories on particular handicrafts to develop a dummy variable that indicates whether, according to the theory, any particular town is likely to suffer from communal violence.[27] And to test ecological theories that argue that the Hindu-Muslim population balance or presence of Hindu refugees causes riots, I used a mix of census data, poverty data, and World Bank data that I collected for all major Indian states.

[26] For examples of the way in which post-1954 government data are used by scholars, see Paul Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 199; Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 7; Lloyd I. Rudolph and Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 226–27.

[27] The main all-India survey I use is S. Vijayagopalan, *Economic Status of Handicraft Artisans* (New Delhi: National Council for Applied Economic Research, 1993). The Uttar Pradesh government also publishes directories that allow us to establish religious breakdowns for wholesalers and self-employed artisans. See, e.g., *Uttara Pradesha Vyapar Protsahan Pradhikaran* (Udhyog Nirdeshalaya: Kanpur, 1994).

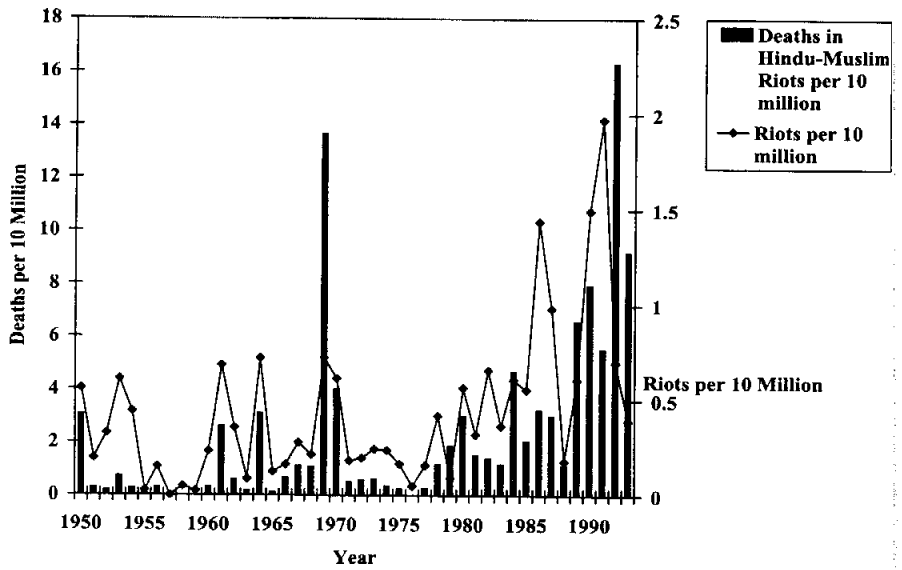

Figure 1.2 Hindu-Muslim riots since independence (data from Varshney and Wilkinson)

The Importance of Understanding Hindu-Muslim Violence

For those concerned about the welfare of the world's most populous democracy, understanding the causes of Hindu-Muslim riots is of more than just theoretical importance. Hindu-Muslim riots threaten the stability of the Indian state, its economic development, and the country's delicate international relations with its Muslim neighbors, especially its nuclear-armed rival Pakistan. Since the 1950s, as we can see in Figure 1.2, the number and gravity of Hindu-Muslim riots in India has grown to alarming proportions, reaching a dangerous peak in 1992–93, when nationwide riots broke out after the destruction by Hindu militants of the Babri mosque in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya. Since 1992 there has also been one further major outbreak of mass rioting, in the western state of Gujarat in 2002, in which an estimated 850 to 2,000 people were murdered.[28]

By some measures the numbers involved may not seem large. The approximately 10,000 deaths and 30,000 injuries that have occurred in reported Hindu-Muslim riots since 1950 are, after all, only a fraction of the

[28] "We Have No Orders to Save You," p. 4.

60,000 people who die on India's chaotic, congested roads each year, and the annual rate of deaths from Hindu-Muslim riots is much lower than that of the number of women murdered in so-called "dowry deaths" (3,000–4,000).[29] India's per-capita death rate from Hindu-Muslim riots is also low when compared with that in some of the world's other well-known ethnic conflicts. For example, deaths in Northern Ireland since 1969 run at 50 times the per-capita rate in India due to Hindu-Muslim violence.[30]

But the importance of the Hindu-Muslim divide lies in more than just the number of people who have died in riots since independence. The divide is also important because the Hindu-Muslim cleavage has split the Indian state apart once already and has the potential to do so again. An estimated 200,000 people were murdered and 13 million forced to migrate from their homes in 1946–48 when India was partitioned into Muslim and Hindu majority states.[31] Because Hindus and Muslims live side by side throughout the length and breadth of India, this cleavage poses a potentially much more serious threat to the country than separatist conflicts in the North and Northeast, which have so far claimed a greater number of lives.[32] This is especially so because Hindu-Muslim violence affects some states at some times so much more than others. As I show in Figures 1.3 and 1.4, which report data on Hindu-Muslim riots after the 1977 emergency, states such as Gujarat and Maharashtra have had, even allowing for population, considerably higher average monthly levels of riots and deaths over the past three decades.[33]

Hindu-Muslim riots also have damaging, though often ignored, effects on India's economic development, and these effects again are concentrated

[29] In 1989, for example, when the Ayodhya agitation was nearing its height, 521 people died in communal riots compared to 3,894 women who were murdered over dowry. Annexure no. 117, *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Appendix 155, August 7–September 7, 1990, pp. 558–60. This official rate of dowry deaths is of course widely recognized to be a gross underestimate.

[30] According to 1995 Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) figures, 3,462 people have died in the Northern Ireland conflict out a population of c. 1.5 million. Mervyn T. Love, *Peace Building through Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Avebury: Aldershot, 1995), p. 38.

[31] My estimate of deaths comes from Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 269. Moon gives a clear explanation of how he arrived at this figure. Scholarly and journalistic estimates that claim a million or more deaths are common but unsubstantiated. Keller for instance quotes a figure of "up to 1 million" dead in communal rioting. Stephen L. Keller, *Uprooting and Social Change: The Role of Refugees in Development* (Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1975), p. 17.

[32] Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 37.

[33] Interestingly, as we can see from Figures 1.3 and 1.4, riots seem to be much more evenly spread than casualties across states. We will try to explain in subsequent chapters why, even though riots break out across India, they only seem to lead to large numbers of deaths in some states.

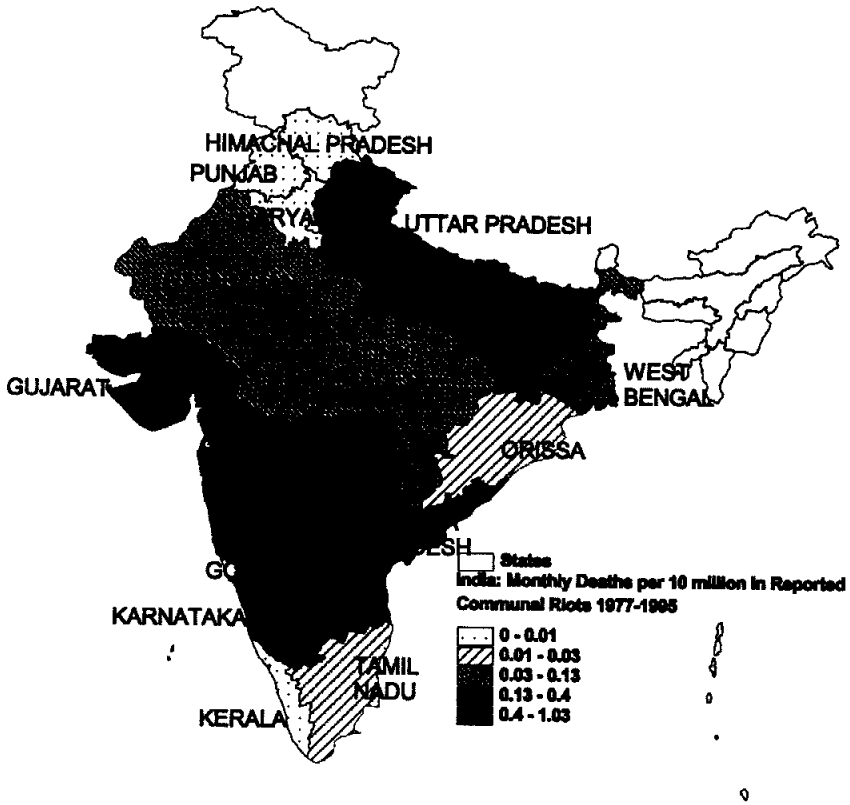

Figure 1.3 State variation in deaths in Hindu-Muslim riots, 1977–1995: Monthly average per 10 million inhabitants (based on data collected by Varshney and Wilkinson from *Times of India* reports)

in certain states.[34] The Hindu-Muslim riots of January 1993, for example, cost the city of Mumbai (Bombay) alone an estimated Rs. 9,000 crores ($3.6 billion) in lost production, sales, tax revenues, property losses, and exports and reportedly forced one industry, synthetic textiles, to at least temporarily abandon Mumbai altogether.[35] Industries in which Muslims account for a disproportionately large share of the work force, such as leather, jewelry,

[34] "Mosque Demolition: Consequences for Reform," *Economic Times* (Bombay), December 10, 1992.

[35] The Mumbai-based Noorani family, the owner of Zodiac clothing, temporarily fled the city and has since directed its new investments outside Maharashtra, mainly in Bangalore. Many Indian statistics are given in units of a *crore* (ten million) or a *lakh* (hundred thousand). The figure on total losses is from the business consultancy Tata Services, reported in Ashgar

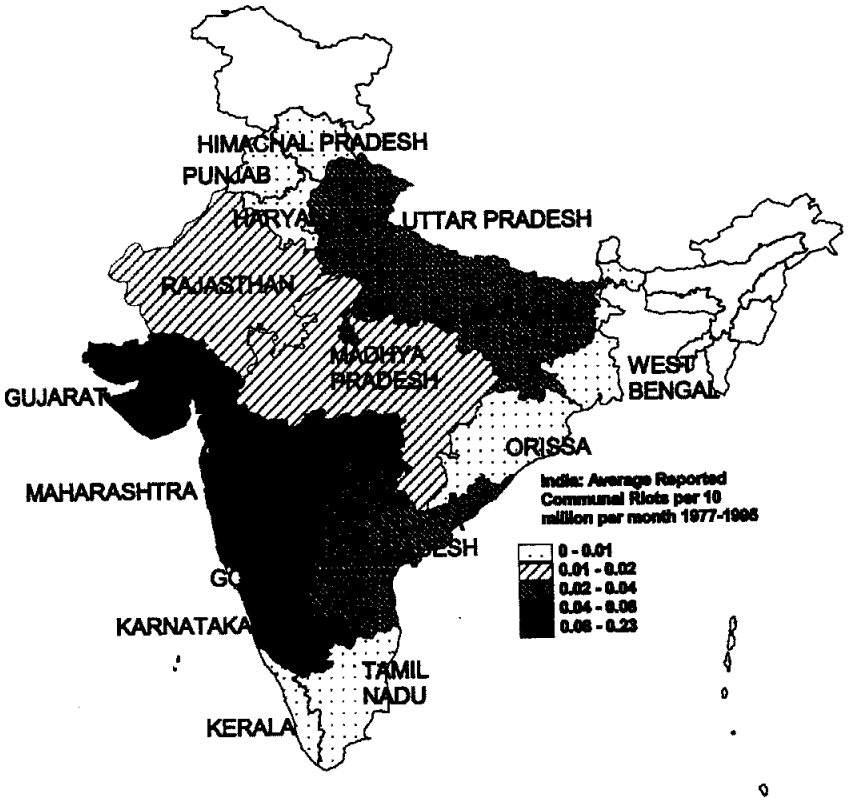

Figure 1.4 State variation in the number of Hindu-Muslim riots, 1977–1995: Monthly average per 10 million inhabitants (based on data collected by Varshney and Wilkinson from *Times of India* reports)

bakeries, and textiles, were particularly hard hit.[36] In Mumbai's ready-made garment industry, for instance, where Muslims from the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are employed in hand and machine embroidery, the 1993 migration of Muslims back to their towns and villages cost manufacturers more than $3 million a day in lost production.[37] The Muslim exodus from Mumbai, by drying up remittances, further impoverished the economies in the migrants' home districts in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bengal.

Ali Engineer, "Bombay Riots: Second Phase," *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 20–27, 1993, pp. 505–8.

[36] For details, see Raju Kane and Teesta Setalvad's report in *Business India*, January 18–31, 1993, pp. 54–66.

[37] *Times of India*, January 25, 1993.

Hindu-Muslim riots also endanger India's international security and the security of Hindus living outside India. Every Hindu-Muslim riot increases tensions between Pakistan and India, South Asia's two nuclear powers.[38] Since the 1950s large anti-Muslim riots in India have often sparked tit-for-tat violence against Hindu minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In December 1992 and January 1993, for example, anti-Muslim riots in India were swiftly followed by serious anti-Hindu riots in Karachi, Lahore, and Dhaka. The mass migration of South Asians to other countries and the spread of global news media have also increased the likelihood that riots in India will lead to violence against Hindus far from India's borders. The 1992 Hindu-Muslim riots had repercussions as far away as Dubai, Thailand, and Britain (where Muslim mobs in Bradford and other northern English cities attacked Hindu temples).[39]

Plan of the Book

I begin in Chapter 2 by examining the town-level causes of Hindu-Muslim riots and the broader question of intrastate variation in ethnic violence. Using systematic town-level data on riots and socioeconomic variables from India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, I show that the probability of whether a town will have a Hindu-Muslim riot is highly related to its level of electoral competition, even once we hold factors such as a town's demographic balance or its past record of Hindu-Muslim violence constant. Towns with a close electoral race are considerably more likely to have a Hindu-Muslim riot than towns with uncompetitive races. I also address the important question of whether historical and geographical variation in Hindu-Muslim violence is best explained using town- or state-level factors. Ashutosh Varshney, for instance, has made a good case for the primacy of town-level factors, which he argues can constrain the actions of state-level officials when it comes to riot control.[40] Although, of course, both play a role, I show that state-level patterns of law enforcement dominate

[38] Seymour M. Hersh, "On the Nuclear Edge," *New Yorker*, March 29, 1993, pp. 56–73; Devin T. Hagerty, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: The 1990 Indo-Pakistani Crisis," *International Security* 20, no. 3 (1995–96), pp. 79–114.

[39] *Times of India*, December 8 and 9, 1992; *Hindustan Times*, December 11, 1992. "Damned by Faith," *Newsline* (Lahore), January 1993, pp. 114A–118. For information on the Bangladesh violence, see *Hindustan Times*, December 12, 1992.

[40] Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 10. My own view, however, developed in more detail in Chapter 2, is that state-level incentives in India are clearly dominant over local factors.

local factors: state law enforcement can prevent violence even in so-called riot-prone towns and facilitate it even in towns with no previous history of riots.

If the law-and-order policies of India's state governments are more important than local-level factors in determining where Hindu-Muslim violence takes place, the key question is obviously, What explains these state-level policies? In Chapters 3 and 4 I examine and test two of the major explanations that are usually provided to explain why some states have lower levels of ethnic violence than others: state capacity and governance arguments, and consociational arguments.[41] I find that neither differences in state capacity nor in the degree of consociational powersharing can explain the variation we observe in states' levels of Hindu-Muslim violence or in their performance in preventing riots.

Chapter 5 tests the main argument of the book, by examining the importance of state-level electoral incentives in explaining Hindu-Muslim violence. I show that from 1961 to 1995, higher levels of party competition in the 15 major Indian states are statistically associated with lower levels of Hindu-Muslim violence. I also provide qualitative evidence to show that politicians do act in the way in which my model predicts and that the level of political competition for Muslim voters does have a direct effect on whether a riot breaks out. An additional question this chapter examines is why Muslims should increasingly be the pivotal voters in Indian state politics? Why has increased political competition not placed Hindu nationalist voters, rather than Muslim voters, in the pivotal position in state politics? I argue that Muslims are especially desirable voters for Hindu politicians to court because of the relatively large size of their community and the relatively few economic and employment demands they make compared with middle- and lower-caste blocs of Hindu voters.

If, as I argue in Chapter 5, the degree of party competition is crucial in explaining the level of Hindu-Muslim violence in various Indian states, then it raises the question, What explains states' different levels of party competition? I address this question in Chapter 6 through three case studies, tracing the history of Hindu-Muslim conflicts and party politics in the states of Tamil Nadu, Bihar, and Kerala. I describe how, in large part because

[41] For the former, see Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); for the latter, see Arend Lijphart, "The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 2 (1996), pp. 258–68.

of institutional incentives for "backward-caste" mobilization provided by the colonial state, intra-Hindu party political competition emerged much earlier (1920s–1930s) in the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala than in northern India. I show that strong postindependence intra-Hindu competition for the Muslim vote led to governments in Kerala and Tamil Nadu that were serious about preventing and stopping Hindu-Muslim riots. The growing strength of similar lower- and middle-caste parties in northern India since the late 1980s, I predict, although it led to a short-term increase in violence, will eventually lead to a similar decline in Hindu-Muslim violence in the North.

In Chapter 7, I demonstrate that the electoral incentives we see at work in India also help account for the pattern of ethnic violence in other countries. I select one case from each of the three great waves of democratization identified by Samuel Huntington, during which multiethnic societies moved from uncompetitive party systems to competitive systems in a relatively short space of time: the "first wave," from 1828 to 1926, when the franchise was extended to 50% or more of adult males in many countries in Europe, the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand; the "second wave," after World War II, when former colonies and many formerly authoritarian countries in Latin America became democratic; and the "third wave," which began with the Portuguese Revolution of 1974 and continued with democratic liberalization in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Africa. In each of these three cases I examine (19th-century Ireland, postindependence Malaysia, and postcommunist Romania), I argue that the pattern of ethnic violence in these countries as well as in other states such as the United States has been consistent with my general explanation: ethnic riots took place where political competition was fiercest, and the state's reaction to this violence was determined by its own support base and the overall degree of party competition in the state.

The broader question this book inevitably raises is whether democratic competition inflames or reduces ethnic violence? Does the fact that electoral incentives often lead to ethnic violence mean that I agree with John Stuart Mill and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom at various times argued that free institutions are next to impossible in multiethnic states? No. In Chapter 8 I argue that, although electoral competition can foment violence, there are many ways in which political competition as well as cleavage structures can also be altered so that politicians have incentives to be moderate toward minorities.

2

Explaining Town-Level Variation in Hindu-Muslim Violence

Most explanations for Hindu-Muslim violence focus on the importance of town-level socioeconomic factors similar to those identified in the broader comparative literature on ethnic riots.[1] The town-level explanations focus on such factors as the relative size of a town's minority and majority populations, a town's total population, the divisive effects caused by the presence of refugees from previous ethnic conflicts in a town, or the degree of Hindu-Muslim economic competition in an ethnically divided labor market.[2] In the past few years, several major studies of communal violence in India have also highlighted the importance of such variables as a town's level of interethnic "civic engagement" or the presence or absence of "institutionalized riot systems" to explain why some towns are violent while others are not.[3]

This book is focused, in contrast, squarely on the state level and on political incentives. While town-level factors need to be taken into account, I argue that it is even more important to understand why India's states sometimes use force to prevent riots and at other times allow or even seem to encourage violence. Force matters because studies of riots have found that rioters are generally unwilling, whatever the strength of the town-level

[1] Data collected by myself and Ashutosh Varshney found that 93% of deaths from 1950 to 1995 took place in towns. This figure probably exaggerates the urban-rural discrepancy somewhat because riots in villages in rural areas are less likely to be reported.

[2] For a review of these theories in the context of the U.S. literature on race riots, see Manus I. Midlarsky, "Analyzing Diffusion and Contagion Effects: The Urban Disorders of the 1960s," *American Political Science Review* 72, no. 3 (1978), p. 996, and Susan Olzak, *The Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[3] Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Strife: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Paul R. Brass, *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Study of Collective Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

factors promoting violence, to confront armed and determined police or soldiers who are prepared to use deadly force to stop them.[4] And states matter, because it is India's state governments, rather than the country's national, municipal, or district governments, that control the local police and paramilitary forces and decide how much force to use to prevent or stop riots at the local level. Under the Indian constitution, central forces may only legally intervene to stop a riot if asked to do so by the local state officials or by the state government itself. This is the case even if a serious Hindu-Muslim riot breaks out only a few miles from an Indian army base, as it did for example at Ranchi-Hatia, in Bihar, in August 1967.

Despite my focus on the states and on what determines the state-level response to the threat of communal riots, it is nonetheless still important to test the many influential theories about the significance of such factors as the ethnic division of labor or the local ethnic balance in causing violence. Especially in those states where the state government is weak in ordering its officials to prevent violence or is openly biased, local economic, social, and political factors will, I acknowledge, often be important in determining the location and scale of ethnic riots – in explaining why, as one journalist put it, Bombay burned while Bhiwandi did not?[5] So in this chapter I address the causes of this town-level variation.

The Importance of Local Electoral Incentives

My main argument in this chapter is that local electoral incentives explain much of the variation in when and where polarizing events and communal riots will break out, even when we control for towns' previous levels of violence and their socioeconomic attributes. The idea that there is a connection between political competition and ethnic violence is not of course new, and in the previous chapter I discussed some of the broader comparative studies that focus on political incentives to foment ethnic conflict. In India, too, there has been no shortage of scholars and politicians who have highlighted the role that electoral competition plays in precipitating communal violence. G. Ram Reddy, for example, reports that large Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in the state capital of Andhra Pradesh during

[4] As Horowitz's recent study of several hundred riots throughout the world confirms, "Force seems generally to deter. As police hesitation reduces inhibition in a crowd, early, determined police action can avert what might have been a very serious riot." Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 363–64.

[5] Rahul Singh, "Lessons from Bhiwandi," *Indian Express*, July 18, 1993, p. 8.

the major municipal, state, and national elections held during the 1980s.[6] Christophe Jaffrelot's work on Madhya Pradesh has also examined the link between electoral competition and riots.[7] Individual politicians frequently blame their rivals for inciting violence; Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, for example, in a debate on large-scale riots in Gujarat in 1970, taunted the Jana Sangh leader (and later prime minister) Atal Bihari Vajpayee by asking him whether it was "a coincidence that when people who belong to the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh] or the Jan Sangh go somewhere, soon afterwards there is a riot close to that place?"[8]

But none of these individual attempts to connect electoral polarization with ethnic violence amounts to a general testable theory that might have some predictive power about the specific conditions under which politicians have an incentive to foment violence in some constituencies and not others. In this chapter, therefore, I first build a general explanation for when and where specific electoral incentives will lead to violence and then test this explanation while controlling for the main alternative explanations identified in other town-level analyses of violence. My claim is not that elections and electoral competition explain all town-level variation in communal violence. Given the complexity of the town-level precipitants of violence, putting forward a unicausal explanation of when violence breaks out would be unrealistic. But I think that close electoral competition is, once we control for previous conflict and socioeconomic factors, the major precipitant of communal riots in contemporary India.

An Electoral Incentives Model of Ethnic Riot Occurrence

A central problem facing individual politicians is how they can ensure that voters will identify themselves with a politician's party and the group he or she claims to represent, at least on polling day, rather than with other ethnic or nonethnic groups, parties, and interests. The choice of *which* identity politicians choose to invoke in an election is complex and depends on the interplay of many different factors: the extent to which existing ethnic

[6] G. Ram Reddy, "The Politics of Accommodation: Caste, Class and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh," in Francine Frankel and M. S. A. Rao, eds., *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 265–321.

[7] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 513–14.

[8] *Lok Sabha Debates, 10th Session, 4th Series Vol. XLI, No. 58, May 14th 1970* (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat), p. 323.

identities are sustained by social, religious, and economic institutions; the number of votes needed to win an election under any particular electoral system (we would not expect politicians to emphasize identities that would, even if successful in attracting their target group, result in the support of too small a percentage of the electorate to win the election);[9] the degree of ethnic heterogeneity within a constituency; political alliances with other ethnic parties; the strength of the party's internal discipline; and the number and ethnic heterogeneity of other seats in which the party is competing.[10]

Once politicians have decided which ethnic or nonethnic identity to invoke, they face the challenge of how to make this identity the most politically salient identity among their target voters. One approach is obviously to highlight the range of programmatic (policy) or clientelistic benefits (i.e., direct transfers to specific voters) the party will deliver to the ethnic group once it wins the election: government jobs; subsidies to areas and economic sectors in which their target group is concentrated; and religious and cultural protections.[11] But, in situations where a party is dominated by a segment of an ethnic group that enjoys a disproportionate share of wealth, power, and government employment, promises to share the wealth with others (whether through policy shifts or clientelistic transfers) will be viewed with skepticism by the have-nots, and with horror by those haves who already support the party. In Uttar Pradesh, for example, promises of the upper-caste Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1995 to introduce affirmative action benefits for "backward" Hindu castes was met with skepticism

[9] For example, in India, upper-caste politicians who once formed an overwhelming majority of the electorate have been forced to change their group appeals as the electorate has expanded from c. 2% of the adult population in the 1920s to 14% after 1935 to 100% of the adult population after 1950. See Harold Gould's study of the town of Faizabad, which traces the changes in political appeals from the preindependence period, when only a few thousand upper castes could vote, to the postindependence mass electorate. Harold A. Gould, *Grass Roots Politics in India: A Century of Political Evolution in Faizabad District* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH, 1994), p. 52.

[10] For example, while it might be beneficial for a politician to highlight a subethnic cleavage such as "Presbyterian" in a by-election for a Presbyterian-dominated seat in Northern Ireland, this gain has to be set against the fact that the overall number of safe Presbyterian seats is small, and that the politician's party may need to forge alliances with Methodists and Episcopalians in many other seats at the next election in order to defeat Catholic candidates. For a general discussion of the ways in which politicians make such calculations, see George Tsebelis, *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[11] For the distinction between programmatic and clientelist appeals, see Herbert Kitschelt, "Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities," *Comparative Political Studies* 33, nos. 6–7 (2000), pp. 845–79.

from backwards, who wondered about its sincerity, and succeeded in infuriating the BJP's own upper-caste supporters, who forced the party to quietly withdraw its proposals.

In this situation, I argue that the most effective method for elite-dominated ethnic parties to mobilize those target voters who are at risk of voting for the main rival parties will be to use ethnic wedge issues to increase – albeit in the short term – the salience of ethnic issues that will favor their party. In India, both upper castes and Muslims live disproportionately in urban areas in most states. In Uttar Pradesh, for example, 17% of the total state population is Muslim but Muslims account for 31% (1991 census) of the state's urban population. Although no precise census figures are available for upper castes, it is generally agreed that upper castes are also concentrated in urban areas, a fact reflected in the last caste census in 1931. Because these two groups frequently vote cohesively, they often constitute the two main voting blocs in bipolar urban races, with the pivotal political position between upper-caste- and Muslim-supported parties in towns occupied by middle- and lower-caste voters. The challenge for upper-caste politicians and parties in urban areas, therefore, is how to win over these pivotal Hindu voters.

They meet this challenge by highlighting the threat posed by Muslims. Upper-caste-dominated parties can highlight anti-Muslim wedge issues – for example, Muslims' alleged slaughter of cows, the renaming of a town with a Muslim origin name with an "authentic Indian" (i.e., Hindu) name,[12] taking a Hindu procession route through a Muslim neighborhood, or disputing the status of a plot of land claimed or occupied by Muslims. These wedge issues allow these parties to potentially rally a large proportion of Hindus (82% of the Indian population) to their side, while entailing no economic cost for the party's existing upper-caste supporters. In Indian terms, the upper castes are fighting *Mandal* – the name of a commission that in 1980 recommended large-scale affirmative action programs for the backward castes – with *Mandir* (a Hindu temple).[13]

The particular form of antiminority mobilization used depends on both the identity politicians wish to make salient and the fact that the Indian state,

[12] The BJP proposed in 1990 and 2001 that Ahmedabad be renamed "Karnavati." *Hindu*, June 11, 2001. Similar proposals have been made to rename Allahabad "Prayag."

[13] The incentives for Muslim candidates to polarize the vote exist theoretically but not often in practice because Muslims are 40% or more of the population in only 11 of the 219 largest cities in the country, and constitute a majority in only 6. R. Ramachandran, *Urbanization and Urban Systems in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 177.

like other states, institutionally privileges some forms of mobilization – and, in particular, "traditional" religious ceremonies and processions – over others.[14] A favorite strategy of Hindu party leaders who calculate that they will gain electorally from polarization around a Hindu identity is to organize unusually large religious processions that take new routes through minority neighborhoods, to hoist the national flag over a disputed site, or to sponsor processions to celebrate national anniversaries. These tactics make it very difficult for the local administration to ban the event, for who could possibly object to the performance of a religious obligation, the raising of the national flag, or the celebration of a national day?[15] But the organizers, once permission has been granted, can easily introduce symbols and speech into these events that is likely to provoke the other community.[16]

If members of the other ethnic group gather to watch the event and defend their neighborhood or community symbols, this countermobilization can then be portrayed as an illegitimate provocation by the minorities on the part of the organizers. Defensive countermobilization by minorities also greatly increases the probability of ethnic violence because, when crowds face each other, the power of individuals to influence their group's actions – whether that individual is a political organizer who wants to incite violence deliberately or a nervous youth intimidated by members of the other community – becomes magnified enormously. If one demonstrator throws a stone, it is interpreted as "the crowd" throwing stones: if one Muslim or Catholic or Jew fires a shot, it is interpreted as "the Muslims" or "the Catholics" or "the Jews" shooting. The instant this kind of violent

[14] The principle that government should be "neutral" toward religions and allow, to the maximum extent possible, each religion to carry out processions and ceremonies began to be introduced in the 1830s, and became a cornerstone of post 1857-government policy, despite the conflict and political mobilization around religious identities it has caused. For an examination of this policy shift and how it was related to 19th-century riots, see C. A. Bayly, *Ruler, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 335–38, and Katherine Prior, "Making History: The State's Intervention in Urban Religious Disputes in the North-Western Provinces in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1993), pp. 200–2.

[15] Administrations in such circumstances must always tread a fine line between preventive action sufficient to prevent riots and preventive action that is so heavy-handed (mass arrests, beating of religious figures, etc.) that it begins to alienate large swaths of the majority community.

[16] For a fine analysis of processions as a form of mobilization, see Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Politics of Processions and Hindu-Muslim Riots," in Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli, eds., *Community Conflicts and the State in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 58–92.

action occurs, a crowd member's identity becomes completely and involuntarily subsumed to that of his ethnic group. As James Rule points out, "The behavior of many, perhaps most individuals in the crowds may not have changed, yet the social construction of their actions may move them from the non-rioter category into that of rioters."[17]

The minority countermobilization or ethnic violence that results from this kind of electoral mobilization will not, of course, be sufficient to scare all the Hindu swing voters into rallying behind the most pro-Hindu party. Many voters, after all, will have firm political allegiances to particular ideological or ethnic political parties. And some voters will have a greater degree of bias toward minorities than others. But to win an election it is not necessary to appeal to every voter but only to pivotal swing voters, especially those undecided voters who are uninformed, unlikely to vote (unless scared into doing so), and most likely for whatever reason to fear the consequences of not taking a strong defensive posture toward members of the other ethnic group.[18] In the southern United States, for example, James Glaser interviewed campaign managers who had a clear sense that ethnic wedge issues would appeal more to some groups among the white electorate than others. For example, one campaign manager told him that rural white voters were normally Democratic but that racial issues could swing them to the Republicans.[19]

Organizing processions and other types of mobilization designed to highlight ethnic cleavages requires scarce resources: time, effort, and money. Therefore we should not expect divisive ethnic mobilization to take place at all times or in every seat in which ethnic parties compete. First, it seems likely that polarizing events will occur disproportionately before elections as politicians try use inflammatory issues to solidify their own ethnic community's support or to intimidate their ethnic opponents.[20] In Kenya, for example, Daniel Arap Moi was accused of fomenting intertribal

[17] See James B. Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 47.

[18] William H. Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 50–51.

[19] James M. Glaser, *Race, Campaign Politics and the Realignment in the South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 69.

[20] If, on the other hand, democratic politics are not well institutionalized within a country (in the first election after a period of authoritarian rule, for instance) we would expect to see a different pattern of ethnic violence, as losers challenge the legitimacy of the electoral process itself. This happened in the Congo, for example, where more than 2,000 died in ethnic violence following the 1993 election. *Agence France Presse*, January 13, 1995.

violence in order to bolster his KANU party's chances of winning in the 1992 election. In Côte d'Ivoire, during the months before the October 1994 presidential election, the government was also accused of fomenting ethnic violence in which 35 people died.[21] Second, it seems likely that an ethnic party that expects, based on previous electoral results, to win handily or to lose massively a local electoral contest has less of an incentive to foment violence in that seat than in seats where the race is close. Instead, the rational strategy is for a party to direct its mobilizing efforts to those close seats in which its efforts will pay the greatest electoral dividends. A great deal of research in American and European politics, for example, has confirmed the relationship between the closeness of an election and politicians' efforts at mobilization. Munger and Cox, for example, found that "Closeness clearly stimulates House expenditures and House expenditures do boost turnout." The incentives for ethnic polarization and ethnic riots follow the same general logic: the incentives are greatest in those seats where electoral races are closest.[22]

Alternative Explanations for Town-Level Riot Variation

The Economic Division of Labor Hypothesis

Ethnic violence is often portrayed as the outcome of economic competition and material interest. Conflict among Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan, according to some, is a simple struggle for jobs and land, with each group using ethnic claims to assert its right to these resources.[23]

[21] *New African*, May 1992, pp. 17–18.

[22] Gary W. Cox and Michael C. Munger, "Closeness, Expenditures, and Turnout in the 1982 U.S. House Elections," *American Political Science Review* 83, no. 1 (1989), pp. 217–32. See also Charles J. Pattie, Ronald J. Johnston, and Edward A. Fieldhouse, "Winning the Local Vote: The Effectiveness of Constituency Campaign Spending in Great Britain, 1983–1992," *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 4 (1995), pp. 969–83. For a comprehensive review of the literature, which includes an assessment of the effects of different electoral systems on levels of elite mobilization, see Gary W. Cox, "Electoral Rules and the Calculus of Mobilization," paper presented at the Shambaugh Comparative Legislative Research Conference, Iowa City, Iowa, April 16–19, 1998 (available at <http://gcox.ucsd.edu/iomob4.htm>). One caveat to this general proposition would be that in any state some sites may be so symbolically important that they may attract political mobilization campaigns even if there is no close electoral race within the town itself. Examples would include capital cities, historic battlefields, or centers of religious pilgrimage.

[23] Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp, "Kyrgyzstan and the Kyrgyz," in Graham Smith, ed., *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1996), p. 396.

Race riots in the United States have often been explained in the same way. Spilerman, for example, in his article examining the 1960s riots, found that towns in which the blacks were moving into "white" occupations in large numbers had more riots than those where their employment opportunities were more restricted. He argued that riots took place because whites resented and felt threatened by minority progress.[24] The Hutu massacres of Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994 and before have also been seen as motivated by an acute shortage of arable land in one of Africa's most overpopulated states.[25]

Two main economic explanations are applied specifically to explain Hindu-Muslim riots. The first, most recently identified with the 1992–93 riots in Bombay and Calcutta and the 2002 riots in Ahmedabad, sees communal violence as a strategy used by slumlords and real-estate developers to displace people from valuable land, which can then be developed or sold for a high price.[26] This theory is extremely difficult to test systematically, as we would need good town-level data on such variables as land prices and ownership over time, data that I have found impossible to obtain. The second theory, and by far the leading economic explanation for Hindu-Muslim riots, sees riots instead as the result of growing competition in ethnically divided labor markets.[27] P. R. Rajgopal, for example, argues that the 1984 riot in the western Indian textile town of Bhiwandi, in which 109 people

[24] S. Spilerman, "Structural Characteristics of Cities and the Severity of Racial Disorders," *American Sociological Review* 41 (1976), pp. 771–93.

[25] Anver Versi, "Rwanda's Killing Fields," *New African*, June 1994, pp. 11–13; Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 171–72.

[26] See "The Burning of Bombay," *Sunday*, January 24–30, 1993, pp. 28–37; Dilip Thakore, "Paying for Socialism," *Sunday*, January 24–30, 1993, pp. 54–55; and Suranjan Das, "The 1992 Calcutta Riot in Historical Continuum: A Relapse into 'Communal Fury'?" *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 2 (2000), p. 301.

[27] Ashgar Ali Engineer, "The Causes of Communal Riots in the Post-Partition Period in India," in Engineer, ed., *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India* (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1984), pp. 33–41; Amiya Kumar Bagchi, "Predatory Commercialization and Communalism in India," in S. Gopal, ed., *Anatomy of a Confrontation* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1990), pp. 193–218; Moin Shakir, *Islam in Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1983), pp. 47; Zenab Banu, *Politics of Communalism* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1989), pp. 82–83; Dildar Khan, "Meerut Riots: An Analysis," in Pramod Kumar, ed., *Towards Understanding Communalism* (Chandigarh: Center for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, 1992), p. 465. Although the thesis is most often linked to recent economic changes, it dates to at least 1886, to when the British viceroy Lord Dufferin described the Delhi riots of that year as a product principally of Hindus' jealousy of Muslims' efforts to improve their economic and social conditions. Ikram Malik, *Hindu-Muslim Riots in the British Punjab, 1849–1900: An Analysis* (Lahore: Jamal Mahmud Press, 1984), pp. 9–10.

were killed and 100 injured, was an organized attempt by Hindu cloth merchants to burn and loot the properties of their new Muslim competitors.[28] Dildar Khan similarly claims that in the town of Meerut, the Hindu Rastogi, Bania, and Marwari castes that control the wholesale cloth trade have started riots to destroy Muslim loom owners who want to move into this business.[29] Riots in the towns of Jabalpur, Kanpur, and Moradabad have also been depicted as organized attempts to drive out new Muslim competitors in, respectively, the *bidi* (cheap cigarette) and brasswares businesses.[30]

Two different types of evidence are used to "prove" arguments that competition in ethnically divided labor markets "causes" communal violence. First, scholars try to show that riots take place disproportionately in towns that are centers for small-scale craft production, where economic competition is said to be especially fierce.[31] The term "small-scale" refers to the system of production in small units and should not give the misleading impression that these industries are unimportant. In 1990 the production of eight major handicrafts including jewelry, weaving, and wood carving accounted for 70% of India's export earnings.[32] Many of the most important crafts – brasswares, silk weaving, the famous *chikan* embroidery of Lucknow, cotton rug weaving, brocade, and wood carving – have work forces that are overwhelmingly (70–95%) Muslim at the national level and often exclusively Muslim at the local level.[33] Although Varanasi *district* has a mixed work force, for example, virtually all the silk weavers within the *city* of Varanasi are Muslim, while Hindu weavers live in nearby villages.[34] In some large centers of handicraft production such as Moradabad, a north Indian

[28] P. R. Rajgopal, *Communal Violence in India* (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House/Centre for Policy Research, 1987), p. 81. For descriptions of the riots, see *Times of India*, May 19–31, 1984.

[29] Khan, "Meerut Riots: An Analysis," p. 465.

[30] Shakir, *Islam in Indian Politics*, p. 47; Ashgar Ali Engineer, "Communal Violence in Kanpur," *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 26, 1994, pp. 473–74.

[31] Engineer, "The Causes of Communal Riots," p. 36.

[32] S. Vijayagopalan, *Economic Status of Handicraft Artisans* (New Delhi: National Council for Applied Economic Research, 1993), p. 9.

[33] A 1991 survey gives the following ethnic breakdown of minority workers in various crafts: art metalware (76% Muslim); embroidery (87.5%); cotton rugs (67%); *zari* (gold thread/brocade) and *zari* goods (89%); and wooden wares (72%). Ibid. For similar figures on Muslim Chikan workers, see *Eighth Annual Report of the Minorities Commission (1986)* (New Delhi: Controller of Publications, 1989), p. 189.

[34] Nita Kumar, *The Artisans of Banaras: Popular Culture and Identity, 1880–1986* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1995), p. 51.

city famous for its brasswares, more than half the city's Muslim population works in the handicraft sector.[35]

Muslim artisans are generally impoverished, work in crowded and unsafe conditions, and are often highly indebted to the Hindu merchants (known as *mahajans or kothidaars*) who supply them with raw materials such as silk, brass, or wood, which the artisans then sell back as finished goods.[36] In Moradabad, for example, 300 *mahajans*, almost all of whom are Hindus, control the brass industry. The workers in Moradabad are almost all Muslims, and according to one study in the early 1990s, 37% of Muslim households in the city owe half a year's income to the moneylenders and *mahajans*. Some Muslim artisans have built up these debts paying for one-time expenses such as equipment, medical treatment, or marriages. Others need loans to cover the period between completion of the brass work and payment from the *mahajan*, which is often a month or more if the goods are being exported.[37]

Studies of communal violence claim that the stability of this ethnic division of labor has come under increasing pressure in the past few decades as Muslim craftsmen have begun to start their own wholesaling businesses. In the town of Mau, for example, a major handloom center in eastern Uttar Pradesh, Muslim *grihasthas* (subcontractors) began in the late 1970s to compete with the Hindu middlemen who controlled the business. Muslims in Varanasi, of whom there were only a handful in the wholesale silk trade thirty years ago, are now reported to account for one merchant in five. If Varanasi and Mau are at all typical, there seem to be two main reasons why Muslims have been able to compete effectively against established Hindu merchants. First, because the new Muslim entrepreneurs are themselves skilled craftsmen, they do not have to employ extra staff (as do the Hindu merchants) to deal with their contract craftsmen and perform quality checks on the goods they buy. Second, research conducted by Nita Kumar in Varanasi suggests that, because it is easier for craftsmen to complain about arbitrary deductions by the wholesaler when they are

[35] Kishwar Shabbir Khan, *Brassware Industry of Moradabad and Its Muslim Artisans* (Aligarh: Interdisciplinary Centre of Development Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, 1991), pp. 49, 187.

[36] For an older survey of handicraft production that describes regional specializations and the middlemen-artisan relationships, see Radhakamal Mukerjee, "Organization of Cottage Industries and Handicrafts," in Radhakamal Mukerjee and H. L. Dey, *Economic Problems of Modern India*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1941), pp. 3–27.

[37] Khan, *Brassware Industry of Moradabad*, pp. 133, 212.

both of the same religion, some Muslim craftsmen prefer to work for their coreligionists.[38]

The second type of evidence used to support arguments about the importance of economic motivations in such violence is information about the distribution of casualties and property losses due to such violence. There is broad agreement that Muslims suffer disproportionately as a result of Hindu-Muslim riots.[39] Hard numbers are difficult to obtain, but of 526 Hindu-Muslim incidents that occurred from 1985 to 1987 in 10 major states, Muslims (12% of the population) accounted for 60% of the 443 deaths, 45% of the 2,667 injuries, and 73% of the property damage.[40] Given that Muslims are, as a community, much poorer than Hindus the relative effect of communal riots on Muslims' economic life is even greater than these percentages suggest. Although the Indian government's policy is not to publish income and wealth data cross-tabulated by religion, leaked statistics from India's National Sample Survey reveal that, while almost half (47%) of urban Hindus work in the organized sector of the economy, the figure for Muslims is only 29%. The majority of urban Muslims (53%, compared with 36% of Hindus) are in the "self-employed" category, which includes craftsmen and craftswomen, bicycle rickshaw drivers, other daily-wage workers such as porters, and small shopkeepers. These self-employed workers are the most vulnerable to both temporary work stoppages and the looting that accompanies riots.[41] The fact that Muslims suffer disproportionate losses in riots and that Muslim businessmen are more often the victims of looting has convinced many scholars and activists that riots are nothing more than a particularly brutal method of protecting Hindu merchants' market share.

Despite the disparate impact of riots on Hindus and Muslims, however, little hard evidence suggests that Hindu merchants and financial interests are fomenting anti-Muslim riots for economic gain; in addition, there are

[38] Conversation with Nita Kumar, Delhi, September 1995, and Kumar, *The Artisans of Banaras*, pp. 42–44.

[39] Even the Hindu nationalist leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee agreed that Muslims suffer most of the casualties in riots in a debate in 1970, although in his view this served the community right for starting the riots in the first place. "Vajpayee's Thesis on Riots Evoke Vehement Protest," *Times of India* (Bombay), May 15, 1970.

[40] *Ninth Annual Report of the Minorities' Commission, 1-4-1986 to 31-3-1987* (New Delhi: Controller of Publications, 1988); *Tenth Annual Report of the Minorities' Commission (for the period 1-4-1987 to 31-3-1986* (New Delhi: Controller of Publications, 1989).

[41] Abusaleh Shariff, "Socio-Economic and Demographic Differentials between Hindus and Muslims in India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 18, 1995, pp. 2947–53.

three counterarguments to challenge the economic competition hypothesis. First, if town-level economic explanations were correct, we would surely see at least a few cases in which, in the very small number of towns in which Muslims are economically dominant, Muslims start riots against their Hindu competitors.[42] But there is no evidence that Muslims ever start or profit from violence in such towns, for example, as Udaipur in Rajasthan.[43] Second, the economic thesis seems to confuse cause with effect. The fact that economically motivated violence against Muslims occurs *after a riot breaks out* does not necessarily prove that this is why the violence broke out in the first place.[44] Third, some journalists and scholars have argued that an ethnically divided labor market might actually promote economic interdependence and peace between Hindus and Muslims rather than economic competition. In Varanasi, for example, journalists reported that a Hindu-Muslim riot was imminent in the city as thousands of Muslims gathered to pray at the disputed Gyanvapi mosque in the center of the city, and 50,000 Hindus gathered at the nearby Kashi Vishvanath temple. A riot did not break out, however, because the local Hindu traders association, the Kashi Vyapar Mandal, reportedly defused the tension.

One columnist explained why Hindu traders, a group that was solidly behind the BJP and the movement to build a temple at Ayodhya, should have acted in this way:

> The issue is not whether these erstwhile supporters of the BJP have suddenly turned secular, but that they have found it necessary to maintain peaceful co-existence. If Varanasi goes the Ayodhya way, the traders would be worst hit as lawlessness and killings would drive away thousands of tourists who flock to this temple city and also kill a flourishing business in carpets and saris that caters to both the home and export markets. Since both Hindus and Muslims are equally dependent on this commerce, it is plain that economic interests have prevailed over political or communal prejudices.[45]

[42] A. R. Saiyed gives examples of target choice that is inexplicable from the perspective of the economic-competition theory in "Changing Urban Ethos: Reflections on Hindu-Muslim Riots," in A. R. Saiyed, *Religion and Ethnicity among Muslims* (Jaipur: Rawat, 1995), pp. 326–27. The issue of target selection is explored in detail by Donald Horowitz in his *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 108–13, 131–35.

[43] See Banu's study of Udaipur, *Politics of Communalism*, pp. 82–83.

[44] A point made by Saiyed, "Changing Urban Ethos: Some Reflections on Hindu-Muslim Riots," in K. S. Shukla, ed., *Collective Violence: Genesis and Response* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1985), pp. 97–119, at p. 102.

[45] Vivek Bharati, "Lessons of Varanasi: Pitting Economy against Hindutva," *Times of India*, January 6, 1993. The economic interdependence argument has also been used to explain why Moradabad remained peaceful in December 1992 and why Malegaon was peaceful

The Demographic Balance–Security Dilemma Hypothesis

Research on urban violence in the United States has extensively explored the relationship between the local ethnic balance and the likelihood of ethnic violence. Spilerman, for example, found that the number of race riots in the 1960s was positively related to the size of a city's black population. In a society where racial tension is high, he argued, a larger number of minorities creates more opportunities for contact and, therefore, for conflict between the majority and minority communities. The larger the total population of an oppressed group, the greater the probability that, once an incident occurs, there will be a critical mass of people with a low threshold for participating in violence.[46]

Within India "ethnic balance" explanations for town-level variations in Hindu-Muslim violence are ubiquitous.[47] One version of this theory – more often heard in conversation than in academic studies – postulates a simple positive and linear relationship between the number of Muslims in a town and the likelihood of violence. According to one police officer I interviewed, for example, the postpartition decline in violence in the town of Bareilly in western Uttar Pradesh was in part the result of the emigration of a large number of the town's Muslims to Pakistan in 1947: fewer Muslims, especially from particular castes alleged to be prone to violence, meant fewer riots.[48] Towns such as Moradabad are also sometimes described as "dangerous" simply because of their high proportion of Muslims.[49]

The particular variation of the "ethnic balance" argument that is most common, however, predicts not a linear but a curvilinear relationship between a town's Muslim population and its level of Hindu-Muslim violence.

prior to 1963. "Against All Odds," *India Today*, March 31, 1994, pp. 179–81; July 31, 1983, pp. 38–39.

[46] Seymour Spilerman, "The Causes of Racial Disturbances: Tests of an Explanation," *American Sociological Review* 36 (1971), pp. 427–42.

[47] See Richard D. Lambert, "Hindu-Muslim Riots" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1951), p. 25; Shakir, *Islam in Indian Politics*, p. 47. See also S. K. Ghosh, *Riots: Prevention and Control* (Calcutta: Eastern Law House, 1972), pp. 52–53; N. C. Saxena, "The Nature and Origin of Communal Riots," in Ashgar Ali Engineer, ed., *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India* (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1984), pp. 51–67.

[48] N. S. Saksena, IP, told me that "The ones who fight are the Lodhas, Ahirs, Jats and Thakurs, and among the Muslims not the Saiyyids, but the Pathans, Mirzas and also the Qureshis. There was a huge exodus of the Muslims from Bareilly in the 1940s. . . . many of those who left were from these 'fighting cock' groups. Those who are left are Ansaris and Julahas." interview, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, August 30, 1995.

[49] I met a Hindu sub inspector in 1995 who quite plainly told me that Moradabad was a dangerous town because it had lots of Muslims.

Riots, the argument goes, occur most often as the population of Hindus and Muslims approaches parity, but then their frequency declines as one community or the other establishes overwhelming numerical dominance.[50] In 1951 Richard Lambert, in one of the first serious social-scientific studies of Hindu-Muslim violence, noted that "Urban riots occurred generally in localities where the communities were more balanced in numbers."[51] More recently, Moin Shakir has argued that Hindu-Muslim riots occur where Muslims are "numerous enough to be reckoned with, yet not sufficient to be overwhelming," while P. R. Rajgopal claims that "As a general proposition, communal riots occur in places where neither of the communities has a preponderance in number."[52]

The Embittered Refugee Hypothesis

Those who flee ethnic persecution in one state are likely to harbor a grudge against members of the group that committed aggression against them if they encounter them in their new home.[53] The 50,000 Tutsis who fled Rwanda for Burundi from 1959 to 1965, for example, were reported to have embittered ethnic relations between Burundi's own Hutus and Tutsis. René Lemarchand, for example, argues that anti-Hutu violence in Ntega and Marangara provinces in 1988 – in which 15,000 people were killed – was in large part the result of the settlement in these provinces of many of these Tutsi refugees, whose "strong anti-Hutu sentiments are almost universally recognized by local inhabitants."[54] More recently analysts of the Bosnian civil war have argued that refugee flows were often the catalyst for violence directed against members of local minority populations.

The mass migration of 7.5 million Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan to India in the wake of the partition of the country in 1947 is alleged to have had a similar negative effect on Hindu-Muslim relations in

[50] Roger Jeffery and Patricia M. Jeffery encountered similar arguments in their study of communal violence in Bijnor, "The Bijnor Riots, October 1990: Collapse of a Mythical Special Relationship?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 5, 1994, p. 551.

[51] Lambert, "Hindu-Muslim Riots," p. 25.

[52] Rajgopal, *Communal Violence in India*, p. 19; Shakir, *Islam in Indian Politics*, p. 47. See also Ghosh, *Riots*, pp. 52–53; Saxena, "The Nature and Origin of Communal Riots," pp. 51–67.

[53] For the political effects of large-scale refugee flows, see Cheryl Bernard, "Politics and the Refugee Experience," *Political Science Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (1986), pp. 617–36.

[54] René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 60–61.

northern and western India.[55] From 1947 to 1950 there was a succession of urban riots in India, as Hindu and Sikh refugees took out their anger on local Muslims whom they held responsible for their hardships.[56] The most detailed postpartition surveys of the effects of refugees on communal relations were carried out in Uttar Pradesh, the destination for more than 490,000 refugees from Pakistan between 1947 and 1951 (5.07% of the state's 1951 population). Only 11% of these refugees settled in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh; most migrants flocked instead toward resort towns they had visited before partition, such as Mussoorie and Dehra Dun, or to major trading centers, such as Meerut (10% refugee by 1951), Saharanpur (21%), and Agra (10%). Social distance surveys done in some of these towns in the 1950s and 1960s found that recent refugees from Pakistan had much worse relations with the local Muslims than longtime Hindu residents. A study of Dehra Dun, for example, where the population was 25% refugee in 1951, found that "Not a single Muslim had any positive liking for the Hindu and Sikh refugees as a community. The latter shared their maximum hostility."[57]

In the 1980s scholars noticed that some of the largest communal riots had taken place in towns such as Saharanpur, Moradabad, and Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh and Godhra in Gujarat, where substantial numbers of Hindu refugees and their families had settled. Several scholars argued that this was not coincidental and proposed that "If in . . . an [urban] area, there is a sprinkling of the post-partition migrants from Pakistan then the area is positively combustible, in the communal sense."[58] There is, however, some difference of opinion over the precise mechanism through which Hindu refugees and their descendants are supposed to have an effect in making an area more combustible. For some, the focus on refugees reflects little more than the stereotype that people from Punjab and Sind are pushy and aggressive. Others point to the fact that refugees are very often traders with economic incentives for anti-Muslim violence; they therefore see the

[55] These refugee numbers are estimates provided by Stephen L. Keller, *Uprooting and Social Change: The Role of Refugees in Development* (Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1975), p. 17.

[56] For examples of these "refugee riots," see reports on the Delhi riot of September 1947, in which perhaps 2,000 Muslims died, the Godhra riot of March 1948, and the Allahabad riot of January 1948. *Times*, September 25, 1947; *Pioneer* (Lucknow), January 20 and April 6, 1948.

[57] Raghuraj Gupta, *Hindu-Muslim Relations* (Lucknow: Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society, U.P., 1976), p. 171.

[58] Shakir, *Islam in Indian Politics*, p. 47; Ghosh, *Riots*, p. 52.

"refugee theory" as a variant of the general economic competition theory of violence.[59]

Probably the most common explanation is simply that refugee participation in violence is the result of higher levels of antipathy toward Muslims on the part of Hindu and Sikh refugees who hold Muslims responsible for their past hardship and emigration, and a higher level of refugee support for Hindu nationalist political parties, which are in turn often blamed for provoking communal riots.[60] The high degree of refugee support for the Hindu right is related to events immediately preceding and following partition. As their position became increasingly insecure in the years before 1947, many members of the Hindu minority in West Punjab, Sind, and the North West Frontier Province (areas that became part of Pakistan) joined the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), a militant Hindu nationalist organization that offered some form of collective protection. In Punjab, for example, the RSS's membership grew from 14,000 in late 1945 to 46,000 in December 1946, and to 59,200 by June 1947.[61] After partition, the RSS took a leading role in providing aid for refugees who had fled to India, thus increasing its support among refugees, who continue to support the RSS and BJP in large numbers. Several studies in the 1950s and 1960s confirmed the disproportionate support given by refugees to the Hindu right, and the prominent BJP leaders L. K. Advani (the current Indian home minister) and M. L. Khurana (former Delhi chief minister) are both refugees from Pakistan.[62]

The Violence-Begets-Violence Hypothesis

A widespread belief among those who study communal riots is that violence leads to more violence. Even if an initial riot has been deliberately fomented

[59] On this point, see Engineer on the 1980–81 riots between the Sindhis and Ghanchi Muslims of Godhra, and Banu on the 1965–66 riots in Udaipur. *On Developing Theory of Communal Riots* (Bombay: Institute of Islamic Studies, 1984), p. 25; Zenab Banu, "Reality of Communal Riot: Class Conflict between the Haves of Hindus and Muslims," *Indian Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 1 (1980), pp. 100–14.

[60] Jeffery and Jeffery, "The Bijnor Riots, October 1990," p. 553.

[61] Governor's Reports, Punjab (IOR) L/PJ/249, L/PJ/250.

[62] L. K. Advani was RSS secretary in Karachi before leaving for India in 1947. R. N. Saksena and Geeta Puri both found high levels of refugee support for the RSS and Jana Sangh in separate studies carried out in Dehra Dun, Rishikesh, and Delhi. Saksena, *Refugees: A Study in Changing Attitudes* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1961), p. 21; Geeta Puri, *The Jana Sangh* (Delhi: Sterling, 1978).

for political or material ends, violence is widely believed to create new fears, hatreds, and motives for revenge that cannot be easily erased. Stanley Tambiah, for example, tells us that "intermittent ethnic riots form a series, with antecedent riots influencing the unfolding of subsequent ones."[63] Chaim Kaufmann doubts whether it is in "anyone's power to resolve ethnic hatreds once there has been large-scale violence, especially murders of civilians."[64] In India, government officials and scholars alike continually use categories such as "riot-prone" and "communally sensitive" to denote towns where violence has occurred and is most likely to break out again.

One way in which violence in the past might influence the likelihood for violence in the present is by creating the urge for revenge on the part of the victims. The most common explanation for the way in which the past level of violence influences the present, however, focuses on the way in which communities assess their security and the threat posed by others. Barry Posen, for instance, argues that, in a situation where the armed forces that usually prevent violence are weak, and settlement patterns place groups in close proximity, ethnic groups assess the threat posed by others by looking to history: "[H]ow did other groups behave the last time they were unconstrained? Is there a record of offensive military activity by the other?" If violence has occurred in the past, he argues, then the likelihood of groups perceiving their security at risk and therefore initiating ethnic violence is high.[65] István Deák makes a similar case for Yugoslavia, arguing that "If Serbs and Croats kill each other today, it is mainly because they fear a repetition of the massive killing of the last World War."[66] In India, as in the former Yugoslavia, many argue that once severe communal riots have afflicted a town or state, the need for revenge and the fear of what will happen if one does not make a "defensive" attack upon members of the other community increase to the point where violence becomes self-perpetuating. Accidents of the sort that happen every day can, in this environment, be the spark for cataclysmic violence: the driver of a truck that killed a Muslim

[63] Stanley Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 214.

[64] Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security* 20, no. 4 (1996), p. 173.

[65] Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993), pp. 30–31, 38.

[66] István Deák, "The One and the Many," review of Aleksa Djilas's *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919–1953* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), *New Republic*, October 7, 1991, pp. 29–36.

youth sparked off a large riot in Jaipur in 1969; and in the most famous incident of all, a pig that wandered into a Muslim festival in Moradabad in 1980 was believed by Muslims to have been deliberately released by the Hindus, sparking off riots in which 112 people died.[67]

Testing the Theories

One problem with assessing the value of these various town-level explanations for violence is that scholars of ethnic violence have tended to develop their theories and "prove" their hypotheses by looking at an unrepresentative sample of the places where violence *has* taken place, rather than at a large sample of all towns. The study of Hindu-Muslim violence is no exception. The tendency in India to develop explanations on the basis of those cases where Hindu-Muslim riots *have* occurred has led to scholars inferring, wrongly, that virtually every socioeconomic characteristic shared by riot-affected cities such as Moradabad, Meerut, Aligarh, and Ahmadabad must be a cause of violence. Cities that share the same socioeconomic characteristics as these violent cities but that have been generally peaceful, such as Bareilly, Allahabad, and Jaunpur, have been largely ignored.[68] A second problem is the absence of good data on riots and their likely causes, which has made it difficult to say conclusively which factors are associated with high levels of Hindu-Muslim violence and which are not.

To test the main town-level theories, I use a specially collected dataset that contains data on violence, socioeconomic, and political variables for all towns with more than 20,000 inhabitants in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, over the course of three decades. I gathered data from newspapers, social surveys, the Indian census, and electoral returns for every major town and city in the state (N = 167) from 1951 to 1991 in the case of census data and from 1970 to 1995 in the case of electoral data. The resulting town-level dataset has 47,642 monthly observations from 1970 to 1995, although because of missing data the number of observations on many variables drops to around 40,000.

I selected the state of Uttar Pradesh for several reasons. First, the state is diverse and populous (2001 population 166 million), with substantial variation in levels of the town-level factors most often associated with Hindu-Muslim violence. Second, a large number of former bureaucrats, police

[67] *Times of India*, June 15, 1969; August 21, 1980.

[68] See Steven I. Wilkinson, "U.P.'s 'Riot-Prone' Towns," *Seminar* 432 (1995), pp. 27–34.

officers, politicians, and academics have written on this state, making a much wider range of information on local-level factors and individual riots available than we could hope to find in less well studied states such as Orissa or Rajasthan. Third, Uttar Pradesh has had a unified state administration with virtually the same boundaries since the early nineteenth century. This improves the availability and quality of historical data on violence and its purported causes compared with data available from the many other Indian states that have had frequent boundary changes or inconsistent data collection procedures.[69]

The source for my data on state level ethnic violence is a dataset on Hindu-Muslim riots from 1950 to 1995, collected by Varshney and Wilkinson (see Appendixes A and B). Details were collected on every riot reported during this period in the *Times of India* (Bombay), India's newspaper of record. Data include injuries, deaths, and duration of each event. A total of 138 reported riots took place in these towns in Uttar Pradesh over this 25-year period, in which 1,151 people were killed and 2,345 injured. In this study I use these data to construct the following two indicators of Hindu-Muslim violence: *RIOTS*, the monthly number of Hindu-Muslim riots in each state; and *KILLED*, the deaths per month in Hindu-Muslim riots. To test for the effect of previous violence on communal conflict, I also calculate the cumulative total of deaths in previous 60 or 120 months, to create the variable *RIOT5YR* or *RIOT10YR*.

These riot data are, of course, an imperfect way of measuring the total number of *polarizing events*.[70] Although an electoral incentives theory predicts that close electoral competition will provide incentives for politicians to organize events such as processions and disputes over sacred sites, which in turn will often, but not always, lead to Hindu-Muslim riots, the dataset lacks town-level information on the precipitating events that

[69] None of these three reasons makes Uttar Pradesh unrepresentative in terms of the factors believed to lead to communal violence. The present day state of Uttar Pradesh shares virtually the same boundaries as the colonial provinces of Agra and Oudh, annexed by the British in 1801 and 1856. These provinces were administered as two separate units until 1902 (although after 1877 the same lieutenant governor headed both governments), when they were joined together as the "United Provinces of Agra and Oudh." After independence in 1947, the small Princely States of Rampur, Banaras, and Garhwal were added to the United Provinces to form the new state of Uttar Pradesh, Hindi for "Northern State." In 2000, as this book was being written, the western hill districts of Uttar Pradesh, accounting for 5% of the state's population, were carved out to form the new state of Uttaranchal.

[70] See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of data quality issues.

do not lead to riots. Precisely because the majority of potentially precipitating events do not lead to violence, they are generally not reported in newspapers and other sources from which these data on violence were generated. It might be possible to create a complete dataset on precipitating events from police, press and secondary sources. For example, each local police station in India keeps a festival register with records of exactly which festivals and processions are allowed, any restrictions that apply, and whether the procession takes place.[71] In the case of religious processions, these notebooks specify the route to be taken, whether music is allowed, and matters such as the allowable height of religious symbols to be carried in the procession.[72] This register could be combined with other police and local press reports about all local processions, demonstrations, and protests to provide an accurate picture of the total number of "precipitating events" that take place in a town. The creation of such a dataset would, however, involve huge problems, both in terms of the sheer labor involved and in securing government approval to examine local police records.

In addition to the problem of lack of information on precipitating events, the dataset used here covers only Hindu-Muslim riots rather than all forms of ethnic and nonethnic collective violence, so we cannot address the fascinating question of how different types of violence vary together and

[71] Interview with an officer, Indian Administrative Service (IAS), December 15, 1994.

[72] The height of objects carried in a procession may appear trivial but there have been cases where *tazias* (symbolic tombs) carried in a Muslim procession sparked violence when some processionists demanded that branches be taken off a Hindu-owned tree or that some other obstacle be removed to allow the procession to pass without lowering the *tazia*. This happened, for instance, at Hazaribagh in Bihar in April 1935, when Muslim processionists claimed that Hindu banners along their route would contaminate the *tazias*. Police officers in such cases sometimes tried to avoid conflict by digging the road deeper so that the *tazia* would not have to be shortened and would still not hit the tree. A former senior police officer, M. K. Sinha, has a good description in his memoirs of a riot averted in this way at Siwan, Bihar, in the 1930s. M. K. Sinha, *In Father's Footsteps: A Policeman's Odyssey* (Patna: Vanity Books, 1981), p. 196. It hardly needs emphasizing that the height of the tazia or the placement of obstacles along the route is not always independent of their potential to cause conflict. In the 1920s several electricity companies in Uttar Pradesh's newly electrified towns had to spend large sums of money taking electricity wires down before *tazia* processions, and then putting them up again after the festivals had finished. This process imposed heavy and unsustainable costs on the fledgling private electricity companies, which appealed to the government for help. "Instructions Regulating the Height of Electric Wires So as Not to Interfere with the Passage of Tazias at the Time of Muharram," UPSA, GAD, file no. 361/1929.

whether, for example, the same factors that lead to a reduction in Hindu-Muslim violence might lead to an increase in caste violence.[73]

Testing the Economic Competition Hypothesis

Testing the religious division of labor or economic-conflict argument has proved especially difficult, because of a lack of data on occupational and income distributions by religion. The type of town-level yearly data on the ethnic division of labor used by Susan Olzak, for example, in her study of racial violence in the United States is simply not available for India, even at the state level.[74] This lack of data reflects a conscious decision taken by the Indian government in 1949 not to cross-tabulate economic and ethnic data because it was felt that such tables had heightened communal and caste sensitivities during the colonial period.[75] What I have done to address this lack of data in this study, at least partly, is to combine two different sources to help identify whether towns possess industries generally associated with increasing Hindu-Muslim economic competition. First, I used the town directories compiled by the census of India in 1971 and 1981 to establish which industries were important in any particular towns. Then I combine this information with case studies, monographs, and economic surveys that have been carried out to identify those industries in which there is an ethnically divided labor force and in which Hindu-Muslim economic competition is most intense. This allows me to create a new dichotomous measure of whether an industry associated with high levels of Hindu-Muslim economic competition is important in any particular town.[76] Towns in which these industries are present would, if an economic theory of ethnic violence were correct, have higher levels of ethnic violence than towns in which they are not.

[73] I am however gathering data on this issue, the preliminary results of which are reported in "Ethnic Mobilization and Ethnic Violence in Post-Independence India," paper presented at the panel on "Operationalizing Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," APSA annual convention, Atlanta, September 2–4, 1999.

[74] Olzak, *The Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict*.

[75] *Times of India*, December 5, 1949.

[76] The main all-India survey I use to identify industries prone to Hindu-Muslim economic competition is S. Vijayagopalan, *Economic Status of Handicraft Artisans* (New Delhi: National Council for Applied Economic Research, 1993). The UP government also publishes directories that allow us to establish religious breakdowns for wholesalers and self-employed artisans. See, e.g., *Uttara Pradesha Vyapar Protsahan Pradhikaran* (Kanpur: Udhyog Nirdeshalaya, 1994).

Measures of Town-Level Electoral Competition

In the absence of any town-level opinion poll data on the intensity of political competition at the local level, I use the previous state and national election results as my primary indicator of the degree of electoral competition in individual towns. My assumption is that politicians calculate which seats are most competitive based on the previous election results and concentrate their polarizing efforts in these seats. Unfortunately systematic data on municipal elections are not readily available, even though press reports and case studies give us good reasons to think that the relationship between electoral competition and violence also exists in municipal politics.[77]

I have collected data for the following variables: *VSMARGIN*, the percentage margin of victory in a town's Vidhan Sabha (state assembly) constituency in the previous state election; *LS MARGIN*, the margin of victory in a town's Lok Sabha (parliamentary) constituency in the previous national election; and *VS CLOSE/LS CLOSE*, races where the previous election in the VS or LS was won with less than a 5% margin. To test whether riots happen more frequently during election campaigns I use the dummy variable *ELECALL6*, which measures whether there is a state or national election in the next six months.

To measure the main socioeconomic hypotheses, I rely primarily on census data. My main measure of a town's population is *CTYPOP*, interpolated from data reported in the decadal census. To test for a direct linear relationship between a town's Muslim percentage and its level of riots and deaths, I use the variable *MUSLIMPCT*, the Muslim percentage in each town interpolated on the basis of the decadal census of India. To test for a curvilinear relationship between a town's Muslim population percentage and its level of riots and deaths, with riots becoming more frequent the closer the Hindu-Muslim percentages are to 50–50, I also ran the regression using *MUSLIMPCTCURVE*, the Muslim percentage defined as the square of (50% – x%), where x is the town's Muslim percentage. We would expect that as *MUSLIMPCTCURVE* goes down, the level of riots should go up.

To test for the thesis that refugee percentages affect a town's level of violence, I use the variable *REFUGEEPCT*, a measure of the proportion

[77] See, e.g., Ashgar Ali Engineer's reports on the July 1992 Ahmedabad riots in, "Communal Riots in Ahmedabad," *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 1–8, 1992, pp. 1641–43, and press reports on riots in Jalgaon, *Times of India*, January 12, 1972.

of refugees in any particular town. To calculate this I use the "displaced persons" figures for the urban portion of each district reported in each of the 56 separate district census handbooks for Uttar Pradesh for the 1951 census. A displaced person was defined as "any person who has entered India having left or being compelled to leave his home in Western Pakistan on or after the 1st March 1947, or his home in Eastern Pakistan on or after the 15th October 1946, on account of civil disturbances or on account of the setting up of the two Dominions of India and Pakistan."[78]

Statistical Model

To analyze these data, I ran several multivariate regressions using a negative binomial model. One advantage of the negative binomial model is that it uses more information about the underlying distribution of my event count data: a large number of towns with no riots and a few riot-affected towns, compared with a model that uses a normal distribution. Another advantage is that, unlike in the case of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses, the negative binomial model does not generate implausible negative predictions of events such as riots. Although the Poisson model is often used for event count data, several of the key assumptions of the Poisson model do not hold when looking at Hindu-Muslim riot data: more than one riot can occur in each month; the probability of a riot occurring is not constant within each month; and the probability of a riot is likely not independent of other riots.[79]

In Table 2.1, I present the regression results. The electoral competition variables I highlight in this chapter clearly do matter, even while controlling for previous violence, variables that reflect alternative hypotheses, and socioeconomic factors specific to each town. I find that proximity to an election sharply increases the likelihood of a riot. In terms of substantive effects, if an election is six months or less away the predicted number of riots in any town per month more than doubles, increasing from .0011 to .0024 riots. The closeness of the previous Vidhan Sabha election also seems to be positively related to the likelihood of a riot taking place before

[78] *Census of India, 1951 District Census Handbook Uttar Pradesh* (Allahabad, 1954–55), p. xi.

[79] J. Scott Long, *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1997), pp. 217–63.

Table 2.1. *Electoral Competition and Occurrence of Riots in 167 Uttar Pradesh Towns, 1970–1995*

	Hindu-Muslim Riots			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Town population (100,000s)	0.151**	0.148**	0.236**	0.231**
	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Industries associated with Hindu-Muslim economic competition	0.535	0.504	0.533	0.553
	(0.282)	(0.301)	(0.295)	(0.298)
Muslim percentage	−1.144	−0.598	−1.019	−0.920
	(1.127)	(1.141)	(1.134)	(1.146)
Muslim percentage (curvilinear)	−10.232*	−7.208	−9.171*	−9.388*
	(4.040)	(4.124)	(4.091)	(4.112)
Percentage of refugees from Pakistan	−6.846	59.770	76.360	77.469
	(36.287)	(74.817)	(71.457)	(73.938)
Riots in previous 5 years	0.409**	0.476**		
	(0.030)	(0.035)		
Upcoming national or state elections (6 months)	0.777**	0.716**	0.812**	0.812**
	(0.212)	(0.219)	(0.213)	(0.214)
Less than 5% margin in previous national election	0.259	−0.166	−0.417	−0.273
	(0.282)	(0.339)	(0.329)	(0.332)
Less than 5% margin in previous state election	0.489*	1.295**	1.088**	
	(0.232)	(0.320)	(0.303)	
Closeness of previous Lok Sabha constituency race		−0.699	−1.702	−1.545
		(1.039)	(1.052)	(1.066)
Closeness of previous Vidhan Sabha constituency race		4.322**	3.391**	2.546
		(1.117)	(1.114)	(1.347)
Riots in previous 10 years			0.323**	0.296**
			(0.028)	(0.027)
Less than 10% margin in previous state election				0.466
				(0.300)
Constant	−6.523**	−7.407**	−6.735**	−6.579**
	(0.607)	(0.704)	(0.679)	(0.719)
Observations	46,494	34,974	34,974	34,974
Number of towns	162	158	158	158

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

the next election, with the variable *VS CLOSE* statistically significant across all models at the 95% confidence level. Having a close race in the previous state legislative election has a clear substantive effect: holding all other variables constant having a margin of 5% or less in the previous election

leads to a predicted 0.003 riots per month, compared with 0.0009 riots in a town with wider election margins in the previous race.

Turning now to the socioeconomic factors most often regarded as precipitants of riots – the presence of industries often associated with Hindu-Muslim economic competition, the linear hypothesis about a town's Muslim percentage, and the percentage of refugees from Pakistan living in a town – we can see in Table 2.1 that these are not statistically significant in explaining the occurrence of riots. Many towns in India have a large number of refugees from Pakistan and industries with a sharp ethnic division of labor, and it appears as if scholars have wrongly inferred that these factors cause riots purely because they are so prevalent. On the other hand two socioeconomic factors do increase the likelihood of riots: as a town's Hindu-Muslim balance approaches 50–50, its level of violence goes up; and as a town's population goes up, so does the likelihood of having a Hindu-Muslim riot. The finding about the significance of population is not unexpected, because virtually every comparative study of ethnic and nonethnic violence (such as U.S. race riots) finds that the level of violence increases with a town's population. The finding that ethnic parity is related to violence also seems to fit well with the general political competition model outlined here: if we assume relatively cohesive Muslim and Hindu voting patterns, the incentives to polarize will increase as the relative sizes of the community approach parity and it becomes more important to win over the small group of swing voters.

The level of previous violence in a town is clearly associated with a higher incidence of riots, with the 5-year cumulative total of riots being highly significant in every model in explaining both the occurrence of riots and the rate of casualties. The measure of the 10-year cumulative total of riots, which I have run on several models, is also significant, although its coefficient is approximately half that of the 5-year lag, suggesting that the effects of violence do diminish through time. Going from a town with no riots in the previous 10 years to a town with a history of 15 riots while holding all other factors constant at their mean would result in a large predicted increase in riots per month, from 0.0012 to 0.1613.

Moving from the occurrence of riots to the level of deaths in Hindu-Muslim violence (Table 2.2), we see that electoral competition variables and several of the socioeconomic variables are also, not surprisingly, associated with higher levels of deaths due to communal violence. In terms of substantive effects, the predicted number of deaths per month in a

Table 2.2. *Electoral Competition and Deaths in Hindu-Muslim Violence in 167 Uttar Pradesh Towns, 1970–1995*

	Deaths in Hindu-Muslim Riots			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Town population (100,000s)	0.197**	0.191**	0.336**	0.329**
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Industries associated with Hindu-Muslim economic competition	0.061	−0.202	−0.156	−0.056
	(0.111)	(0.121)	(0.116)	(0.115)
Muslim percentage	−1.726**	−1.299*	−2.268**	−2.316**
	(0.509)	(0.531)	(0.537)	(0.547)
Muslim percentage (curvilinear)	−22.458**	−18.361**	−22.467**	−23.509**
	(2.077)	(2.131)	(2.171)	(2.200)
Percentage of refugees from Pakistan	48.773**	105.480**	125.473**	123.517**
	(11.571)	(32.002)	(30.183)	(30.825)
Riots in previous 5 years	0.634**	0.725**		
	(0.014)	(0.017)		
Upcoming national or state elections (6 months)	1.233**	1.335**	1.288**	1.249**
	(0.085)	(0.090)	(0.084)	(0.083)
Less than 5% margin in previous national election	1.198**	0.604**	0.229	0.553**
	(0.093)	(0.127)	(0.119)	(0.116)
Less than 5% margin in previous state election	0.452**	1.629**	1.587**	
	(0.090)	(0.130)	(0.119)	
Closeness of previous Lok Sabha constituency race		−0.762	−2.403**	−2.144**
		(0.441)	(0.440)	(0.446)
Closeness of previous Vidhan Sabha constituency race		6.256**	5.630**	3.609**
		(0.409)	(0.390)	(0.477)
Riots in previous 10 years			0.440**	0.402**
			(0.013)	(0.012)
Less than 10% margin in previous state election				0.511**
				(0.117)
Constant	−4.369**	−5.529**	−4.437**	−3.947**
	(0.265)	(0.304)	(0.295)	(0.305)
Observations	46,494	34,974	34,974	34,974
Number of towns	162	158	158	158

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.

town goes up by around 75% if there was a close race in the previous election (0.03 to 0.014 per month). The percentage of refugees in a town and its Muslim percentage and Hindu-Muslim balance are positively associated with a higher level of deaths. Proximity to an election also increases the

predicted number of deaths in riots by around 75%, and the closeness of previous state assembly races are also positively associated with deaths in Hindu-Muslim rioting.

The statistical finding that the presence of industries associated with Hindu-Muslim economic competition is not associated with the *occurrence* of ethnic violence supports a point made many times in case studies, qualitative research, and riot investigations: that economic motivations may come into play once violence has begun but that they do not seem to be important in explaining the initiation of violence. If we look at the sequence of violence and looting, not just during ethnic violence in India but around the world, it is striking how many reports describe how looting only occurs once it is obvious that the costs of seizing the property of the minority community are low and that there is little risk of the police intervening. In Bosnia, for example, a Muslim woman, Vahida Kartal, told a reporter in 1994 how "At the beginning, the Serbs said they would not force us out and simply ordered us to hand over our weapons," but that after a few months it became clear that the Bosnian Serb police would not intervene to protect Muslims. Once this became apparent to local Serbs, Kartal described how "In the middle of the day, an armed Serb would come and take the television, or a refrigerator, or whatever he chose that had some value."[80]

In India Justice Dayal investigated the Ranchi riots of 1967 and concluded that economic rivalries between Muslims and Hindus had not sparked the violence, "though this feeling could have been exploited once the disturbances started."[81] A similar picture emerges from other detailed riot inquiries. The 1931 Kanpur riot report found that Hindu and Muslim mobs on the first day of the riot were concerned purely with inflicting physical harm on members of the opposite community. It was only on the second day, after the weak police response to the first day's killings, that large-scale looting began.[82] Similarly in the Bombay riots that followed the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque, the bulk of the economically motivated attacks on Muslim businesses and slums and lumber yards that were prime targets for property development only took place in January 1993, *after* the Maharashtra state police had already shown, by its actions in the December

[80] "How Serbs Drove Out Their Muslim Neighbors," *New York Times*, August 30, 1994.

[81] Quoted in Rajgopal, *Communal Violence in India*, p. 99.

[82] East India (Cawnpore Riots), *Report of the Commission of Inquiry and Resolution of the Government of the United Provinces* (London: HMSO, 1931), pp. 18–31.

1992 violence, that it was unwilling to intervene to protect Muslim lives and property.[83]

Qualitative Evidence on the Relationship between Electoral Competition and Violence

Qualitative research on other towns and states in India supports the statistical finding that increases in electoral competition are associated with a rise in the likelihood of communal riots, even if we control for previous levels of Hindu-Muslim violence. Reports on the riots that broke out in the Maharashtra town of Nasik, for example, describe how politicians from the Shiv Sena Party tried to solidify Hindu support against the Muslim-supported Congress (I) in advance of the 1986 elections by taking processions through Muslim-dominated areas of the town, shouting political slogans as they passed through the Hamid Chowk. Muslims stoned the processions as they went by, sparking several days of violence between Hindus, Muslims, and the police in which 8 people were killed and 65 injured. A former Congress member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Shantaram Bapur explained at the time that the riots took place because the Sena "wants to create terror, divide the people, and show themselves as protectors of Hindus."[84]

Perhaps it is a sign of how many politicians feel themselves to be immune from the law that many are quite open about the relationship between communal violence and an improvement in their electoral prospects. In January 1986, for instance, riots broke out in Aurangabad (Maharashtra) following processions and protests organized by the Shiv Sena, which was trying to break the electoral hold of the Congress in the city. The riots helped the Sena defeat the Congress (I) in the subsequent elections, and the Shiv Sena chief in the city, Chandrakant Khaire, had no doubt about the connection. He claimed that the riots were critical in building support for the Sena in the city and that "ever since the first stir our party has received tremendous sympathy from the Hindus." In 1993 Neeraj Chaturvedi, an MLA from a constituency in the major industrial town of Kanpur, was similarly frank when he told a journalist that Hindu-Muslim riots sparked

[83] *Damning Verdict: Reprinting of the Justice B. N. Srikrishna Commission Appointed for Inquiry into the Riots at Mumbai during December 1992–January 1993 and the March 12, 1993 Bomb Blasts* (Mumbai: Sabrang, n.d.).

[84] "Maharashtra: Communal Cauldron," *India Today*, June 15, 1986, p. 65; *Times of India*, May 11, 12, 13, 17, 20, 1986.

by a procession of his BJP supporters would polarize Hindu voters in his favor.[85]

One fruitful way to trace the connection between electoral competition and subsequent efforts by politicians to polarize a community is to examine what happens when an institutional reform changes uncompetitive seats into competitive seats in which Hindus are a majority of the electorate. Do Hindu politicians respond quickly as an electoral theory would predict by trying to polarize the electorate along Hindu-Muslim lines? The evidence from the few cases where such transformations have been studied in detail suggests that they do. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, Ratna Naidu has described how electoral boundary changes in the city of Hyderabad in 1976 led to a new, highly competitive political situation, which in turn led directly to an increase in communal mobilization efforts that sparked off Hindu-Muslim riots during election campaigns in 1983, 1984, and 1985.[86] Prior to 1976 the state assembly constituencies that included Hyderabad's old city had a solid majority of Muslim voters, and the Muslim Majlis Party represented the seats. Hyderabad was free of riots. But the 1976 boundary changes created two new constituencies, Karwan and Chandrayangutta, in which Hindus and Muslims were for the first time almost equal in numbers.

Hindu and Muslim political parties responded to this newly competitive political environment by organizing religious events that would provoke the other community and unify their own. In the late 1970s, Naidu describes how Hindu politicians began to combine the small local processions devoted to the god Ganesh into several new, large processions that converged at Charminar in the heart of the old city. And after 1981 the Hindu Bonalu festival procession route was changed so that it followed the new Ganesh route. The previous Ganesh and Bonalu processions had traveled through Hindu areas, but these new processions deliberately went through Muslim areas on the way to Charminar, where they were then addressed by Hindu politicians. These processions were not only larger but also much noisier than in the past, and processionists were supplied with drums and loudspeakers calculated to offend the local Muslims, especially those in the

[85] Chandrakant Khaire, quoted in *India Today*, June 15, 1988, p. 50. R. K. Srivastava, "Sectional Politics in an Urban Constituency: Generalganj (Kanpur)," *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 13–20, 1996, pp. 111–20.

[86] See Ratna Naidu, *Old Cities, New Predicaments: A Study of Hyderabad* (New Delhi: Sage, 1990), pp. 117–43. The description of Hyderabad politics I provide here draws from Naidu's excellent study.

mosques that abutted the new route. The very first Bonalu procession that used the new route sparked off a major Hindu-Muslim riot in 1981, as it passed through the Muslim Golconda neighborhood; 30 died and 90 were injured.[87]

Responding in kind to this Hindu mobilization, the main Muslim political party began its own new *pankha* religious festival after Hindu politicians reorganized the Ganesh festival in 1978. The *pankha* festival takes place three days before the Ganesh festival and travels through several Hindu bazaar areas during a winding route to and from a Muslim shrine in the old city. This procession, like the Ganesh festival, is then addressed by political rather than religious leaders once it reaches its terminus. In 1983 the *pankha* procession sparked off a serious riot when some processionists allegedly desecrated a Ganesh idol in the Moazamjahi market.[88]

Electoral Effects of Town-Level Mobilization

Polarizing the electorate through communal processions and other events likely to divide people and increase the salience of religious identities is a highly effective electoral strategy. In Uttar Pradesh I have examined several interelection periods to learn more about the constituencies where riots take place. Most of the constituencies that experienced riots were ones in which the upper-caste BJP was competing with a Muslim supported backward-caste party for political power. Between the 1989 state elections and 1991 state elections, for instance, a total of 33 riots in which 295 people died took place in Uttar Pradesh. Of this total, 19 riots and 188 deaths from 1989 to 1991 took place in the small proportion of urban constituencies (18% of all constituencies) in which the BJP had been one of the top two finishers in the 1989 elections: these constituencies accounted for 57% of the total number of riots and 67% of the total number of deaths.

Press accounts of these electorally motivated riots describe how in every case, the precipitating event for violence was an organized Hindu nationalist attempt to disrupt an anti-Muslim procession, to hold an anti-Muslim public meeting, or to raise the fears that Muslims were just about to turn upon Hindus. In Agra for example a major riot took place in December 1990

[87] Ibid., pp. 120–33.

[88] These 1983 riots led to 45 deaths and 150 injuries. The police detained Mr. A. Narendra, a BJP state assembly member under the under National Security Act as well as three members of the main Muslim party. The police also closed down the Urdu daily, *Munsif*, for 15 days. *Times of India*, September 10–28, 1983.

because Muslims objected to a Hindu nationalist attempt to take a procession carrying the ashes of "Hindu martyrs" through Muslim neighborhoods of Tajganj and Loha Mandi.[89] In Saharanpur in March, violence broke out when members of a Hindu procession deliberately shouted provocative slogans in front of a mosque.[90] In Ganjdundwara the riot followed a speech by the firebrand BJP member of Parliament Ms. Uma Bharati.[91] In Aligarh in December violence was triggered by published reports in the Hindi newspaper *Aaj* (Today), later found to be false, that Muslim doctors in the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Hospital had murdered dozens of Hindu patients.[92]

This polarization paid off for the BJP on polling day. Riot-affected towns saw a jump in their BJP vote far larger than that in towns not affected by violence. Towns affected by Hindu-Muslim riots saw their BJP vote go up by an average of 24%, from 19% to 43%, while the average town saw its BJP vote go up only 7%, from 29% to 36%. The vote was also more polarized in riot-affected towns than in towns in general, with the two major parties in riot-hit towns securing a combined average 69% share of the vote compared with 64% in the average town. In terms of electoral outcomes, the effect of this BJP boost was dramatic. The BJP defeated incumbents from the middle-caste, Muslim-supported Janata Dal in all but two of the riot-affected towns, and in eight towns its share of the vote rose to around 50%. Although no polling data are available for these towns, it seems likely based on what we know about the ethnic support base of each party that many Hindu voters, alarmed by the riots, switched their votes from the Janata Dal Party to the Hindu nationalist BJP in order to keep out the Muslim-supported parties.

The hypothesis that Hindu-Muslim violence improved the BJP's electoral performance in the 1990s (as it improved the Congress Party's performance in some states in earlier decades) is also supported by Christophe Jaffrelot's research on riots and state elections in Madhya Pradesh in the 1990s.[93] Muslims in Madhya Pradesh, although only 5% of the total population, are highly concentrated in towns and are electorally important (more

[89] *Times of India*, April 1, 1991.
[90] *Times of India*, December 15, 1990.
[91] *Times of India*, December 6, 1990.
[92] The official death toll in these Aligarh riots was 37 though the unofficial total was over 65. *Times of India*, December 11, 1990.
[93] Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, pp. 513–14.

than 20% of the population) in 12 key urban constituencies. The state had always elected a handful of Muslim MLAs from these seats. The state's capital, Bhopal, is the former capital of a Muslim-ruled princely state and the Bhopal North constituency (40–45% Muslim), in the heart of the old city, had before 1993 always been held by a Muslim MLA.

In December 1992 riots broke out in urban areas throughout Madhya Pradesh. The riot in Bhopal was especially bad, with 107 deaths (mainly Muslims), 400 injured, and 2,500 arrests.[94] These riots, which Jaffrelot found were instigated by Hindu nationalist organizations, and against which the BJP state government took no firm action, had the same dramatic impact on the electoral results in the 1993 assembly elections that we saw in Uttar Pradesh.[95] Hindus in the 12 urban constituencies where Muslims were electorally significant voted solidly for the Hindu parties with the best chance of keeping the Muslim-supported parties and candidates out. The BJP won in 8 of the 12 seats. Jaffrelot found that Scheduled Caste Hindus, who live in close proximity to the Muslim neighborhoods, and were therefore most worried about the prospects of Hindu-Muslim violence, shifted their votes to the BJP.[96] In the 1993 elections, for the first time in Madhya Pradesh's history, not one Muslim was elected to the state assembly.

The effects of Hindu-Muslim polarization due to the riots were most dramatic in the Bhopal North constituency. In 1989 the constituency's Muslim independent candidate Arif Aqueel had been able to fend off a BJP challenge because the Congress candidate, who received 8% of the votes, split the Hindu vote. But in 1993, in the aftermath of the riot, the BJP candidate Ram Sharma won with more than 50% of the votes on a very heavy turnout (76% compared with 62% in 1989), handily defeating Aqueel's 43%. The victorious Sharma unhesitatingly credited his victory to the riots, telling Jaffrelot that Hindu women in particular had been frightened by the riots into switching their votes to the BJP.[97]

[94] Anil Sharma, "Riots Shatter Peace in Bhopal," *Times of India*, December 17, 1992, p. 12.
[95] Jaffrelot tells us that "The BJP state government in Madhya Pradesh showed little urgency in containing the rioting or caring for the victims, while rioters from the Bajrang Dal became almost accustomed to receiving government protection." Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, p. 462.
[96] Ibid., pp. 447–48.
[97] Ibid., pp. 513–14.

Alternative Hypotheses Not Tested: Institutional Riot Mechanisms and Civic Engagement

In this chapter I have not tested town-level hypotheses that have been advanced in two important recent studies, one by Paul Brass, who highlights the importance of what he calls "institutionalized riot systems," and the other by Ashutosh Varshney, who focuses on the importance of civic engagement at the town level in preventing violence. I have not systematically tested these theories largely because of the difficulty I have had in collecting time-series data for them across a sufficiently large number of towns in Uttar Pradesh. However, because these studies are important and influential, and my book will undoubtedly be compared with them, I want to at least deal with some of their central arguments here.

In *Theft of an Idol*, Paul Brass argues that one important factor that explains Hindu-Muslim violence (a category that he himself skillfully deconstructs) is the existence of town-level "institutionalized riot systems," by which he means "a network of actors, groups, and connections involving persons from different social categories whose effect . . . is to keep a town or city in a permanent state of awareness of Hindu-Muslim relationships."[98] Riot specialists – agents provocateurs – specialize in inflaming emotions and identifying individual events as part of a wider "Hindu-Muslim conflict," and at times they deliberately incite violence.[99] Brass's general approach, as well as his acknowledgment of the role of state-level political actors, is certainly compatible with the state-level arguments I make in this and subsequent chapters. Brass in fact explicitly highlights, as I do, the complicity of the state in failing to prevent violence.[100]

The problem with empirically testing his arguments about the role of "institutionalized riot systems" at the town level, however, is that to do so we would need to be able to verify independently the existence of such systems through time and across different cities, in addition to controlling for all the other town-level factors likely to restrain or to lead to violence. Establishing the presence of such riot systems therefore seems a formidable task, even if we could assemble a large group of scholars and devote years of fieldwork to the task: the difficulty in testing this hypotheses is perhaps suggested by the fact that even Brass at times in his book seems to demonstrate that institutionalized riot systems exist more by inferring their existence from

[98] Brass, *The Theft of an Idol*, p. 284.
[99] Ibid., pp. 258–59.
[100] Ibid., pp. 286–88.

whether a riot has occurred or not, rather than independently proving that such systems are present on a year-by-year basis.

Ashutosh Varshney has put forward the idea that the presence of high or low levels of interreligious interaction, what he terms "civic engagement," can explain why some towns experience riots and others do not. The central insight here has a distinguished history: in social psychology, Gordon Allport's "contact hypothesis" long ago recognized the importance of particular kinds of majority-minority social interactions (those promoting contact as equals and directed toward superordinate goals) in reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict.[101] Clifford Manshardt's study on Hindu-Muslim violence in India in 1936 argued that organized as well as informal civic interaction could prevent communal tensions and violence, because "the strain between the groups is lessened as the common contacts multiply."[102] Manshardt reported the views of contemporaries such as Jayakar who advocated U.S. style civic engagement as a way of dealing with the communal problem.

> In America, citizens of all classes meet together to discuss common sanitary problems, to lay plans for making the city beautiful, and for improving the general level of life. The secret of the success of these organizations is that they deal with common problems, and through dealing with common problems other problems are made common. Common interests are created where they do not exist. . . . Planting trees, providing open spaces, and the like are not very controversial problems, but the friendships gained through these activities are a powerful solvent of matters of controversy. If we could carry out activities of this kind in India, it would be a very splendid thing indeed. . . . Communal harmony will not come until a man realizes that his own interests are the interests of his brother.[103]

Varshney's study is nevertheless new and important because he systematically builds a theory about how such interactions – especially through the work of interethnic civic associations – work to reduce violence, and then assesses the significance of civic engagement by looking at three pairs of cities, with one violent and one peaceful city in each pair, and controlling each pair for key factors that might lead to violence: Aligarh and Calicut, Ahmedabad and Surat, and Hyderabad and Lucknow. On the basis of case studies, historical research, and interviews in these cities, he argues that,

[101] Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954; reprint, Boston: Addison Wesley, 1997), especially chap. 16 on "The Effect of Contact."
[102] Clifford Manshardt, *The Hindu-Muslim Problem in India* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1936), p. 37.
[103] Ibid., pp. 124–25.

in urban areas, daily contacts in intercommunal associations exercise an important effect in reducing communal violence. He finds that:

> In peaceful cities . . . an institutionalized peace system exists. When organizations such as trade unions, associations of businessmen, traders, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and at least some cadre-based political parties (different from the ones that have an interest in communal polarization) are communally integrated, countervailing forces are created. Associations that would suffer losses from a communal split fight for their turf, making not only their members aware of the dangers of communal violence, but also the public at large. Local administrations are far more effective in such circumstances. Civic organizations, for all practical purposes, become the eyes and ears of the administration. . . . In the end, polarizing politicians either don't succeed or eventually stop trying to divide communities by provoking and fomenting communal violence.[104]

The main problem we face in testing whether a social capital or contact hypothesis theory of violence actually works is that there are few good statistics on "social capital" that tell us about town-by-town differences in social interaction, social distance, and the presence of town-level *mohalla* committees. Good research on interreligious attitudes and social distance was done in the 1950s, when Gardner Murphy coordinated a Unesco-sponsored study of social tensions in India. But this and similar studies covered only a few towns: Aligarh, Lucknow, Bombay, Dehra Dun, and Calcutta.[105] When I traveled to Uttar Pradesh I hoped to find such data to use in a large-N study, but my interviews with the UP officials whose job it is to register local associations convinced me that government figures on associational life are deeply flawed.[106] To test the civic engagement thesis fully in this chapter would therefore require detailed surveys on social interaction and associational life through time at the town level for a large number of UP towns – while also controlling for socioeconomic factors and the likely precipitants of violence – and such data do not exist.

While I cannot therefore test the civic engagement thesis here, there are several reasons, while applauding any effort to bring members of different communities together for interreligious interaction, that I think we ought to be skeptical about claims that intercommunal interaction or interethnic associations are sufficient in themselves to prevent large-scale ethnic riots.

[104] Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, p. 10.

[105] Gardner Murphy, *In the Minds of Men: The Study of Human Behavior and Social Tensions in India* (New York: Basic Books, 1953); Gupta, *Hindu-Muslim Relations*.

[106] Interviews with Mr. Dixit of UP Societies Registration and Mrs. N. S. Kumar, Chair of Nari Sewa Samiti, Lucknow, August 1995.

First, the fact that many societies with rich traditions of interethnic associational life have experienced very high levels of ethnic violence suggests that associational life may be more the result than the cause of communal peace and that, in any event, it is insufficient in itself to prevent violence. The classic case is pre-civil-war Yugoslavia, a society with high levels of residential integration, interethnic friendship and intermarriage, and multiethnic associational life. None of these factors prevented a brutal civil war and mass violence in the early 1990s. More recently the vibrant Muslim-Christian associational life in Nigerian towns such as Kano and Kaduna (2002) has not been sufficient to prevent ethnic violence in these towns.[107] And while Varshney argues that the interethnic associations he looks at in some Indian towns have constrained the strategic behavior of politicians who want to foment violence, even during partition, it seems that an interethnic political party and local associations were not sufficient to prevent mass violence in 1947 in Pakistani and Indian Punjab, where the same arguments about associational density, civic engagement, and economic interdependence could surely have been made.[108]

The Punjab after all was, before independence, the home of India's most successful, genuinely multiethnic party, the Punjab Unionist Party. The party's leader, Khizr Tiwana, saw the party's pursuit of a multiethnic Punjabi identity as a direct outgrowth of the everyday social interaction between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in the state, arguing that "There are Hindu and Sikh Tiwanas who are my relatives. I go to their weddings and other ceremonies. How could I possibly regard them as coming from another nation."[109] And at the local level we can point to successful multiethnic unions, for example among the drivers for Lahore's major form

[107] A reporter who interviewed people in Kaduna after November 2002 riots in which 200 people were killed reported that "Even now most families are made up of those who believe in Jesus and those who follow Muhammad – not to mention all those who worship the trees and rocks like generations of animists before them. Christians recall being invited to Muslim weddings. A devout Muslim recalls kneeling down and praying with his Christian cousins." See "Piety and Politics Sunder a Riot-Torn City," *New York Times*, February 22, 2003, p. A4.

[108] Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, p. 10. One additional indicator of the interethnic nature of associational life in the Punjab would be the strength of the multiethnic Unionist Party, which won provincial elections in 1937 and 1946.

[109] Roderick MacFarquhar, foreword, in Ian Talbot, *Khizr Tiwana: The Punjab Unionist Party and the Partition of India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. xii. For a general the success of the Unionist party in appealing to both Hindus and Muslims in the 1920s and 1930s, see Talbot, *Khizr Tiwana*, and David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 108–44.

of public transport, the horse-drawn *tongas* in the decade before independence. Yet desirable as all these developments were, they were not sufficient to prevent violence once some political leaders determined to provoke it in 1947.[110]

Second, as a methodological issue it is very difficult to separate out the effects of interethnic contact and associational life from the influence of all the other socioeconomic and political factors likely to predispose a town to peace or violence. Varshney properly qualifies his claims at various points in the book by stressing that the relationship between civic engagement and riots is "probabilistic, not lawlike."[111] But without good time-series information on all the likely factors that might reasonably influence a town's level of violence – including data on attempts by organizations and individuals to precipitate violence as well as preventive measures by the state – it will be difficult to determine just how much of a probable contribution interethnic associations make to peace.[112] Inferring that interethnic associations are successful from a town's overall low level of violence might be misleading for several reasons: logically the most successful peace committees – if success is judged in terms of how much they reduce violence – might actually be in the most violent cities. In South Africa, for example, many observers felt that the most effective interethnic community peace committees were, paradoxically, in the most violent areas of Kwa-Zulu Natal.[113] Another difficulty is that the same police officials and district magistrates who have been most active in promoting interreligious associations in India, such as Suresh Khopre in Bhiwandi and the late Ashok Priyadarshi in Lucknow, are also those who have the best reputation for strictly enforcing law and order and using force early against riots.

[110] Som Anand, *Labore: Portrait of a Lost City* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1998), pp. 34–35. For another account of prepartition social life in Punjab, see Prakash Tandon's *Punjabi Century, 1857–1947* (Berekeley: University of California Press, 1968).

[111] Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, p. 11.

[112] An additional difficulty is establishing exactly which level or threshold of civic engagement is necessary to lead to peace, something that methodologically needs to be assessed independently from knowing whether violence has or has not broken out: for example, we need to understand why a level of 60% of Hindus and Muslims visiting each other in Aligarh should be too low to preserve peace, whereas 84% of Hindus and Muslims visiting each other in Calicut should lead to a good outcome there. Ibid., p. 127.

[113] Centre for Policy Studies, *Crying Peace Where There Is None? The Functioning and Future of Local Peace Committees of the National Peace Accord*, Research Report no. 31 (Transition Series) (Johannesburg, 1993).

In addition, nongovernmental (NGO) and local officials, forever in search of grants or promotions, are tempted to overplay the significance of their local initiatives in preventing violence. Journalists and editors, hungry for good news to counteract the bad, are also only too willing to run stories on the latest bureaucratic or NGO "quick fix" for ethnic violence. The head of one of Uttar Pradesh's main women's organizations expressed her skepticism to me about NGO claims that they could, in addition to reducing poverty, alleviating malnutrition, and empowering women, alleviate ethnic conflicts as well. With a wry smile she remarked to me "The grants go to those who write the best proposals, not to those who do the best work."[114]

A third issue is that the contact hypothesis, which forms the intellectual basis for many of our assumptions about the benefits of interethnic interaction, may very well be invalid because it too easily assumes that the proven effects of intergroup contact at the individual level easily translate into the same phenomenon at the group level. Several important studies have found that social institutions that bring members of different groups together to work for common goals may have only limited effects. Cook, for instance carried out research on black-white relations in the United States and found that, while black-white cooperation did reduce prejudice toward other participants in the activity, levels of prejudice toward the other ethnic group as a whole were barely affected.[115] R. M. Williams's study of race relations in four American cities in the 1960s went further and found that, while individual intergroup contacts were negatively correlated with ethnic prejudice, high levels of intergroup contact at the city-level were actually *positively correlated* with ethnic prejudice.[116]

Which Level of Analysis: Town or State?

This chapter has explored the contribution of various town-level factors, especially the role of electoral incentives, in accounting for where and when

[114] Interview with Mrs. N. S. Kumar, Chair of UP Nari Sewa Samiti, Lucknow, August 22, 1995.

[115] S. W. Cook, "Interpersonal and Attitudinal Outcomes in Cooperating Interracial Groups," *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 12 (1978), pp. 97–113. For a general discussion of the "Contact Hypothesis," see Rupert Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 235–70.

[116] R. M. Williams, *Strangers next Door: Ethnic Relations in American Communities* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964). For a systematic review of the problem of aggregating individual outcomes from contact to ethnic groups, see H. D. Forbes, *Ethnic Conflict: Commerce, Culture and the Contact Hypothesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

	State Government Determined to Prevent Riots	*State Government Not Determined to Prevent Riots*
Local Precipitants of Violence Present (e.g. high electoral competition, previous violence, low levels of civic engagement)	**Second Lowest Level of Violence** More riots break out but they are quickly contained by the state.	**Highest Level of Violence** More riots break out, and these are prolonged and bloody because they are unrestrained by either the state or local community
Local Precipitants of Violence Absent (e.g. low levels of electoral competition, no previous violence, high levels of civic engagement)	**Lowest Level of Violence** Fewer riots break out and those that do are contained by the state.	**Second Highest Level of Violence** Fewer riots break out but they continue because they are not contained by the state.

Figure 2.1 The relationship between town- and state-level factors

communal violence breaks out. But the following chapters make a case for the importance of *state-level factors*, especially the level of political competition in a state, in explaining patterns of violence. I differ then with Varshney when he says that "the relationship between state-level and city-level statistics clearly establish the city as the unit of analysis for a study of the causes of communal violence. India's Hindu-Muslim violence is city-specific. State (and national) politics provide the context within which the local mechanisms linked with violence are activated."[117]

This seems to me to place too much emphasis on town-level factors. My view, depicted in Figure 2.1, is that while local precipitants are important, state-level politics does much more than simply provide the context for local mechanisms to work. Because states control the police and the local deployment of force, state-level politics in fact largely determines whether violence will break out, even in the most riot-prone towns – those with "bad" levels of previous violence, civic engagement, or whichever other factor is associated with communal violence.

[117] Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, p. 106.

To understand the crucial role of state-level factors, consider the all-India pattern of Hindu-Muslim riots in the two months following the murder of 58 Hindu nationalists and their family members on a train in Godhra in Gujarat on February 27, 2002. This event precipitated attempts to foment violence and Hindu nationalist mobilizations across the country, including polarizing events in a large number of towns that have historically experienced large numbers of riots. Communal demonstrations, strikes, processions, or attacks of the type that usually precipitate violence were reported in 2002 in more than a dozen of the 25 most "riot-prone" towns that Varshney identifies in his book: Ahmedabad, Aligarh, Aurangabad, Bhiwandi-Thane, Bhopal, Bombay, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Jalgaon, Surat, Vadodara, and Varanasi.[118]

If town-level factors such as high or low civic engagement, the ethnic division of labor, and the previous level of violence were truly the most important variables in explaining where riots break out (whether directly, or indirectly by constraining or not constraining the behavior of politicians toward minorities), we would surely have expected the riots that followed the Godhra violence to be primarily, or at least disproportionately, located in these "riot-prone" towns, regardless of state. If a state-level explanation is correct, on the other hand, we would expect there to be substantial state-level variation in the pattern of riots, with violence being controlled even in the "bad towns" in those states determined to keep order and violence breaking out even in the "good towns" in those states that were not prepared to use full force to prevent riots.

The pattern of polarizing events and riots from February to April 2002 seems to show clearly that the state-level explanation can better account for riot occurrence. In Figure 2.2 I have mapped all the reported events from February 27 to April 30, 2002, of the kind that normally precipitate communal riots in India, such as religiously polarizing processions, Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad violent demonstrations and strikes, and individual acts of violence such as stabbings and stone throwing against members of the other religious community. This map is striking for two reasons. First, we can see that there were attempts to precipitate violence throughout India during the period from February to April 2002. Second, we can see that these nationwide attempts only led to deaths on a large scale in Gujarat. All the most-riot-prone towns outside the state of Gujarat avoided large-scale deadly riots because the state governments in Madhya

[118] See ibid., table 4.1, pp. 104–5, for a list of riot-prone cities.

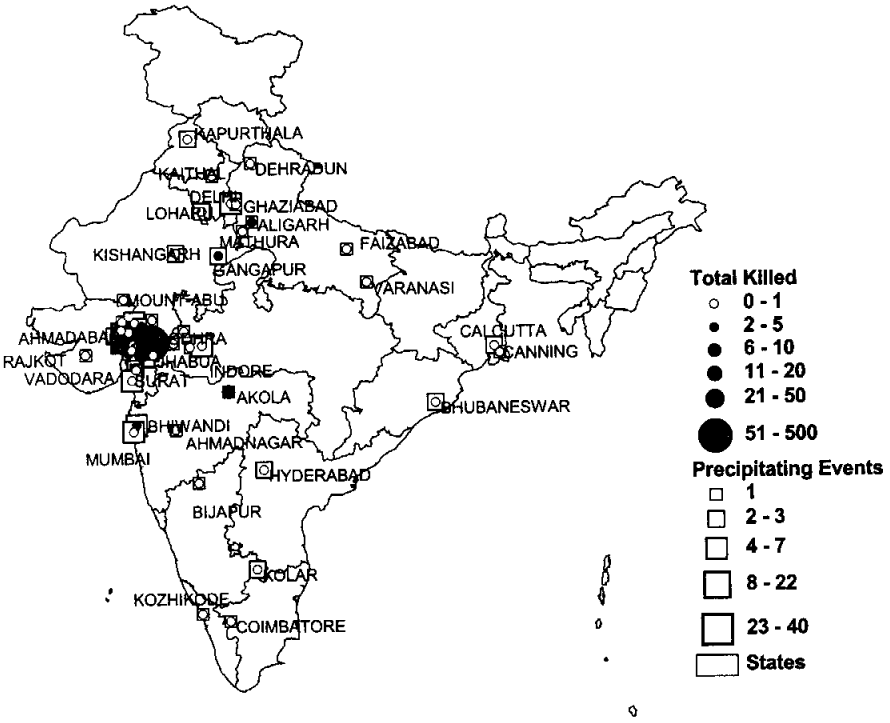

Figure 2.2 Reported precipitating events and deaths during the February–April 2002 communal violence (data collected by Wilkinson based on *Indian Express* reports)

Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and elsewhere were prepared to use the full strength of their police forces to prevent riots and to call on the services of central forces promptly where necessary.[119]

In Madhya Pradesh, for example, attempts to provoke large-scale violence in the two most riot-prone cities in that state – Indore and Bhopal, both of which have experienced numerous communal riots in the past – were effectively stopped by curfews, mass arrests of militants, deployment of the central Rapid Action Force, and the imposition of the National Security

[119] As I discuss in Chapter 5, those casualties which did take place outside Gujarat were largely the result of police firing to break up riots and prevent attacks, rather than – as in Gujarat – the result of members of one community attacking another.

Act.[120] In Rajasthan, mass deployments of state police forces and the police force's orders to fire on rioters if necessary prevented serious incidents in Jaipur (one of the 28 most riot-prone cities in India, and the site of serious violence in 1989, 1990, and 1992), Gangapur, and elsewhere from erupting into mass violence.[121] In Andhra Pradesh, where the capital Hyderabad is one the 5 most riot-prone cities in India, it was a similar story: despite a large-scale stone-throwing incident on March and later strikes and isolated attacks, the state government's arrests and the speedy deployment of police prevented large-scale riots from taking place.[122] In West Bengal, although Calcutta is one of the most "riot-prone" cities in India, with a total of 67 riots and thousands of deaths reported since 1920, the West Bengal state government forces prevented riots by arrests, police deployment, and a willingness to use force – deadly if necessary – to break up unauthorized demonstrations by Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) militants on March 10.[123]

In Gujarat, on the other hand, even some towns with no recent history of large-scale riots experienced violence. Once the Gujarat state government had shown that it was not prepared to stop the riots, both by its inaction as well as its actions – such as delays in calling in central forces, failing to make preventive arrests, and transferring officials who were determined to use force and arrests to prevent violence – then riots broke out in rural areas as well as in towns such as Bodeli and Akola where there had been no reported violence for at least 50 years.[124] To be sure, the violence in Gujarat was worst in the most riot-prone towns, especially in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, and Godhra. But it was also bad in towns such as Modasa and Akola, where there had been no reported violence for decades.

This state-specific pattern of violence is only explicable once we acknowledge that the response of the state government forces is the main factor in determining whether large-scale ethnic violence breaks out and

[120] "Over 200 Arrested in Indore Violence," *Indian Express*, March 12, 2002. Indore has had reported communal riots in 1927 (5 killed, 20 injured), 1969 (10 killed, 208 injured), 1970, 1973, 1975, 1989 (23 killed, 75 injured), and 1990 (11 killed). Bhopal has had riots in 1946, 1953, 1954, 1970, 1987 and most recently in 1992, when 107 were killed and 400 injured.

[121] "Police Firing in Rajasthan, Two Killed," *Indian Express*, March 26, 2002.

[122] "Andhra Police on High Alert," *Indian Express*, February 28, 2002.

[123] See "Cops Take No Chances, Bengal Put on Red Alert," *Indian Express*, March 12, 2002, and "1 Killed in Firing on West Bengal VHP Activists," *Indian Express*, March 11, 2002.

[124] For the delay in bringing in the army and carrying out other preventive measures in Gujarat, see "Police to Decide on Army Use: Modi," *Indian Express*, March 2, 2002; "Full 18 Hours after Godhra: Gujarat Police Has an Action-Not-Taken Report," *Indian Express*, March 6, 200; and "Dial M for Modi, Murder?" *Indian Express*, March 24, 2002.

continues. In the following chapters I assess the various explanations that have been put forward to explain why this will is sometimes present and at other times not. First I show that the "capacity" of state governments – in terms of institutional quality – has been wrongly identified as a critical factor in riot control. Then I consider in Chapters 4 and 5 whether consociational factors or levels of electoral competition can explain this variation.

3

State Capacity Explanations for Hindu-Muslim Violence

> The State is held at ransom by bootleggers, smugglers and all such anti-social people. Many politicians are their close associates. A very considerable section of the police are on the pay-roll of these people. If those people want a disturbance to occur, a disturbance will occur. The State does not have the power to stop it.
>
> Amal Datta, MP, 1986[1]

Social scientists often argue that we can explain variation in mass violence by focusing on the strength or weakness of state institutions. Neil Smelser's research on England, Mexico, and the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries, for example, finds that periods in which police corruption was rife, training and equipment were poor, and local political interference high were invariably accompanied by large increases in riots.[2] James Tong's study of violence in Ming China found that riots occurred most often in peripheral areas where the effectiveness of the Chinese state was weakest.[3] More recently, studies of collective mobilization and violence in places as diverse as Los Angeles, the former Soviet Union, and the former state of Yugoslavia have identified state capacity, and the impact it has on individuals' decision about whether to participate in violence, as a crucial factor in

[1] Amal Datta, an MP from West Bengal, speaking during a parliamentary debate on riots in Gujarat. *Lok Sabha Debates*, July 22, 1986, p. 314.

[2] Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), chap. 8, pp. 231–34, 261–68.

[3] Tong argued that riots were concentrated in the periphery because there the "likelihood of surviving hardship is minimal but the likelihood of surviving as an outlaw is maximal." James W. Tong, *Disorder under Heaven: Collective Violence in the Ming Dynasty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 93.

shares of federal and state benefits and government jobs for particular ethnic groups. Surely at some point increasing the number of groups with proportional political representation, giving each group cultural autonomy, and providing each with a minority veto that allows them to block future changes will impose huge and unacceptable costs in terms of basic state capacities.

5

The Electoral Incentives for Hindu-Muslim Violence

Why do some political leaders in some Indian states impress upon their local officials that communal riots and anti-Muslim pogroms must be prevented at all costs? Why do governments in other states fail to protect their minorities or even incite violence against them? In previous chapters we showed that factors such as declining state capacity or India's changing level of consociational power sharing cannot explain the geographical or historical patterns in the effectiveness of states' response to the threat of communal violence. In this chapter, I argue that we can best explain state-level variation in levels of Hindu-Muslim violence if we understand the electoral incentives facing each state's government. I show that states with higher degrees of party fractionalization, in which minorities are therefore pivotal swing voters, have lower levels of violence than states with lower levels of party competition. This is because minorities in highly competitive party systems can extract promises of greater security from politicians in return for their votes.

The chapter is organized into three parts. First, I develop the theoretical argument about the importance of state-level electoral incentives and outline the conditions under which high levels of multiparty electoral competition will lead to higher levels of state protection for minorities. Second, using data from 1961 to 1995 for 14 major Indian states, I show that greater party fractionalization leads to a statistically significant reduction in states' levels of Hindu-Muslim riots. This is true even when we control for socioeconomic variables, the particular party in power in a state, the previous level of ethnic violence in a state, and fixed effects for states. Third, I turn to qualitative evidence to determine if some of the mechanisms identified in the theoretical section of the chapter seem actually to be responsible for the observed state-level variation in riot prevention. Are politicians behaving

as we would expect in intensely competitive political situations, by offering security in return for the support of pivotal minority voters? How do the politicians in control of states act in situations where Hindus rather than Muslims are perceived to be the key marginal voters?

Electoral Competition and the Supply of State Protection for Minorities

What determines whether a local, state, or national government will order the police and army to prevent ethnic polarization and to stop ethnic violence against ethnic minorities? In democracies, governments will protect minorities when they rely on them directly for electoral support, or if party politics in a state is so competitive that there is a high probability that they will need to rely on minority votes or minority-supported parties in the future. We can think of three different types of party competition that will have different effects on a state's response to antiminority violence, which I have represented as A, B_i, and B_{ii} in Figure 5.1.[1]

My argument is that the best situation for minorities is situation A, where there are high levels of party fractionalization with three or more parties. In this situation, politicians will have a greater incentive to appeal to minority votes directly in order to win elections, especially in a first-past-the-post system such as India's where small shifts in votes can lead to large shifts in seats. If minorities are pivotal to electoral outcomes, politicians will increase the supply of security and prevent riots in order to attract their votes. Even if majority parties do not rely on minorities directly, a highly fractionalized party system will force ruling-party politicians to take actions that maximize their political options in the future, especially in terms of coalitions. In other words, ruling-party politicians must take care not to alienate minority voters who support parties that are likely to be future coalition partners, and this will also lead to ruling parties increasing the supply of security to minorities.[2]

[1] My theoretical arguments in this chapter – in particular the argument that low levels of electoral fractionalization can lead to high as well as low levels of violence depending on who is pivotal to the party in power – have benefited greatly from several conversations with Herbert Kitschelt.

[2] See Donald L. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa: Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 177–85, for a general discussion of the value of majority and minority "vote pooling" in coalitions for increasing party moderation toward minorities.

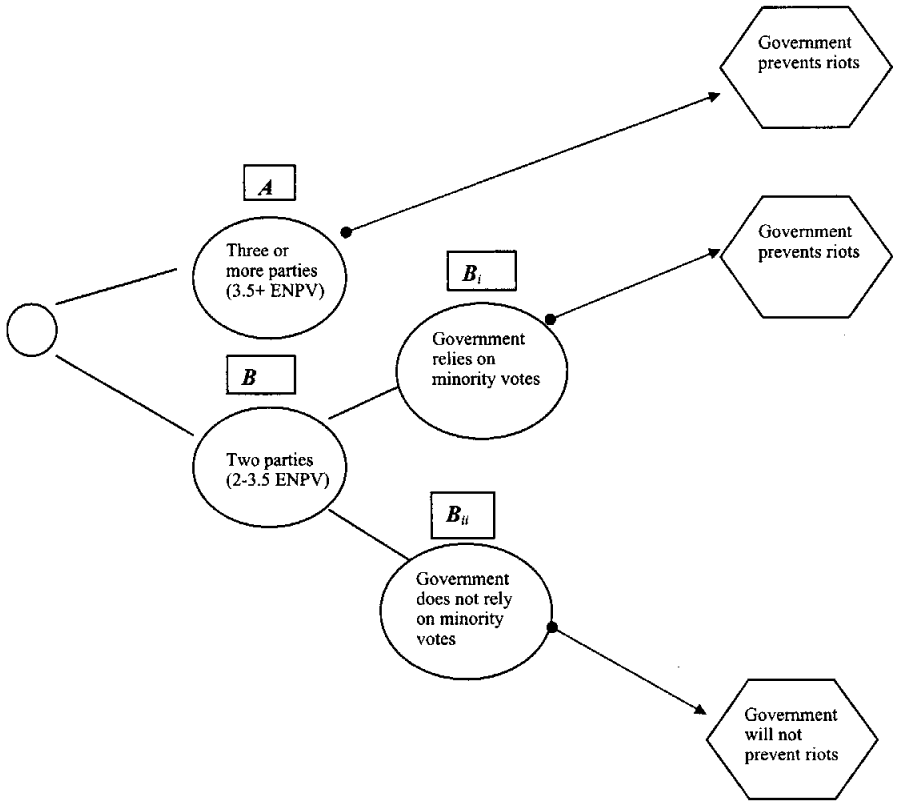

Figure 5.1 The theoretical relationship between party competition and a state's response to antiminority polarization and violence (ENVP = effective number of parties).

A more dangerous situation is when there are bipolar levels of party fractionalization in a state (i.e., less than 3.5 effective parties), represented by B in the chart, and one of these majority community parties effectively "owns" the antiminority issue while the other emphasizes some other cleavage, such as economic redistribution. In this case, we would expect the party that has the strongest antiminority identity to foment antiminority violence in order to attract swing voters away from its main competitor. Whether violence will actually result from this polarization, however, will depend on which party controls the state, the antiminority party or its competitor, and whether the party in power relies on minority votes. If the antiminority party with no minority support is in power (situation B_{ii}) we would expect it to allow antiminority mobilization and violence to occur, at least until

such violence begins to result in such large economic and social costs that it begins to lose support from its own voters in the majority community. In situation B_i, however, where the party that "owns" the issue of economic redistribution and relies on minority support is in power, we would expect a different outcome. The party in power, worried that it would lose support from antiminority polarization, has every incentive to prevent violence that threatens its support base. As long as the state has sufficient institutional capacity to prevent violence and the party in power has control over the various police forces in a state, we can expect it to act firmly to prevent riots in this case, and to stop them quickly once they break out.

Why Should Minorities Benefit from High Levels of Party Fractionalization?

There are of course several enabling conditions to this model of the effects of party competition on the prevention of antiminority violence. First, I assume the existence of multiple issue dimensions in politics rather than simply the existence of a single majority-minority polarization. Second, I assume that minorities will be willing to "bid low" in terms of what they demand from majority parties across most issues in order to maximize their security. Third, I assume that the majority community does not regard increasing the minority's security as fundamentally threatening its own dominant position in the state and its own security.

These three conditions are necessary to help us understand why minorities should be the beneficiaries of greater levels of electoral competition and become pivotal voters in a state, rather than extremists from the majority community. We can think of some cases, for instance, where intense competition and high levels of party fractionalization has given more leverage to extremist voters and antiminority parties than to moderates dedicated to improving majority-minority relations. In Israel, for example, the moderate Mapai Party was in a pivotal coalition-forming position in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) from 1949 until 1977. But then increased electoral competition in the Knesset elections of 1977, 1981, and 1988 put more conservative voters and their parties (Agudat Yisrael, Shas, and Degel Ha'Thora) in the pivotal position. These conservative voters and their parties used their pivotal position to draw Israeli politics away from majority compromise with the minorities rather than toward it.[3]

[3] Abraham Diskin, *Elections and Voters in Israel* (New York: Praeger, 1991), pp. 180–84.

First, where social, ideological, economic, and intraethnic cleavages among the majority community are highly salient, we would expect a greater willingness to reach out to minority voters. These cleavages are certainly not carved in stone and, as we will explore in the next chapter, they can and do change over time in response to state policies and incentives as well as individual actions.[4] In societies where such intragroup cleavages are strong, politicians from the ethnic majority will often prefer to seek minority support rather than the support of segments of their own ethnic group with which they may be in competition for scarce economic and political goods. In the United States, for example, the growth of economic divisions between white industrialists in the North and planters in the South from the 1920s to the 1950s created political incentives (when combined with the migration of blacks to the North) on the part of white northern politicians to appeal to minorities.[5]

The second factor that determines the degree to which parties will compete for minority support is the number of votes minorities can deliver and the cost to majority parties of the demands minority voters and politicians make, relative to the demands made by other groups within the majority community.[6] The number and intensity of the demands minority politicians and voters make will depend on factors such as whether antiminority violence has occurred in the past, whether a minority has a substantial educated mobilized middle class that relies on state employment (e.g., Anglo-Indians in India in the 1940s and 1950s or Sri-Lankan Tamils in the 1970s and 1980s), or whether the minority controls a large section of the economy (e.g., Chinese in Indonesia or Asians and whites in 1960s East Africa).

[4] For a discussion of the "hierarchy of cleavages," see Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction," in Lipset and Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 6. For an example, see David Laitin's *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), who shows how colonial policies privileged "ancestral city" identities in Yorubaland in Nigeria, a development that helps explain why Yorubaland has escaped the Muslim-Christian clashes that have occurred elsewhere in the country. In general a greater number of cross-cutting ethnic cleavages leads to an increase in party proliferation, but the relationship is certainly not a simple one, as we explore in Chapter 6: although most states in India are highly diverse, only some states have high levels of electoral fractionalization.

[5] Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[6] The electoral system obviously makes a difference to how valuable small shifts in voter preferences will be: in India's plurality single-member system, small swings in votes can lead to dramatic swings in terms of seats.

Relatively poor and populous minorities that place a high value on one issue dimension that costs little for the majority to provide will be more attractive coalition partners than small wealthy, well-educated minorities with many demands that are costly, such as physical protection, government employment for educated members of groups, or the maintenance of a privileged economic status.[7]

Third, security for minorities will be inexpensive to provide as long as the measures taken do not seem to threaten the majority's own sense of physical security. Under what conditions will the majority be threatened? Protection for minorities will be more costly for majorities to provide when the minority is in the demographic majority in some areas of the country (allowing polarizing claims that the minority is taking over to seem more credible) or if the party that minorities support has no majority leaders that can provide reassurance to members of the majority population. Also, supplying greater security for minorities will be more politically costly in situations where minorities have substantial representation in the police, paramilitary forces, and army, because this representation can be used to convince people that supplying greater security is a prelude to minority domination of the majority. Lastly, once antiminority violence crosses a low or medium threshold and becomes widespread, the opposition party might be tempted to take an antiminority stance as well in order to neutralize the threat to its support base.[8]

How Do Indian States Fit the Model?

Most states in India now have very high levels of party fractionalization, especially considering that India has a single-member, district-plurality voting

[7] A similar argument, though put in formal language, has been made in the American politics literature by James M. Enelow and Melvin J. Hinich, "Non-Spatial Candidate Characteristics and Electoral Competition," *Journal of Politics* 44, no. 1 (1982), pp. 115–30. Hinich and Enelow show how the greater intensity of minority preferences can influence majority policies much more than previous models of party competition would predict.

[8] We can think of several such cases where ethnic violence has so polarized majority-minority relations that it has become impossible for members of the majority community to hold their coalition together while simultaneously appealing to minority voters. This happened in the 1890s for white Progressives in the U.S. South, because of racist polarization against African Americans. It has also happened in Israel, where the strength of the Jewish-Arab cleavage within Israel was such that all the mainstream Jewish parties, even on the left, regarded the Arab-supported Communist Party and Arab Democratic Party for decades as politically untouchable.

Table 5.1. *Number of Effective Parties in Major Indian States as of February 2002*

State/Ruling Party[a]	Most Recent State Election	Effective Number of Parties	Vote Share of Two Largest Parties
Andhra Pradesh/TDP	1999	2.78	84.48
Himachal Pradesh/ –	1998	2.85	82.53
Gujarat/BJP	1998	2.97	79.66
Madhya Pradesh/Congress	1998	3.09	79.87
Rajasthan/Congress	1998	3.19	78.18
West Bengal/Left Front	2001	4.14	67.25
Karnataka/Congress	1999	4.19	61.53
Orissa/Biju JD & BJP	2000	4.26	63.18
Punjab/Akali Dal	1997	4.40	64.23
Tamil Nadu/AIADMK	2001	4.84	62.36
Uttar Pradesh/Under Central Rule	1996	4.99	54.32
Haryana/Indian National Lok Dal	2000	5.01	60.83
Maharashtra/Congress & NCP	1999	5.64	49.8
Kerala/UDF	2001	6.16	52.76
Bihar/RJD	2000	7.70	42.98

[a] TDP = Telegu Desam Party, JD = Janata Dal, AIADMK = All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, NCP = National Congress Party, UDF = United Democratic Front, RJD = Rashtriya Janata Dal.

Source: Calculated from Indian Election Commission Reports available at <www.eci.gov.in>. The calculation of effective number of parties excludes independents.

system, which is normally associated with convergence to a two-party system.[9] As of February 2002, as we can see in Table 5.1, there were only five major states where two parties shared 75% or more of the vote (fewer than 3.25 effective parties). In Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Himachal Pradesh elections are basically a straight fight between the Congress and the BJP, whereas in Andhra Pradesh a regional party, the Telegu Desam Party (TDP), competes with the Congress Party. In all the other major states, there are at least three major parties and often many more competing for power in each state, and the number of effective parties in each state ranges from 4.14 to 7.70.

All three of the necessary conditions for high levels of electoral competition to benefit minorities are also present in India: there are multiple issue

[9] Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman, "Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States," *American Political Science Review* 92, no. 2 (1998).

dimensions in politics along such issues as economic redistribution rather than simply the existence of a single majority-minority cleavage; minorities place a very high value of security and are willing to "bid low" in terms of what they demand from majority parties across most issues in order to maximize their security; the majority community values other issues much more than the majority-minority cleavage and does not regard increasing the minority's security as threatening its own dominant position in the state and its own security.

First, in recent decades, there has been a dramatic growth of new Hindu-led parties that explicitly claim to represent the "oppressed," especially the middle and lower castes and minorities, groups that collectively represent a majority of the Indian population. Examples would include the Bahujan Samaj Party, which represents Scheduled Castes; the Samajwadi Party, which has a particular base among backward castes; and the Telegu Desam Party, which represents middle and lower castes in Andhra Pradesh. All these parties are keen to expand beyond their core social constituencies and include Muslims in a broader social and political coalition. The rise of these "pro-backward" parties – and hence the size of the overall "market" for Muslim votes – has therefore increased considerably over the past few decades.

Second, Muslim voters in India are in a good position to profit from this increasing state-level electoral competition over distributional issues because they demand less than most Hindu voting blocs. Muslims are a large proportion of the electorate (12% overall, but much more in some states and constituencies), they have intense preferences on one major issue (security), and they make fewer and less intense demands on other political issues than many of the main voting blocks within the majority Hindu electorate, even lower than those made by the middle and lower castes.[10] Muslims make fewer demands in part as a consequence of their community's relative economic backwardness. As we can see in Table 5.2, the Muslim community

[10] There have been several estimates over the years to determine how important the "Muslim vote" is in national politics. Rudolph and Rudolph, for example, identified 207 constituencies in the Lok Sabha where Muslims accounted for 10% or more of the vote. Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 194–95. There have been fewer attempts to do the same for state politics. Ashgar Ali Engineer and several others have estimated that Muslims in Uttar Pradesh, where they are 17% of the state population but 29% in urban areas, are of crucial electoral importance in around 60 of the 403 assembly seats. "Defeat of BJP Is Defeat of Communalism," *Secular Perspective*, March 1–15, 2002, downloaded on June 15, 2002, from <http://ecumene.org/IIS/csss71.htm>.

Table 5.2. *Comparative Educational Levels among Different Religious Groups in India (%)*

	Muslims	Hindus	Christians
Male illiteracy	42.4	25.3	18.8
Male graduates	2.3	7.9	8.1
Female illiteracy	59.5	45.2	22.7
Female graduates	0.8	4.5	5.5

Source: National Sample Survey 43rd Round, 1987–88, cited in *Times of India*, December 10, 1995.

has proportionately fewer educated or wealthy members whose demands have to be met than any other major ethnic group. A National Sample Survey in 1987–88, for instance, found that only 2.3% of Muslim men and 0.8% of women had university degrees, compared with 7.9% of Hindu men and 4.2% of Hindu women. Only 8.0% of Muslim men had completed secondary school, compared with 17.2% of Hindus. In landholdings, too, Muslims are on average much poorer than upper- and middle-caste Hindus, largely because of the effects of the post-Partition land reforms that hit Muslim landlords harder than Hindus.[11]

As a result of anti-Muslim riots in the past, we know that Muslims place a very high priority on one particular issue – that of physical protection or at least nonaggression from the state – compared with other issue dimensions that are more salient for Hindu voters. In a 1991 survey in Delhi, for example, 23% of Muslims named communal violence or the Ayodhya issue as the single most serious problem India's citizens faced compared with only 6.2% of Hindu upper castes, 1.5% of Hindu backward castes, and 7.9% of Hindu Scheduled Castes. Muslims were much less likely than Hindus to identify distributional issues such as price rises and unemployment as the key issues facing the country. Muslims and the minority Sikh community were also the most nervous about the long-term future of Indian democracy: 80.3% of Muslims and 67.2% of Sikhs said the future of democracy was not safe in India compared with 51.3% of upper-caste Hindus, 44.4% of Scheduled

[11] The most important reasons for Muslims' disadvantaged economic position today are the large-scale land reforms in the 1950s, which Hindus were better able to resist; the loss of minority reservations in government service; and the emigration of much of the commercial and political Muslim elite to Pakistan. For comprehensive data on Muslims' economic backwardness compared with that of Hindus, see Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: Indian Muslims since Independence* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Caste Hindus, and 49.3% of the backward castes.[12] That Muslim voters value security so highly and that they have fewer educated, privileged members whose interests have to be satisfied than any other major ethnic group make Muslims a relatively inexpensive voting bloc. In contrast, middle- and upper-caste voters, groups well entrenched in the bureaucracy who are better educated and with larger landholdings, will be a much more "expensive" group of voters for a party to attract.

Third, these Muslim demands for security cannot be portrayed as threatening to the core interests of the majority for the following reasons. Muslims have a very low level of representation in the armed forces (less than 1%), so there is clearly no threat to Hindu control of the country there. Muslims are also a minority in almost all districts in the country, with the exception of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and a handful of districts in other states (such as Mallapuram in Kerala and Rampur in Uttar Pradesh), so it is difficult to claim that a greater supply of security will alter the political balance within the country as a whole or within states. Finally, because they are a minority in all but one state and in most constituencies, Muslims generally support Hindu-led parties, whose Hindu leaders can therefore reassure anxious members of the Hindu majority that moves to help Muslims are not threatening to Hindus.[13]

Testing for the Observable Implications of the Model

In the remainder of this chapter I test for the observable implications of my theoretical argument about the relationship between party competition and the prevention of violence. First, is there a statistical relationship between the quantitative indicator of the level of electoral competition, the effective number of parties in a state, and a state's level of Hindu-Muslim violence? Second, when we examine situations when antiminority mobilization is fomented across India, do we find that states in situations A, B_i, and B_{ii} act in the ways predicted by the model? Third, when we examine specific instances where riots did or did not break out can we find evidence that the politically strategic considerations outlined in the model are really the key mechanisms responsible in predicting where violence does or does not break out?

[12] "The Face of the Delhi Electorate in the Gallup Mirror," *Indian Institute of Public Opinion Monthly Public Opinion Surveys* 36, no. 809 (1991), pp. 10–16.

[13] The notable exception here is in the city of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, where Muslims have supported a Muslim-led party, the MIM.

Party Competition and Riot Prevention

Because detailed state-level opinion poll data on minority support for parties is only available since the mid-1990s in India, it is impossible to test statistically my arguments about the effects of minority support on government actions at low levels of party competition (situations B_i and B_{ii}). However, I can test for my central argument that high levels of party competition lead to lower levels of antiminority violence and that bipolar party competition is generally associated with higher levels of violence. To carry out this test I have compiled a monthly dataset on Hindu-Muslim riots and socioeconomic and electoral variables for 14 major Indian states since 1961: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.[14] As of 1991, the most recent census for which data on religious identification are available, these states accounted for 95% of India's total population and 93% of its Muslim population. The Hindu-Muslim riot data I use here were collected jointly with Ashutosh Varshney in 1994–96. They are derived from daily newspaper reports (every issue of the *Times of India* published between 1950 and 1995) and include information on riot occurrence and deaths, in addition to many other factors. The data we collected are both more complete than publicly available government data on communal violence and more useful in statistical and other types of analysis, because, unlike government data, they are disaggregated by town, district, day, and month.[15] These Hindu-Muslim riot data are correlated at 0.64 with the post-1954 Government of India annual data on communal riots and at 0.7 with the post-1975 data on atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

I use these riot data to create two variables that measure Hindu-Muslim violence: *RIOTS*, the monthly number of reported Hindu-Muslim riots in each state; and *KILLED*, the deaths per month in Hindu-Muslim riots in each state. To control for the possibility that past violence is driving both the level of electoral competition (by increasing polarization) as well as the level of present violence – due to revenge for past events, or perhaps because

[14] I select 1961 as a starting date because state reorganization was largely complete for major states by this date, and because the key demographic data for these new states is only easily available for 1961 onward. Assam is not included here because of decisions made during the collection of the riot data, which make the data for that state less reliable than for the others.

[15] For details of how the Varshney and Wilkinson data were collected, see Appendixes A and B.

past violence is evidence of the continuing existence in a state of what Paul Brass has termed "institutionalized riot networks" that foment violence – I also calculate the variable *PREVIOUS VIOLENCE*, which measures the number of casualties in each state in the previous 5 and 10 years.

To measure the degree of electoral competition in a state, I employ the most widely used indicator of electoral competitiveness, the effective number of parties (ENPV). The formula for this index is $ENPV = 1/\Sigma v_i^2$, where v_i is the *vote share* of the *i*th party. This measure weights parties with a higher vote share more heavily than those parties with a very low vote share, thus providing a better measure of the "real" level of party competition than if we were to simply count the total number of parties competing in a state. I use Butler, Lahiri, and Roy, *India Decides*, as the source for these Indian state election data.[16]

One reasonable objection to the use of ENPV as an indicator of party competition is that the best indicator of the competitiveness of a system might in reality be competition at the level of party factions (i.e., *below* the party level) or between competing blocs of parties with similar agendas and interests (i.e., *above* the party level).[17] Unfortunately I could obtain no reliable data on the shifting factional alignments that exist *within* the major Indian political parties, but I am able to carry out a test for the effects of alliance-competition at the level above the individual party. I do this by adjusting ENPV for the presence of preelection interparty alliances – if three parties were allied they would be counted as one party in calculating the index – to create the new variable *ADJENPV*. However because of the extreme instability of coalitions in Indian state politics, I believe that *ADJENPV* will be a less reliable indicator of party competition than the underlying number of parties.

[16] David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides: Elections, 1952–1995* (New Delhi: Books and Things, 1995).

[17] Herbert Kitschelt et al., *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 8–9. The "fit" between factions and parties in India, however, is probably better than in other countries where party control over campaigns and elections makes defection much more costly for the individual legislator and hence a voice through a party faction more likely. In the Indian political system it is relatively easy, even after the passage of several antidefection laws, for dissatisfied factions within parties to go off and form their own parties without having to resign their seats and fight for reelection. Local alignments are also often as important as national party support in winning an election, making defection less costly. Some parties in India are basically the vehicles of only a few politicians, as can be seen from the fact that registered parties are often named after their dominant personality (e.g., "Kerala Congress-Joseph," "ADMK-Janaki Ramachandran").

The Indian national government has the power to impose central rule on a state and suspend its state legislature if it believes that a state is not being governed in accordance with the Indian Constitution, or if no stable state government can be formed. Because this central rule results in a state's governor taking over the administration, it is sometimes called "governor's rule," though more often termed "president's rule," reflecting the fact that the imposition of central rule must be approved by the president of India. To control for these periods when each state was under central administration, I therefore use the dummy variable *PRESRULE* in my statistical analysis.[18]

To see if there are particular party effects on riot control over and above the level of party competition – as is often alleged by both supporters and detractors of Indian political parties – I also collected data on when the BJP, Communists, Congress, or "Others" (which includes the middle- and lower-caste and regional parties) were in power or in coalition in each state each month from 1961 to 1995. To do this, I relied on Butler, Lahiri, and Roy's volume *India Decides*, on published Election Commission of India (ECI) election returns, and on approximately 30 books or articles on state politics, which I list in Appendix A.[19] I code a party as ruling (e.g., the variables *CONGRULE*, *BJPRULE*) where it has a clear majority of the seats in a state's assembly (Vidhan Sabha). In cases where a party does not have a majority of the seats but it is participating in government, either as an official partner or in an arrangement where it supports the government from outside, I code it as participating in a coalition (e.g., *COMMCOAL*, *BJPCOAL*). In those cases where the Congress Party splits – as in Maharashtra in 1978 – I apply the same rule introduced by the 52nd Amendment and used by the Election Commission to determine whether MLAs have "defected" or split the party: the resulting coalition government is still coded as being "Congress" if it contains more than one-third of the previous Congress members.

In addition to these indicators of violence and political competition I control for the same socioeconomic variables I used in the regressions in Chapter 4: a state's total population, its linguistic and religious diversity

[18] Dates for these periods of "President's Rule" were obtained from Lok Sabha Secretariat, *President's Rule in the States and Union Territories* (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1996).

[19] Butler et al., *India Decides: Elections, 1952–1995*. Most ECI reports are now available online at <www.eci.gov.in>. I am currently collecting data that will ultimately allow me to test for the effects of all major parties in the country, as well as the ethnic support base and ethnic appeals made by each party.

(*LANGFRAC* and *RELFRAC*),[20] its Muslim population, and a state's level of urban income inequality.[21] I also control for a state's literacy level, obtained from the Indian census. To analyze these data I use the same negative binomial model discussed in Chapter 2.[22]

Discussion of Regression Results

Table 5.3 reports the results when we examined the relationship between the effective number of parties and the number of riots in each state in each month from 1961 to 1995. The results in these regressions, and in others not displayed here, support the hypothesis that there is a negative relationship between the degree of electoral competition in a state and its level of communal riots. The number of Hindu-Muslim riots goes down as the effective number of parties goes up, with the coefficient for the effective number of parties significant at the 99% level across all models, including, most importantly, those regressions where I control for a state's previous level of violence, the parties in power or coalition in a state, and (through the use of dummy variables for each state) other important state-level effects.[23]

Several of the socioeconomic control variables were significant in almost all models. Urbanization rates and states' total population are both highly significant and positively related to the probability of riots, which is a finding consistent with virtually every other study ever done on urban violence. But two other variables seem to be related to violence in a surprising way: states with greater income inequality in urban areas (at least as measured by *WBUGINI*) actually seem to have lower levels of violence than those with a more equal income distribution. And states with higher levels of literacy

[20] For a discussion of ethnic fractionalization indicators, see Peter C. Ordeshook and Olga V. Shvetsova, "Ethnic Heterogeneity, District Magnitude and the Number of Parties," *American Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 1 (1994), pp. 100–23, and Gary Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[21] I calculate my measures of state linguistic and religious fractionalization, using Rae's index $(1 - \Sigma g_i^2)$, where g_i is the proportion of the population in linguistic or religious group i. For definitions of these variables and information on the data used to calculate them, see the discussion in the previous chapter.

[22] J. Scott Long, *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1997), pp. 217–63.

[23] I also ran these regressions using the coalition-adjusted measure of party competition discussed earlier: this variable had the same negative direction as ENPV but was insignificant in explaining both riot levels and deaths.

Table 5.3. *Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in Major Indian States, 1961–1995*

	Riots			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Effective number of electoral parties	−0.217	−0.267	−0.258	−0.229
	(0.071)***	(0.074)***	(0.073)***	(0.076)***
State population (log)	0.819	2.044	2.225	1.371
	(0.117)***	(1.233)*	(1.244)*	(1.236)
State election within 6 months	0.376	0.432	0.410	0.418
	(0.139)***	(0.136)***	(0.137)***	(0.137)***
National election within 6 months	−0.367	−0.374	−0.351	−0.370
	(0.145)**	(0.142)***	(0.143)**	(0.143)***
President's rule	−0.077	−0.276	−0.322	−0.576
	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.183)	(0.227)
Literacy percentage	4.828	10.216	9.825	10.691
	(1.092)***	(4.829)**	(4.847)**	(4.799)**
Urbanization percentage	−1.931	−23.110	−23.212	−19.576
	(1.523)	(8.590)***	(8.581)***	(8.635)**
Muslim percentage	10.439	24.344	24.153	18.437
	(1.808)***	(16.446)	(16.476)	(16.315)
Urban Gini coefficient (World Bank)	−0.034	−0.034	−0.033	−0.040
	(0.019)*	(0.020)*	(0.020)	(0.021)*
Religious fractionalization	−10.704	−48.662	−47.393	−49.269
	(2.598)***	(10.283)***	(10.344)***	(10.198)***
Linguistic fractionalization	−6.226	−23.210	−23.161	−23.910
	(2.392)***	(7.293)***	(7.305)***	(7.228)***
Interaction of Relfrac and Langfrac	26.641	77.518	76.273	79.913
	(8.564)***	(26.328)***	(26.403)***	(26.082)***
Communist rule	−1.303	−1.482	−1.576	−1.524
	(0.335)***	(0.457)***	(0.445)***	(0.447)***
Congress rule	0.364	0.043		−0.266
	(0.112)***	(0.115)		(0.156)*
Riots in previous 10 years	0.015	0.008	0.008	0.009
	(0.002)***	(0.002)***	(0.002)***	(0.002)***
Coalition dummy				−0.529
				(0.182)***
State dummies		Included	Included	Included
Constant	−14.742	−23.218	−26.345	−11.829
	(2.122)***	(19.297)	(19.469)	(19.428)
Observations	5472	5472	5472	5472
Number of states	14	14	14	14

Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. For state dummy coefficients, see Appendix C.

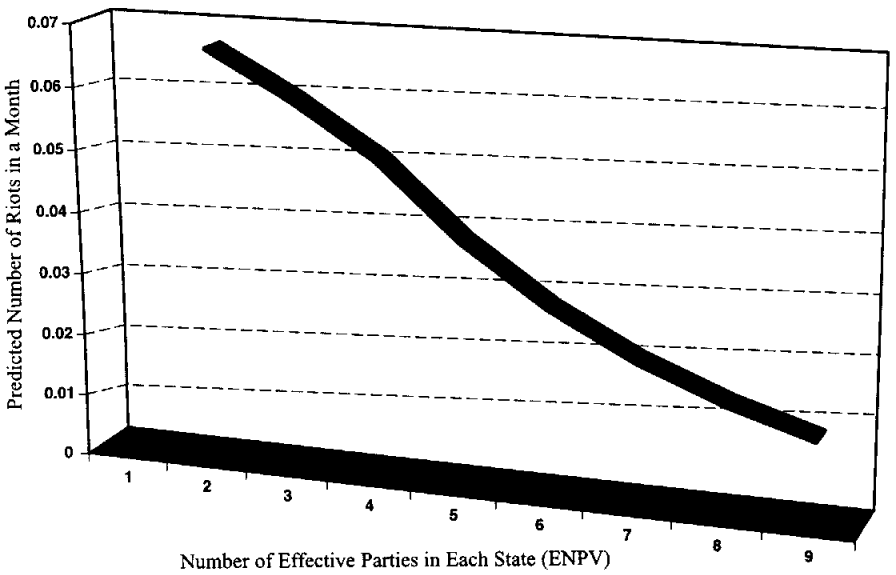

Figure 5.2 Predicted effect of state party fractionalization on communal riots

also seem to have higher levels of violence, despite predictions made by some that riots ought to decline as education rises. It is not the case, as we might think, that the effective number of parties is purely a function of a state's level of ethnic heterogeneity. The measure for party competition (ENPV) is not highly correlated with the measures of ethnic heterogeneity, and the effect of party competition remains robust even when we include measures of ethnic diversity. Interacting party competition variables with ethnic variables to look for their joint effect also had no discernible effect.

How much of a substantive effect does electoral competition have in explaining state levels of communal violence? We can see in Figure 5.2 that the predicted effect of moving from a state in which there were two effective parties to one in which there were eight parties, holding other factors at their mean, would be to reduce the expected number of riots in a state from 0.07 per month to .01 riots per month, a drop of more than 80%.[24] To give an example that is somewhat less abstract, the effect of moving from a state with Gujarat's level of party competition in 1995 (3.08 effective parties) to one with Kerala's level of party competition in that year (5.63 effective

[24] These marginal effects were all calculated using the stata7 command *mfx compute, at(x=value of interest mean)* following regression 3 in the table.

parties), while holding other factors constant at their mean, would have been to reduce the predicted number of riots in a state by half, from 0.05 to 0.025 riots in a month, or from 0.6 riots to 0.3 riots in a year.

Whether the BJP or the Congress had an overall majority in any particular state seems to have had no independent impact on the overall level of riot occurrence from 1961 to 1995.[25] In the case of BJP rule this may in part be a function of the fact that the BJP only began to win outright in state elections in the early 1990s, so there are very few observations, and that president's rule was imposed on four BJP-ruled states immediately after mass rioting broke out in December 1992, so the violence that some would argue resulted from BJP rule is classified under "president's rule" rather than "BJP rule." Congress rule was initially significant when I ran regressions (see column 1 in Table 5.3) but then became insignificant when I introduced dummy variables for states (in columns three and four in Table 5.3) and also when I ran the regression on only some decades from the time series. This makes sense for two reasons: first, Congress was in a dominant position for so many years in so many states that the variable *CONGRULE* is probably serving as a proxy for state- and time-specific factors; second, as we discussed in Chapter 4, despite Congress's official claims to always protect minorities, the party's status as the dominant catchall party for many years and its often weak party discipline has meant that at one time or another Congress politicians have both fomented and prevented communal violence for political advantage. Congress governments have failed, for example, to prevent some of India's worst riots (e.g., the Ahmedabad riots of 1969, the Moradabad riots of 1980, or the Meerut riots of 1987) and in some cases Congress ministers have reportedly instigated riots (Bihar ex-chief minister K. B. Sahay was allegedly involved in the 1967 Ranchi riots) and have blocked riot enforcement.[26] However, there does seem to be a clear party effect when we control for Communist rule. Communist rule is negatively related to the level of riots in a state in all versions of the model, no matter which other variables are included. The predicted effect of moving from a state where the Communists are not in power to one in which they have an overall majority, while holding other factors constant at their mean, would be to reduce the level of riots

[25] Only the coefficients for the regression in which the dummy variables for Congress rule were included are reported in Table 5.4.

[26] See, e.g., *Lok Sabha Debates*, May 14, 1970, p. 336, and October 7, 1982. p. 335, for details of alleged Congress interference with local riot prevention activities in Meerut and Jyoti Basu's allegations about Sahay's role in the 1967 Ranchi riots.

by three-quarters, from 0.51 riots per year to 0.12. One can speculate that this strong relationship is the result of two factors: a strong ideology of secularism, and (this would differentiate the party from Congress) a much greater degree of party discipline and ideological coherence over time.

Perhaps most interesting is that coalitions seem to have an independent effect in reducing the level of violence. When there is a coalition in a state, the predicted number of riots drops by more than half, from 0.56 riots per year to 0.33 riots. This effect applies even when coalitions include parties generally thought to foment violence, such as the BJP.

I also ran the same regressions I used on riots on the monthly level of deaths from communal riots in India's states from 1961 to 1995, rather than riot occurrence. The results were very similar to those for riots. The effective number of parties was again highly significant and negatively related to the level of deaths in a state: a rise in the number of effective parties from 2 to 8 in a state would lead, all other factors being equal, to a 50% reduction in the number of deaths. Moving from the number of effective parties in Gujarat in 1995 (3.08) to the number in Kerala (5.63) would have led to a predicted fall in the number of deaths of 25%. The dummy for Communist rule is again highly significant, with Communist rule associated with a reduction in deaths of almost 75% (from 0.92 to 0.24 per annum).

Party Competition, Minority Support, and State Riot Prevention

The fact that election surveys with detailed data on minority voting in state elections have only been collected since the mid-1990s makes it impossible to test systematically my hypothesis about the effects of minority support at low (bipolar) levels of party competition. However, it is possible to make use of the available exit survey data from the late 1990s together with party fractionalization data to provide at least a partial test of my arguments about the importance of levels of party competition and minority support in explaining government response to riots. When we examine situations in which antiminority mobilization is fomented across India, do we find that states in situations A, B_i, and B_{ii} act in the ways predicted by the model?

To examine this issue, I look at state responses to attempts to foment violence throughout India during the Gujarat riots of February–April 2002. The Gujarat riots of 2002 have been extensively examined in the Indian press and by human rights organizations and academics. The BJP's "secular" Muslim-supported coalition partners in New Delhi were unwilling during this period to force the BJP to impose central rule on Gujarat, where

the state government had allowed antiminority riots to continue for weeks after Hindu nationalists and family members were murdered at Godhra on February 27, 2002.

Many observers have argued that the Gujarat riots therefore symbolize the failure of coalitional politics in general to control communal extremism and communal violence in India.[27] I certainly acknowledge that the events in early 2002 showed that regional parties with minority support in their own states were unwilling to bring the central government down in order to protect minorities in Gujarat. However, this does not invalidate my general argument about the actions that politicians and parties will take in order to protect their own political futures in their own states. If we examine the state-level response to attempts to foment riots throughout India in 2002, we can see that state governments responded as predicted by my general model. States with high levels of party fractionalization prevented anti-Muslim mobilization even if the state government concerned (as in Orissa) included a Hindu nationalist party. In states with low levels of party competition, as predicted, the state response depended on whether the ruling coalition relied on Muslim votes. Where Muslims were an important support base for the ruling coalition, as in Madhya Pradesh (where exit polls from the most recent election suggest 97% of Muslims support the ruling party) or Maharashtra (99% Muslim support for the governing coalition), the state governments were highly effective in preventing violence. Where the governing party had no Muslim support, however, as in Gujarat, the government adopted a very weak and biased stance toward the riots.

In Table 5.4 I categorize the major Indian states in terms of whether they had low levels of party competition in which the governing party relies on minority votes (B_i) or does not rely on majority votes (B_{ii}) or in situations where there is high party competition in a state. Only in Gujarat did we have the most dangerous situation B_{ii}, where there was both a low level of party competition (2.97 effective parties, with Congress and BJP having obtained 80% of the vote between them in the previous election) and a party in power, the BJP, that did not rely on minority voters at all: election surveys estimated that the BJP got 0% of the minority vote in 1998. Moreover, by 2002 the BJP, after a string of electoral reverses in by-elections and

[27] Syed Shahabuddin has long argued that the coalition allies have "compromised their secular ideology to join hands with the BJP and share power. Will they be willing to give up power if the BJP takes steps that are not to their liking? They may well look the other way." "Why Muslims fear the BJP," *Week*, April 12, 1998.

Table 5.4. *Party Competition and Riot Prevention, from February to April 2002*

State/Ruling Party[a]	State Coding	Effective Number of Parties	Vote Share of Two Largest Parties	Percentage of Muslim Voters Estimated to Support Governing Party	State Response to Riots
Andhra Pradesh/TDP	B_i	2.78	84.48	30%	Prevented
Himachal Pradesh/	B_i	2.85	82.53	NA	
Gujarat/BJP	B_{ii}	2.97	79.66	0%	Allowed
Madhya Pradesh/Congress	B_i	3.09	79.87	97%	Prevented
Rajasthan/Congress	B_i	3.19	78.18	92%	Prevented
West Bengal/Left Front	A	4.14	67.25	49%	Prevented
Karnataka/Congress	A	4.19	61.53	86%	Prevented
Orissa/Biju JD & BJP	A	4.26	63.18	16% (2% + 14%)	Prevented
Punjab/	A	4.40	64.23	NA	Prevented
Tamil Nadu/AIADMK	A	4.84	62.36	39%	Prevented
Uttar Pradesh/Under Central Rule	A	4.99	54.32	NA	Prevented
Haryana/Indian National Lok Dal	A	5.01	60.83	59%	Prevented
Maharashtra/Congress & NCP	A	5.64	49.8	99% (53% + 46%)	Prevented
Kerala/UDF	A	6.16	52.76	71%	Prevented
Bihar/RJD	A	7.70	42.98	61%	Prevented

[a] For acronyms, see Table 5.1.

Sources: CSDS and ORG-Marg opinion polls reported in *India Today and Frontline*. In all cases the most recent pre-2002 opinion poll is used as the most reliable indicator of the parties' support base, even if that was for the Lok Sabha national election in 1999. Sources: Madhya Pradesh: *Frontline*, November 19, 1999, pp. 46–48; Bihar: *Frontline*, March 31, 2000; Kerala: *India Today*, May 14, 2001, p. 26; Maharashtra: *Frontline*, November 19, 1999, pp. 44–45; Haryana: *Frontline*, April 14, 2000, pp. 52–53; Tamil Nadu: *India Today*, May 14, 2001, p. 21; Orissa: *Frontline*, April 14, 2000, pp. 52–53; Karnataka: *Frontline*, November 19, 1999, pp. 46–48; West Bengal: *India Today*, May 14, 2001, p. 23; Andhra Pradesh: *Frontline*, November 19, 1999.

important municipal elections over the preceding two years, was anxious to polarize the vote along majority-minority lines to bring Hindu voters back to the party in preparation for state elections that had to be held by mid-2003.

The result, as expected, was that the state performed very poorly in controlling the riots. According to press accounts and human rights investigations, the Narendra Modi regime facilitated the violence in many different ways: by transferring officials who had successfully prevented antiminority riots or who arrested Hindu militants involved in the violence; by delaying calling in the army until the worst of the violence was already over; by taking punitive action against people trying to register cases against the government's political allies; and by instructing state officials not to intervene in some cases to prevent the violence.[28] The link between government action and state response to riots was clear from the fact that the state BJP leaders met in late March, while the violence was still continuing, to discuss the possibility of calling early elections to benefit from the antiminority pro-Hindu wave the Godhra killings and subsequent riots had engendered.[29] As a result, Gujarat burned.

Outside Gujarat however, in states where there was relatively low competition but the party in power relied on Muslim votes or where party fractionalization was high, regardless of which party was in power, India's state governments performed very well in 2002 in preventing Hindu-Muslim violence from spreading as it had done in 1992–93.[30] This success came despite numerous attempts by Hindu nationalists – as well as a handful of attempts by Muslim militants – to foment violence in different states between February 27 and the end of April 2002. Figure 2.2 shows those cases where the press reported Hindu nationalist demonstrations, processions, bands, or attacks against minorities during this period, explicitly linked to the violence in Gujarat. As we discussed in Chapter 2, these are all events that one would have expected to lead in many cases to large-scale

[28] See "Modi Ties Hands of Cops Who Put Their Foot Down," *Indian Express* (New Delhi), March 26, 2002, p. 1; "Gujarat Pot Keeps Boiling as CM Looks the Other Way," *Indian Express*, March 29, 2002; *Indian Express*, March 28, 2002.

[29] See, for example, the reports in *Indian Express*, March 29, 2002, which describe political interference with law enforcement in Gujarat in March as well as BJP officials' discussions a few weeks after the riots began on whether to call early elections in the state to take advantage of the Hindu backlash.

[30] See Steven I. Wilkinson, "Putting Gujarat in Perspective," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai), April 27, 2002, pp. 1579–83.

violence, as they did in Gujarat. As we can see in Figure 2.2, very few of the precipitating events outside Gujarat led to significant numbers of deaths. The explanation for this lies in determined state law enforcement efforts, which themselves were the result of the electoral variables I have identified.

The map in Figure 5.3 shows data on precipitating events and deaths from February–April 2002 as well as data on the level of party competition in each state during this period. In states with low levels of party competition (75% of the vote or more split between 2 main parties) but in which the state governments relied on minority votes, we can see that the number of precipitating events that turned into large-scale riots was low. This was because the state governments in these states ordered their police forces to prevent violence in order to protect the multiethnic coalitions built around distributive issues on which they had won power.

In Andhra Pradesh (2.78 effective parties), Madhya Pradesh (3.09 effective parties), and Rajasthan (3.19 effective parties) the Congress governments of Ashok Gehlot (Rajasthan) and Digvijay Singh (Madhya Pradesh), determined to preserve their Hindu-Muslim coalitions before 2003 elections, put massive preventive measures into effect to prevent the violence from spreading into their states from adjacent Gujarat. In Madhya Pradesh the government rounded up thousands of militant Hindu nationalists, enforced curfews in dozens of districts, and ordered the police to take strong action against rioters. In Rajasthan too the police were under orders to prevent violence, and local police officers prevented riots from breaking out in Jaipur, Kishangarh, and Ajmer.[31] Chandrababu Naidu's TDP government in Andhra Pradesh was also absolutely determined to prevent violence: even though his party was in a national alliance with the BJP, it was well recognized that his party had been able to win 30% of the Muslim vote in 1999 because Naidu had always been able to prevent antiminority riots in the state and had paid special attention to Muslim voters in the capital, Hyderabad.[32] Naidu's police force arrested militants and was prepared to fire on militants to prevent them from starting a riot in Hyderabad in mid-March 2002.

[31] Though it is difficult to say for sure, it seems likely that early firm state action outside Gujarat – arrests, curfews, bands of movement – prevented some precipitating events from even occurring in the first place. For example, preventive measures stopped any precipitating events from taking place in towns such as Indore and Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh.

[32] *Frontline*, November 19, 1999. The Congress got an estimated 64% of the Muslim vote in Andhra Pradesh in the 1999 national elections.

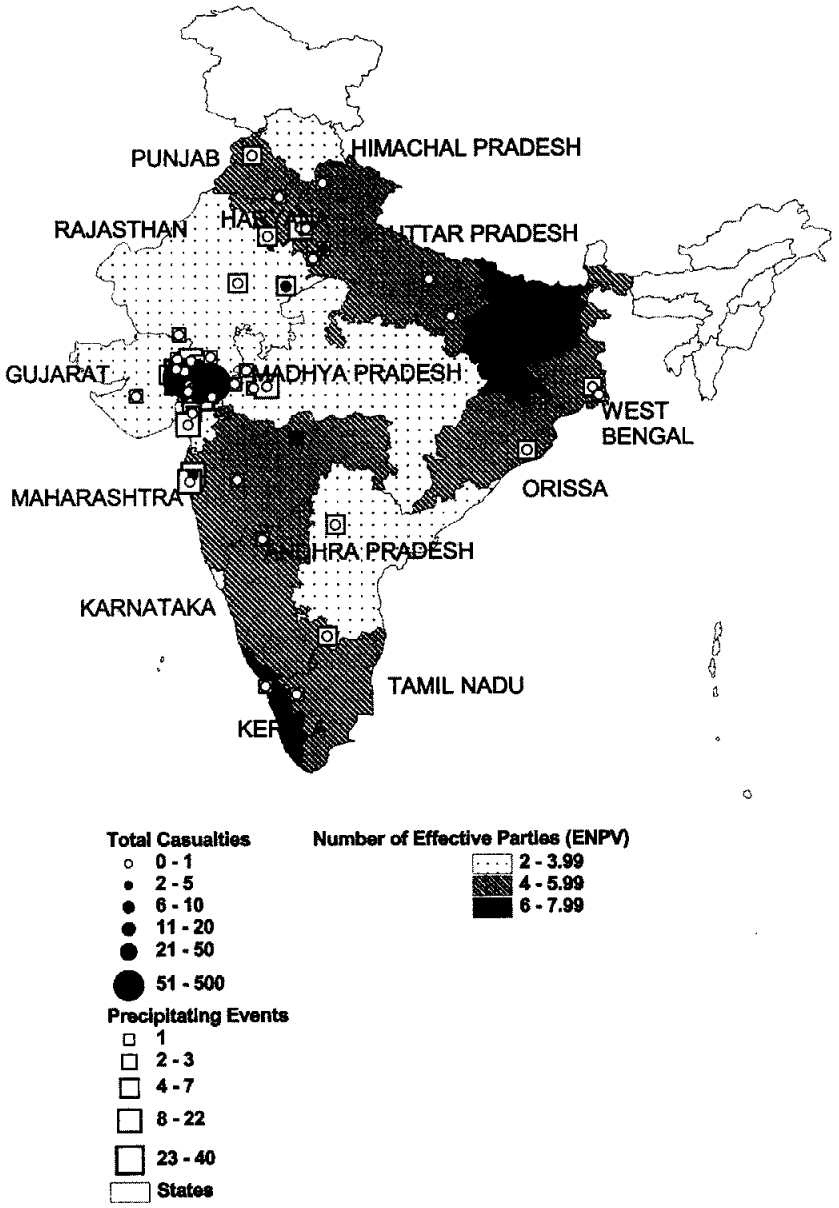

Figure 5.3 Reported precipitating events and deaths during the February–April 2002 communal violence and patterns of party competition (data on violence collected by Wilkinson based on *Indian Express* reports; data on levels of party competition calculated from Election Commission of India reports)

In states with high levels of party competition, governments were forced to take strong action to prevent riots in order to preserve their current coalitions or future political opportunities. This was true even when the governments included Hindu nationalist parties or parties formerly linked to communal movements, as in Orissa and Kerala. In Orissa the BJP–Biju Janata Dal (BJD) coalition government arrested 500 Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal activists to prevent violence during the March 1 strike called in the state.[33] In Bihar, with the highest level of party competition in India (with 7.7 effective parties), the ruling coalition repaid Muslims for their electoral support by massively deploying police in order to avert riots during Holi. Some states, such as West Bengal, benefited from having both an explicitly secular party in office and high levels of political competition (4.14 effective parties) that make the Muslims a crucial part of all the major parties' electoral arithmetic. The Communist Party (Marxist) or CPM took a firm line with attempts to cause trouble, and West Bengal police fired on *karsevaks* at Taldi in March when they refused to disperse, killing 1 and wounding 29.

The few apparent "exceptions" to the generalization that state governments outside Gujarat performed well in preventing violence in fact only go to prove the point. On closer investigation of these incidents – at Ajmer, Kishangarh and Gangapur (Rajasthan), Canning and Calcutta (West Bengal), Ahmadnagar (Maharashtra), and Bhubaneshwar (Orissa) – we find that the deaths that did occur were due largely to police action against rioters rather than the result of militants attacking minorities, as in Gujarat. One hundred percent of the casualties in Gangapur in Rajasthan, for example, were the result of police firing to break up an illegal Hindu militant attempt to block the route of a Muslim religious procession, killing 3 and injuring 15.[34]

How Electoral Competition Affects Riot Prevention

If we turn from the aggregate level to individual cases, can we also find evidence that the mechanisms outlined in this chapter are responsible for government action to allow or prevent actions likely to lead to riots? In this section I examine this question by looking at two cases from Uttar Pradesh in the 1990s where the UP government had to decide whether to

[33] "Partial Response in Orissa," *Hindu*, March 2, 2002.
[34] *Indian Express*, March 27, 2002.

prevent Hindu nationalist mobilizations that it knew were likely to lead to communal violence. In the first case, in Varanasi in 1991, the state government allowed the mobilization to continue, resulting in a riot in which 17 people were murdered. In the second case, at Mathura in 1995, the state government ultimately intervened to prevent the mobilization and averted communal violence. The difference between these two outcomes, I argue, can be explained when we look at three factors: the party in power: the BJP in 1991, a BJP-BSP coalition in 1995; the group of voters that the party in government saw as pivotal for its party's success in the next election (the BJP in 1991 wanted to attract Hindus, the BSP in 1995 wanted to attract Muslims); and the overall level of party competition in the state. Uttar Pradesh moved from a situation in 1991 in which the BJP felt that if it polarized the Hindu electorate it could win power unaided, to a more fluid system in the mid-1990s in which it was becoming clear no one group or party could form a government without the support of others. What happened in the town of Mathura in 1995 demonstrates the good effects of multipolar political competition in reducing violence, even in a situation where one of the two coalition partners in government, the BJP, was explicitly pro-Hindu and antiminority.

Varanasi, November 8–11, 1991

Although in retrospect it seems clear that a decisive shift toward multiparty competition took place in the political system in Uttar Pradesh in the early 1990s, this was not how it appeared to BJP leaders at the time. From 1989 to 1991 the party had launched a succession of demonstrations and processions around the Ayodhya mosque issue, and it won considerable sympathy from the state's Hindus when Mulayam Singh Yadav's police force fired at Hindu militants in Ayodhya in November 1989. In May 1991 the BJP won 34.5% of the vote in the state elections and a narrow majority (221 out of 425) in the UP Assembly. It appeared as if promoting Hindu issues was a sufficiently effective strategy so that the BJP would be able to avoid coalition politics in the future, and Kalyan Singh believed that the BJP, like the Congress Party it had replaced, could thrive as the dominant party in a system in which its opponents split the anti-incumbent vote.

The BJP, however, somewhat moderated its antiminority stance once in office in order to further its longer-term political objectives. Chief Minister Kalyan Singh was anxious to prove that the party could be "responsible" while in state government, in order to win over Congress voters who

associated the party with extremism and to maximize the chances of the BJP winning power in the future, including at the national level. Throughout the 1991 election campaign Singh had tried to reassure moderate voters that the party could guarantee a "riot-free state" in which law and order were paramount.[35] The Singh government even leaked figures to demonstrate that it had been very effective in reducing the number of riots compared with previous regimes.

The BJP interpretation of these figures was, not surprisingly, that "The BJP, which merely proclaims justice for all and appeasement of none . . . turns out to be the real savior of Muslims."[36] The BJP's opponents argued that the figures merely demonstrated that the BJP and its allies caused the riots in the first place in order to win political power by solidifying the "Hindu vote." As one opposition politician remarked, "When the thief is made the caretaker, he cannot steal, he won't steal. They [The Shiv Sena and the BJP] engineered the riots, now they are in charge of law and order. So there will be some peace."[37] The opposition point of view was supported by the fact that the Police Intelligence Department reportedly submitted a confidential report to the BJP government in May 1991 providing evidence that the BJP mobilization campaigns had led directly to communal riots in the state. The BJP government, not surprisingly, suppressed the report.[38]

But one serious riot did occur under the BJP regime, at Varanasi in November 1991. On Friday, November 8, 1991, in a move that went against the Singh government's official policy that there should be no large processions in connection with the temple movement, the Hindu nationalist VHP was allowed to conduct a religious procession and ceremony with only a light police escort in the sensitive city of Varanasi. This procession led directly to a serious Hindu-Muslim riot. At around 9:15 P.M. a VHP procession, carrying a statue of the Hindu goddess Kali, marched through the heavily Muslim Madanpura area of the old city. The Hindu processionists chanted slogans and a few set off fireworks, one of which hit and injured a Muslim. When the processionists refused to stop setting off

[35] One part of this law-and-order strategy, reported to be very popular among the upper castes, was the Anti Copying Act, which provided harsh penalties for students. The repeal of this act was the first act of the Mulayam Singh's government when in took office in early 1993. See "Good Riddance," *Sunday*, July 9–15, 1995, pp. 62–63.

[36] Source: B. P. Singhal, "Definition of Secularism," *Indian Express*, August 28, 1992.

[37] *Pioneer*, June 27, 1992; "Muslims: Fear and Distrust," *India Today*, May 31, 1996, pp. 42–43.

[38] *Pioneer*, October 1, 1992.

firecrackers, scuffles began and Muslims threw brickbats and then stabbed one of the processionists. Several processionists ran to the nearby predominantly Hindu area of Godaulia and told lurid tales of Muslim attacks. Hindu mobs in Godaulia then attacked and killed Muslims attending a cinema in Godaulia. These attacks sparked off four days of riots, in which 17 people were killed.[39]

After the initial incidents, several attacks were made on the properties of Muslim *kothidars* (merchants) in the Madanpura area of the old city. Many of these silk merchants are relatively recent entrants to the city's important sari trade, which traditionally has been dominated by Hindu middlemen who buy from the Muslim weavers. In Varanasi and in nearby villages an estimated 200,000 Muslims work making saris to supply the city's huge export industry. The *kothidars*' success in moving up from weavers to middlemen has been resented by some of the Hindu merchants. Resentment, according to a social scientist who has worked for fifteen years in the area, is especially strong among the less-established Hindu merchants.[40] Local Hindu politicians have claimed that Muslims, some of whom had been buying up land in the area before the riots, were trying to drive Hindus out of the trade.

How can we explain this riot and the failure of the government to ban the procession? The BJP, after all, was in power in Uttar Pradesh and apparently wanted to present a moderate face to north Indian voters in order to widen its electoral appeal. To understand why the Singh government allowed the procession that led to the riot, it is necessary to understand both the state electoral context and the internal tensions within the party by November 1991. By the autumn of 1991 there was substantial unease among the hard-line Hindu nationalist group within the Uttar Pradesh BJP over the party's pragmatic attempt to rein in Hindu nationalist mobilizations. The hard-liners represented around 15 of the party's 50 MPs in the state and 80 members of the 212-strong BJP contingent in the Vidhan Sabha. Singh's attempt to placate the hard-liners with the transfers of 67 policemen and civil servants (who had taken action against Hindu protesters during the Ayodhya campaign the previous year) was not successful.[41] In early September Vinay Katiyar, the local MP for Ayodhya and the state

[39] This information comes from interviews with several UP cadre officers in Lucknow, Delhi, Varanasi, and Bareilly, July and August 1995.

[40] For background on the structure of the Varanasi sari industry, see "A Matter of Pride," *Business India*, February 28–March 13, 1994, pp. 260–61.

[41] "Temple Talk," *India Today*, August 15, 1991.

secretary of the Bajrang Dal (the VHP's youth organization) stepped up the hard-line pressure when he demanded the removal of some police barricades at Ayodhya and warned that "I do not care whether the BJP Government stays or goes, but the barricades at the site have to go." The Kalyan Singh government removed the barricades, but it was becoming obvious that to reduce some of the internal party pressure on Ayodhya, which would bring the state government into direct conflict with the center, some temporary concessions might have to be made elsewhere in the state.

These internal ideological pressures were serious but would probably not have been enough on their own to force Singh to allow the procession in Varanasi. The key reason he allowed the anti-Muslim, pro-Hindu, procession to take place in one of the state's most religiously important and sensitive cities was that by-elections to 14 state assembly districts were due in two weeks and the BJP viewed those Hindu voters sympathetic to Hindutva and fearful of the alleged "Muslim threat" as the pivotal constituency his party needed to attract. The BJP leadership was worried that the party would lose its bare majority in the Assembly unless it could use these issues successfully to mobilize Hindu voters behind the party.[42] The BJP had only an eight-seat majority in the state assembly, and several of these constituencies in May 1991 experienced extremely tight races between the BJP and its rivals supported by backward castes and Scheduled Castes, the Samajwadi Party and the BSP. In Nawabganj constituency, for example, five candidates had received more than 10% of the vote in the May election, and the BJP had narrowly lost the contest, getting 21.43% of the vote compared with the Janata/Samajwadi alliance's 24.66%. It seemed possible to many that the BJP's failure to resolve the Ayodhya mosque issue, combined with more general antigovernment sentiment, might lead to a low Hindu turnout, which in turn would lead to BJP losses in at least some of the seats and the consequent fall of the BJP government.

The BJP's worries about losing its majority therefore persuaded it that allowing a planned VHP antiminority procession to take place in the sacred, symbolic city of Varanasi might help the party to mobilize Hindu voters for the forthcoming by-elections. The local district magistrate was against the procession, which would go through sensitive Muslim areas of the city normally off limits to processions. But the state government told the district magistrate unofficially that the procession should be allowed unless it would definitely cause a disturbance. He therefore rescinded the ban and allowed

[42] *Times of India*, November 16, 1991.

the November 8 procession that led directly to the riots. Once the riots broke out, there was a substantial delay on the part of the administration in intervening to stop the violence, and the local police refused to take any action against BJP and VHP activists murdering Muslims in the central Godaulia area.[43] Evidence of police partiality was clear when Varanasi's MP, Mr. S. C. Dixit of the BJP, an ex-senior policeman himself, stayed in the police control room for three days during the riots, offering advice on how best to keep law and order.[44]

In the short term, the BJP strategy to win over swing Hindu voters worked. The party won 8 of the 14 by-elections and held onto its precarious majority in the UP house.[45] The BJP allowed the 1991 Varanasi procession to go on and then did not intervene once violence broke out because, on the evidence of the 1991 state elections, it felt it could win an absolute majority in the UP Assembly by pursuing an antiminority agenda that appealed mainly to the upper castes and those voters prejudiced against and fearful of Muslims.

Mathura, 1995

The contrast between the riot at Varanasi and the riot that almost broke out in the town of Mathura in August 1995 provides a good example of the way in which the shift to a genuine multiparty system in Uttar Pradesh (a system that now increasingly requires coalition governments) has improved the state's effectiveness in preventing communal riots. Because the BJP's coalition partner in 1995 needed to attract Muslim votes in the next election, it forced the government to stop a mobilization in Mathura that would have probably led to a serious riot.

In the December 1993 elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh suffered what it initially regarded as a temporary setback when it failed to win an outright majority in the state legislature. The Samajwadi Party and the largely Scheduled Caste Bahujan Samaj Party formed an anti-BJP government coalition in January 1994, which then fell apart in May 1995, when the BSP unexpectedly formed a coalition of convenience with the BJP. Both the BSP and the BJP hoped to use their period in office in

[43] Interview with UP IAS cadre no. 5, July 14, 1995.

[44] A. A. Engineer, "Banaras Rocked by Communal Violence," *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 7–14, 1992, pp. 509–11.

[45] By-election results taken from *Journal of Parliamentary Information* (1992).

order to build support for the state elections that would follow once the two parties finally parted ways. But the two partners had very different views of the possibilities in the next election. The BSP, with 67 seats in a 425-seat house, and a social base (Scheduled Castes) of only 22% of the population, knew that its future lay in building coalitions with other Hindu castes and with the Muslims. The BJP, on the other hand, believed that by mobilizing a large segment of Hindus around antiminority issues as it had done in 1989–91, it could once again secure an overall majority in the UP assembly.

The BJP's chosen statewide symbol was the western UP town of Mathura. In August 1995 the BJP and its allied Hindu nationalist organization, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), announced their attention to carry out a *Vishnu mahayagna* (religious offering to the Hindu god Vishnu) and a *parikrama* (circumambulation) around what it referred to as the "disputed" complex that houses both the Hindu Keshav Das temple and the Muslim Shahi Masjid Idgah.[46] The VHP timed the *parikrama* to coincide with the religious festival of Janamashthami, which draws thousands of pilgrims to Mathura every year. And it planned the *yagna* for a Friday, when it would coincide with large numbers of Muslim worshipers offering their afternoon prayers at the nearby Idgah.[47]

There was little local support for the *mahayagna* and *parikrama*. Mathura has not been the focus of intense Hindu-Muslim violence in the past nor has it been the focus of intense political competition. The only reported Hindu-Muslim violence near the site was in 1954, when a Krishna idol in the temple was broken by unknown intruders, leading to a brief scuffle during which three people were slightly injured and 25 people were arrested.[48] Local Hindus and Muslims had already come to a legal agreement, signed by the Muslim Trust and the Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sangh (Krishna's birthplace service organization) in 1968, about the boundaries and organization of what was now being claimed by the VHP as a "disputed site."[49] Excluding

[46] An Idgah is an enclosed site where the festival of Id (breaking the fast of Ramadan) is held. The VHP claimed a four and a half acre plot next to the Idgah as a hall for religious and cultural events. *India Today*, June 15, 1993.

[47] On August 4, some Muslim politicians from Aligarh visited Mathura to encourage Muslims there to turn out en masse for prayers at the Idgah on August 18. A proposed "peace march" to coincide with the VHP parikrama, planned by Muslim students from Aligarh Muslim University, was halted by authorities. *Hindu*, August 7, 1995; *Indian Express*, August 14, 1995.

[48] *Times of India*, August 23, 1954.

[49] The text of this agreement is reproduced by former supreme court justice V. R. Krishna Iyer in an article in *Hindu*, August 16, 1995.

the local VHP and BJP leaders in Mathura, the vast majority of the town's inhabitants seemed to oppose the VHP's *parikrama*. Because of the security precautions and worries about violence, the number of pilgrims in August 1995 was down sharply, ruining the town's most important tourist season. Those tourists who did make it through the security cordons found most of the hotel rooms occupied by civil servants and police officers.[50]

There were three reasons why Mathura rather than some other town was selected by the VHP for large-scale Hindu-Muslim mobilization in August 1995. First, Mathura is one of the most important Hindu religious sites in north India. Second, and more important, the Keshav Das temple–Muslim Idgah complex is one of several dozen disputed mosque-temple sites in Uttar Pradesh and, as such, a "natural" site for anti-Muslim mobilization. The third reason, and the one that led to the VHP choosing Mathura rather than one of the other possible sites, was that the VHP leaders knew that the BJP needed substantial backward-caste support if it was to win the upcoming assembly elections. The Keshav Das temple, and the city and district of Mathura are closely associated with the Hindu god Krishna, who is regarded as a Yadav (a backward caste), and the hope was that a campaign built around Krishna would win over large numbers of backward castes suspicious of the BJP's upper-caste image. As one Hindu nationalist leader put it, "As of now, the Yadavas, almost to a man, are with the S.P. [Samajwadi Party] led by Mulayam Singh Yadav. But when the call of a Yadava god comes, can they remain indifferent?"[51]

In backing the Mathura agitation, the BJP leaders knew that they were taking some risk of alienating their coalition partner in the UP government, the lower-caste Bahujan Samaj Party, and the state's chief minister, Ms. Mayawati. Mayawati and the BSP were looking to Muslims for political support in the upcoming elections, and there was a risk that she would disallow the Hindu agitation for this reason. However, the BJP-VHP leaders seemed to have gambled that Mayawati would acquiesce because of her wish to remain in power. Power means patronage, and Mayawati was not only making a great deal of money personally as chief minister but was also winning political supporters by dispensing state funds to important social groups. In addition, the BJP had taken great pains to win over Mayawati and drive a wedge between her and her national party leader, Kanshi Ram. For

[50] *Hindu*, August 16, 1995.

[51] *Frontline*, September 8, 1995, p. 8.

example, at one BJP function in Lucknow, Mayawati was praised effusively while Kanshi Ram was studiously ignored.

In late July, when the *mahayagna* was first mooted, Mayawati apparently did not wish to challenge it openly, and she gave her verbal permission for the *mahayagna*, as long as the festivities were not on too large a scale.[52] But Mayawati, whose party's ethnic support base was even smaller than the BJP's, quickly realized just how serious an electoral threat the Mathura *mahayagna* would be. During her period in office Mayawati had made great efforts to win over at least some of the Muslim vote from the Samajwadi Party.[53] Her government had created a new ministerial position for minority welfare and, at a meeting in Lucknow on July 10, the BSP national leader, Kanshi Ram, announced that the UP government would henceforth reserve 8.44% of government jobs for poor Muslims.[54]

If the BJP's mobilization campaign succeeded, Ms. Mayawati realized that the BSP stood to lose all the ground she had gained with Muslim voters, which could potentially block any hopes of increasing the BSP's share of the vote if state elections were to be called the next year. Mayawati had to weigh the advantages of remaining in government prior to the next year's elections against this likely loss of Muslim voters, and she ultimately decided there was more to be gained from taking a firm stance than for acquiescing in the Mathura mobilization. In early August, therefore, Mayawati took a public stance against the Mathura *mahayagna*. On August 4, in the UP Assembly, Mayawati announced "nobody will be allowed to start any new tradition for paying obeisance in the complex." Shortly afterward she announced that no VHP ceremony would be allowed within three kilometers of the complex.[55]

The hard-liners in the VHP held their ground, hoping that Mayawati would back down. On August 10, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, the joint general

[52] Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, "Angry in Mathura," *Frontline*, September 8, 1995, pp. 10–16.

[53] Meanwhile, the SP leadership was doing all it could to foment revolt among the BSP's Kurmi (Middle Caste) MLAs, who were unhappy over the allocation of ministries in the state government. Mayawati stemmed the revolt by immediately appointing four Kurmis as district magistrates and promising to appoint two Kurmis as ministers as soon as possible. For details, see *Sunday*, July 30–August 5, 1995, pp. 24–26.

[54] By reserving benefits for "backward Muslims" the BSP got round the constitutional provision that forbids employment discrimination on grounds of religion but allows it to relieve social backwardness. The BJP forced the BSP to withdraw this proposal, but it nonetheless helped establish Mayawati's credibility with Muslims. See "Looking for Support," *Sunday*, July 30–August 5, 1995, pp. 24–26, and "Growing Mandalisation," *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 22, 1995.

[55] "VHP's Mathura Plan Strains BJP-BSP Ties," *Indian Express*, August 7, 1995.

secretary of the organization, reiterated the VHP's determination to hold both events. The head of the VHP's national youth wing said on August 11 that the *parikrama* and *mahayagna* would go on as planned.[56] Meanwhile, BJP leaders were getting worried about the possible fall of the BSP-BJP coalition, which might open up the possibility of a more united opposition to the BJP in the forthcoming elections. Several senior leaders tried to broker a compromise in which the *parikrama* would be scrapped and the *mahayagna* held several hundred meters away from the complex.[57] Mayawati was prepared to make a few concessions. On August 12 she transferred Mr. Deen Dutt Sharma, the Mathura district magistrate and a man the VHP disliked for his firm commitment to law and order. But at a meeting on August in Lucknow, Mayawati again made it clear to the VHP leaders that she would not back down on the central issue of the *mahayagna*.

On August 14, VHP leaders met for an hour and a half with Mayawati in Lucknow. She refused to allow the *mahayagna* and threatened to resign if the BJP pushed the issue, unwilling to risk the long-term loss of Muslim votes for the short-term advantages offered by staying in power prior to the elections. Once it became obvious she would not back down, a BJP compromise plan was adopted. The VHP would scrap the *parikrama* and hold the *mahayagna* on August 18, but well outside the three-kilometer security cordon surrounding the temple-mosque complex.[58] This cordon prevented hundreds of Muslim and Hindu activists, who had traveled from throughout northern India, from getting near the site. This plan worked smoothly, and no Hindu-Muslim riot broke out, although many VHP cadres felt betrayed by their leadership and refused to participate in the VHP's face-saving "Vrat Hindu Sammelan," at which only 1,000 people turned up.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how electoral incentives determine whether state governments will prevent communal violence. As party competition increases, especially if the new parties focus on redistribution from forward to backward castes, majority politicians will have greater incentives to appeal to Muslim voters who can provide them with the margin of victory. The

[56] Statement of All-India Bajrang Dal Chief, Jaibhan Singh Pawaiyya. *Indian Express*, August 12, 1995. For Kishore's statement, see *Hindu*, August 11, 1995.

[57] See the statement of BJP spokesman K. L. Sharma on August 11, 1995. *Hindu*, August 12, 1995.

[58] *Indian Express*, August 15, 1995.

effect of the decline of the dominant Congress Party and the resulting party competition in recent years has not, as some have argued, been to increase the level of communal violence. On the contrary, the increasing party competition for minority voters has led to a reduction in Hindu-Muslim violence, as politicians are forced by electoral incentives to take firm action to prevent Hindu-Muslim riots.

Greater political competition in the states leads, I have argued, to a greater degree of security for Muslims, who demand less for their votes than other significant groups of voters. Unfortunately, the growing leverage of Muslim voters has had negative consequences for India's 2% Christian minority. While Muslims are a large enough voting block to swing elections in most Indian states and have in recent years become a sought after support base for many backward-caste and Scheduled Caste parties, Christians, at least outside Kerala and the Northeast, are too small a community to "count" politically in most Indian states. In the late 1990s the Hindu right in many states therefore seems to have switched strategies and began polarizing Hindu voters against Christians rather than Muslims. For example, Dara Singh, the leader of the Bajrang Dal in the state of Orissa, reportedly organized attacks on missionaries in that state in the run-up to the 1999 parliamentary elections. Electorally, this strategy carries many of the benefits of the anti-Muslim strategy (with Christians, like Muslims, often being portrayed as tools of foreign powers bent on converting allegedly defenseless tribals and lower castes) and few of the electoral costs, because Christians are a much smaller proportion of the electorate.

One important question for the long term, however, is whether, as Muslims become more politically mobilized, wealthier, and make more demands for job reservations and economic benefits, they will become more "costly" and thus less attractive voters for majority parties to court, possibly even resulting in a resurgence of anti-Muslim polarization in state politics? One response to this worry is that Muslims in India are, given their poverty, a long way from being too costly to court compared with other groups of voters. But even if they do become wealthier and demand more, evidence from the South of India, where Muslims are already better off than in the North and have long enjoyed political clout, suggests that, after an initial electoral breakthrough is made by minorities, and majority parties all begin to court them as voters, it becomes difficult for majority parties to go back to scapegoating minorities overtly.

One plausible hypothesis is that, after an initial lengthy period in which minorities establish themselves as electorally pivotal, majority politicians

over time try to neutralize the minority issue as a vote loser by accepting the need to protect minorities. In political science terms, supplying security to minorities moves from being a positional issue (with politicians taking different positions) to a valence issue (all politicians in public are for it) as politicians in competitive systems try to neutralize the issue as a vote loser.[59]

This tentative hypothesis seems to have some support from what has actually happened in some states in India, as well as in comparative cases (e.g., in Bulgaria and the United States) that we examine in Chapter 7. In the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, for example, Muslims are a highly urbanized and relatively well off community (63% live in towns) that has played an important role in politics ever since the 1967 DMK victory over the Congress, when Muslim support was important for the DMK's strong showing in Dindigul district and in electoral victories in the towns of Vaniyambadi, Ambur, Tiruvannamalai, and Tirupathur, a lesson that has not been lost on any of the main parties in the state in the succeeding decades.[60] Other political parties quickly began to court Muslims as well after this electoral breakthrough, and despite the community's relative wealth and political clout, it continues to be courted by all of the major parties in the state, and successive state governments have taken strong actions to prevent anti-Muslim polarization.

In Kerala too the Muslims have been a vital constituency ever since the formation of what became the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in the 1960s. Their pivotal role in 14–20 of the 140 seats in the State Assembly has allowed them to make or break the United Democratic Front (UDF) and LDF governments in the state. Muslim political leverage has allowed them to demand and get control of important ministries (such as Education) and force the removal of school textbooks that portrayed Muslims as disloyal Indians.[61] Yet this growing political clout has not led to Hindu voters in the state coalescing along the Hindu-Muslim cleavage or ceasing to appeal to Muslim parties and voters. Instead all the major parties and politicians accept the need to protect minorities in order to remain politically viable in the state.

[59] For the distinction between "valence" and "positional" issues, see Donald E. Stokes, "Spatial Models of Party Competition," *American Political Science Review* 57, no. 2 (June 1963), pp. 368–77.

[60] Muslims have also been a key swing vote in Madras corporation elections. Marguerite Ross Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 288.

[61] *India Today*, December 1–15, 1980, pp. 39–40; *Sunday*, February 27–March 6, 1994, p. 45.

6

Party Competition and Hindu-Muslim Violence

THE INSTITUTIONAL ORIGINS OF DIFFERENCES IN ELECTORAL COMPETITION

Once we establish the existence of a relationship between party competition and levels of ethnic violence, an obvious question follows: if party competition is so important, then what explains states' different levels of party competition? Why do some states have party systems that reflect a greater degree of cohesion around backward-caste identities than others? Why, in particular, did some southern states in India such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu have an effective opposition to Congress by the early 1960s, well before states in the north such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar?

My central argument in this chapter, laid out in Figure 6.1, is that an institutional difference going back to the 1920s – the implementation of job and educational reservations for backward and lower castes in the South but not in the North – is largely responsible for different state patterns of postindependence party competition and fractionalization. In the early 20th century, after the colonial state and several princely states in southern India grouped members of diverse castes together under a backward-caste identity, they provided political and economic incentives for Indians to mobilize around this identity, which has been sustained since then not only by government affirmative action programs but also by social and political organizations that grew up in response to the governments' willingness to reward claims made on the basis of "backwardness."[1]

In exploring the historical development of these caste cleavages, I show that, because the colonial state provided institutional incentives for

[1] The first preferences for "backward classes" were introduced by the government of the princely state of Mysore in 1918, and by the colonial governments in Madras and Bombay in the 1920s. Similar measures began to be adopted in a few northern states only in the 1980s. See Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984).

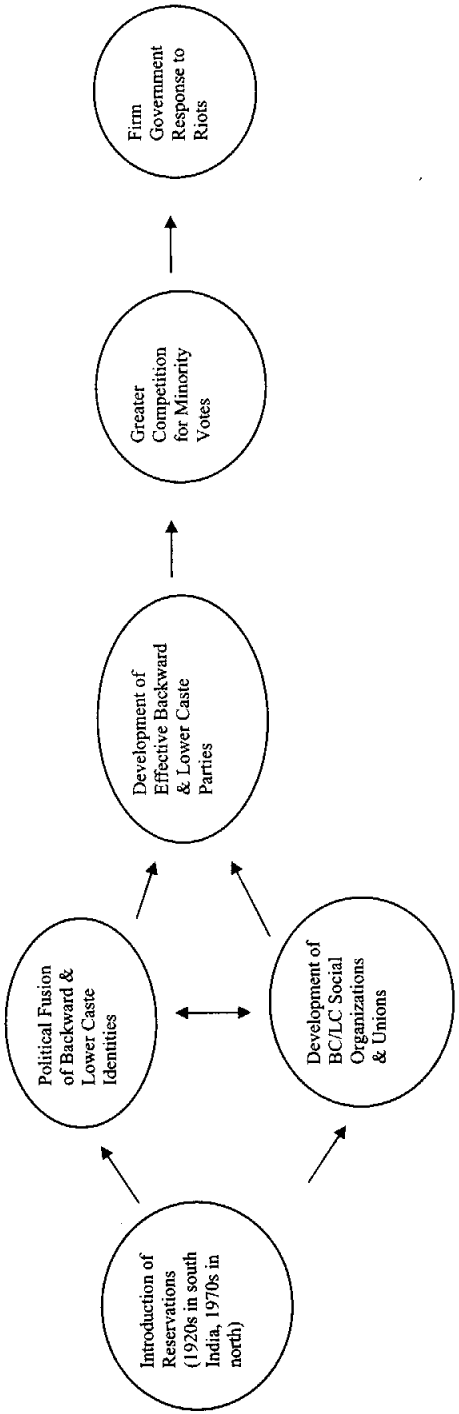

Figure 6.1 The institutional origins of state-level differences in party competition

backward-caste mobilization, substantial intra-Hindu party political competition emerged as early as the 1920s and 1930s in such southern states as Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Even after Congress's political victories in the south in the late 1930s and 1940s, these political movements retained their coherence, and they formed the basis of the Communist Party in Kerala and the Dravida Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu, parties that led the political opposition to Congress after independence. As a result of this strong backward-caste solidarity, political alternatives to Congress existed in the South, in the postindependence period creating a "market" for minority votes. To win Muslim votes away from their political rivals, Hindu parties here have had to offer security guarantees to Muslims and other minorities. Despite attempts to foment Hindu-Muslim conflict in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, governments in both states have effectively prevented or controlled most riots.

In the North, by contrast, large-scale mobilization around a backward-caste identity is a recent phenomenon. In previous decades, because of the weakness of opposition parties, the ruling Congress Party politicians had little incentive to woo Muslim voters at the expense of the Hindu nationalist swing vote (the Jana Sangh) and their core upper-caste constituents. The growing strength of similar lower- and middle-caste parties in northern India since the late 1980s, however, has shifted the balance. After experiencing a short-term increase in violence prompted by a Hindu nationalist countermobilization, the North has witnessed a similar overall decline in Hindu-Muslim violence.

Does Ethnic Fractionalization Explain Party Fractionalization?

Before beginning to analyze the effects of caste reservations on political fractionalization, we should first consider one alternative explanation that is often raised to explain why party fractionalization might be higher in some states than in others – that some states are more ethnically diverse than others and that their higher number of parties reflects a greater number of salient cleavages. Gary Cox, for example, has found that the effects of a first-past-the-post party system on party aggregation are always moderated by ethnic heterogeneity.[2] Pradeep Chhibber likewise argues that ethnic heterogeneity helps explain why there is more state-level party competition

[2] Gary W. Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 218–19.

in India than we would expect, given its first-past-the-post, single-member district electoral system.[3]

Although the link seems plausible, there is no clear relationship between a state's level of ethnic diversity (using Indian census data) and its number of parties. The measure for party competition (ENPV) is not highly correlated with the measures of ethnic heterogeneity, and regressions on ENPV using the same socioeconomic and ethnic variables used in Chapter 5 provide no ethnic fractionalization variables that explain the observed variation in states' levels of party competition (see Table 6.1). In fact, no socioeconomic variables whatsoever – including literacy and urbanization – seem to be significant in explaining a state's level of party competition.

One reason for the lack of a statistical finding may be because census data in India only imperfectly represent the underlying ethnic diversity of the country. For example, the Indian census, from which I calculate my indicator of linguistic fractionalization, lists "Hindi" as the dominant language in many states in the North. But since 1975 the census category "Hindi" has in fact aggregated 48 separate answers to the question "What language do you speak?" including such major regional languages as Bhojpuri (23 million speakers in 1971, or 7% of those identified as Hindi speakers), Chattisgarhi (10.6 million), Kumaoni (1.7 million in 1971), Pahari (2.2 million), and Garhwali (1.9 million). This 1975 decision to aggregate many language answers under the heading "Hindi" – presumably to bolster the position of Hindi as the national language – has had the effect of leaving unrecognized many languages that have been important both in politics and in party proliferation. For example, in 2000, after years of political mobilization, the new states of Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal were carved out of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to accommodate political movements that represent people who speak Chhattisgarhi, Kumaoni, Garhwali, and Pahari, all of which are identified as "Hindi" in the census.[4]

Another obvious problem is that since 1931 the Indian census has not collected information on major caste identities, with the exception of the quarter of the population that composes the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In December 1949 the Indian government decided it would no

[3] Chhibber and Kollman find that party centralization as well as ethnic fractionalization has an effect on party fractionalization at the district level. Pradeep Chhibber and Kenneth Kollman, "Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States," *American Political Science Review* 92, no. 2 (1998), pp. 329–42.

[4] Personal communications from Dr. M. Vijayanunni, former census commissioner of India, November 3, 2002; March 27, 2003.

Table 6.1. *Do State-Level Differences in Ethnic Heterogeneity Explain Levels of Party Competition?*

	Number of Effective Parties	
	(1)	(2)
Population (log)	−0.144	−0.142
	(1.932)	(1.932)
Upcoming state election	−0.004	
	(0.011)	
Upcoming national election	0.001	
	(0.011)	
President's rule	0.001	
	(0.016)	
Literacy percentage	2.743	2.731
	(6.627)	(6.627)
Urbanization percentage	−5.570	−5.565
	(12.716)	(12.714)
Muslim percentage	2.351	2.385
	(21.286)	(21.285)
Urban Gini coefficient (World Bank)	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Religious fractionalization	−0.462	−0.430
	(11.572)	(11.573)
Linguistic fractionalization	−1.561	−1.534
	(11.921)	(11.921)
Ethnic fractionalization	3.827	3.751
	(33.186)	(33.187)
Riots in previous 10 years	0.000	0.000
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Constant	4.243	4.207
	(30.716)	(30.715)
Observations	5,472	5,472
Number of states	14	14

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. For state dummy coefficients, see Appendix C.

longer publish caste data and cross-tabulate them with socioeconomic data because to do so would be to encourage further caste divisions within Indian society.[5] So the ethnic fractionalization data I use in the regression do not

[5] *Times of India*, December 5, 1949. This measure, of course, did not remove the influence of caste as an important social and political factor in Indian society.

reflect caste cleavages that are clearly politically important in explaining party competition and aggregation.[6]

Even if we were able to generate 1931-style caste data for the contemporary period, however, that would still not necessarily answer our problem, because a census-derived measure of the underlying number of castes does not necessarily tell us how castes will aggregate politically. Politicized ethnicity depends on a whole range of factors, such as federal boundaries and government policies, and not just on underlying census categories.[7] We know, for instance, that smaller ethnic groups in Nigeria identified themselves with the "big three" groups of Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Ibo during the 1960s, when Nigeria had essentially a three-unit federation, because to do otherwise would have been politically suicidal for the small groups. But as the number of federal units has increased in Nigeria since the 1970s, politicians can now feasibly form political movements around ethnic identities that might include less than a million people, because the new smaller states make these identities potentially large enough to win a majority in state elections.[8]

Kerala: The Institutional Origins of Party Fractionalization

Preindependence Caste Mobilization in Travancore and Cochin

The present-day state of Kerala was created in November 1956 through the merger of the two former princely states of Travancore and Cochin together with the Malayalam-speaking areas of Madras state.[9] The new state, 39,000

[6] There was a major debate before the 2001 Indian census about whether caste categories should be reintroduced in the census (they were not). The main arguments for and against are outlined in Satish Deshpande and Nandini Sundar, "Caste and the Census: Implications for Society and the Social Sciences," *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 8, 1998, pp. 2157–59.

[7] Ethnofractionalization indices are frequently used in the comparative politics literature without considering the extent to which they are endogenous to the variables they are being used to explain. Gary Cox, for instance, interacts ethnic fractionalization data with a variable that measures the magnitude of the median legislator's district; he does not take account of how district magnitudes and other institutional factors affect underlying ethnic identifications over time.

[8] Donald A. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa: Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 215–26. Dan Posner's excellent new study on Zambia explores in depth the whole issue of how the shifting size of the arena of competitive politics affects which ethnic identities become politicized.

[9] Travancore and Cochin became part of India in 1947 and were administered as a single unit after 1949.

square kilometers in area and with the country's highest population density, is one of the most linguistically homogenous in India, with around 94% of the population speaking Malayalam as its first language, and most of the remaining 6% speaking Tamil. Despite the fact that the state's per-capita income is below the national average, Kerala is by many social indicators highly advanced: the literacy rate, at 94.2% in 2001, is by far the country's highest, the proportion below the poverty line (25.4%) is well below the 36% national average, and life expectancy at birth is 70.7 compared with an all-India average of 62.4 years.[10]

Kerala is religiously diverse, and non-Hindu minorities are a larger proportion of the population than in any major state except Kashmir. Hindus, 82% of the overall Indian population, account for only 57% of Kerala's 29 million inhabitants. Muslims, with 23% of the population, are the next largest minority group, and Kerala is also home to a third of India's Christians, who account for 19% of the state population. Kerala is also home to the last 125 members – the rest having emigrated to Israel – of South Asia's oldest Jewish community. In contrast to most Indian states there are no significant religious differences in rates of urbanization; the rate for Hindus is 27%, for Muslims 27%, and Christians 24%.

At the turn of the 20th century the Hindu caste system in Travancore and Cochin, dominated by the 5% Brahmin minority, was harsher toward the middle-caste Nairs and lower-caste Ezhavas and Pulayas than in any other Indian states. While the *touch* of lower castes was regarded throughout India as polluting by high-caste Hindus, southern Indian upper castes practiced the concept of "atmospheric pollution," the idea that a lower caste could taint the upper by his mere presence within a specified distance. An untouchable who appeared on the scene while upper castes were engaged in an especially important religious rite therefore risked serious punishment for having "polluted" the ceremony. Ezhavas, though their situation was better than that of the lowest untouchables, also suffered from restrictions on social distance, and from sanctions that prevented Ezhava men and women from carrying umbrellas, covering their upper bodies, wearing certain kinds of cloth, and using some types of cooking utensils.[11]

[10] Figures from *Statistical Outline of India, 2000–2001* (Mumbai: Tata Services, 2001) and "Ranking of States and Union Territories by Literacy Rate and Sex: 2001," in *Census of India 2001 Provisional Population Totals: Paper 1 of 2001* (Delhi: Controller of Publications, 2001).

[11] Prema Kurien, "Colonialism and Ethnogenesis: A Study of Kerala, India," *Theory and Society* 23 (1994), pp. 393–94. A more detailed description of intrareligious differences among Kerala's religious communities is provided in V. K. S. Nayar, "Communal Interest Groups in Kerala," in Donald E. Smith, ed., *South Asian Politics and Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 176–90. For a fuller description of caste among Kerala's Muslims, see Victor S. D'Souza, "Status Groups among the Moplahs on the South-West Coast of India," in Imtiaz Ahmed, ed., *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), pp. 41–56.

Lower-caste mobilization in Travancore and Cochin began much earlier than in states in the North, a development that had two main causes. First, Travancore and Cochin states were strongly influenced by politics and caste categorizations in the nearby Madras presidency (discussed later in this chapter), and therefore took a relatively benign attitude to lower-caste political mobilization compared with other princely states. Second, educated elites among the lower castes in Kerala arose much earlier than in the North, in part because a few Ezhavas were well placed to take advantage of growing economic opportunities in trade and agriculture in the 19th century. By the 1880s these Ezhava entrepreneurs wanted social recognition to go with their new wealth and began to press the government to admit their sons in elite educational institutions.[12]

In 1892, 10,000 Ezhavas, Christians, and Muslims in Travancore petitioned the Raja to protest against discrimination in access to education and government employment. This was followed in 1896 by a separate larger Ezhava petition complaining about discrimination against their caste. In 1903, in the most important single act of lower-caste mobilization, the Ezhava social reformer Sree Narayana Guru founded an Ezhava caste association, the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP). By 1928 the SNDP, whose stated goal was to promote the "religious and secular education and industrious habits among the Elava [Ezhava] community," had over 50,000 members and hundreds of local branches throughout Travancore.[13] During the 1920s and 1930s the organization was active in fighting for Ezhava and untouchable access to Hindu temples, and held important nonviolent protests at Vaikom in 1924 and the Guruvayoor temple in 1931–32.[14] The regime responded favorably to many of these efforts. Frightened that the Ezhavas might convert to Christianity if their demands were not met, the government passed a path-breaking temple entry bill

[12] T. J. Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala: A Study in Political Adaptation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 30.

[13] Ibid., pp. 30–32.

[14] P. M. Mammen, *Communalism vs. Communism: A Study of the Socio-Religious Communities and Political Parties in Kerala, 1892–1970* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1981), p. 53.

in 1937 that guaranteed lower-caste access to all government-controlled religious sites.[15]

The Ezhava mobilization on behalf of lower castes and untouchables was matched by a process of middle-caste mobilization around a Nair caste identity. In 1914 several prominent Nairs, determined to reform their own community's personal laws, and worried about growing Christian and Brahmin dominance in education and government, followed the SNDP's lead and formed their own broad caste organization, the Nair Service Society (NSS), to press their community's interests. The NSS grew rapidly, and by independence in 1947 it had set up a network of local branches, hospitals, and educational institutions throughout Travancore and Cochin.

The Nairs' success as a lobbying group acted as a further spur to Ezhava mobilization in the state. The Ezhavas and several other castes feared that proposals in the early 1930s to introduce limited democratic government in Travancore would lead to the replacement of Brahmin rule by Nair rule, because the wealthier Nairs would dominate the proposed property franchise. The Ezhavas therefore joined together with Muslims and Christians and in 1932 successfully petitioned the Raja to moderate the plan so that each community had its own share of reserved seats. Spurred on by this success, the Muslim, Ezhava, and Christian "Joint Political Congress" then pushed for reservations in government employment for each religious and caste community, a demand that was conceded in 1936.

The Ezhava mobilization over political rights was matched by a corresponding agitation over the rights of the many Ezhava landless laborers, who worked on plantations owned by Brahmans, Nairs, and Christians. This labor movement forged a link between the Communists and the Ezhava community, because Communist members helped organize labor agitations and, in order to avoid detection and punishment by the Travancore and Cochin governments, concealed their Communist links by becoming active in Ezhava caste organizations.[16]

Postindependence Ethnic Politics in Kerala

The strong preindependence caste mobilization in Kerala and the political struggles between Nairs and Ezhavas led to the emergence of an effective backward-caste opposition party to Congress in the postindependence

[15] Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala*, p. 80.
[16] Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Communism in Indian Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 175–83.

period much earlier than in north India. The Nair- and Christian-dominated Congress's harsh suppression of a Communist-organized labor strike on plantations between 1948 and 1952 helped cement the social and political division between the Nairs and Christians on the one side and the Ezhavas on the other.[17] According to one estimate, 1.2 million Ezhavas voted for the Communists in the 1957 elections, with only 200,000 voting for the Congress, whereas the Congress secured 1.25 million Christian votes compared to only 170,000 for the Communists.[18] In the 1950s the Ezhava's SNDP secretary estimated that his organization supplied the Communists with as many as 60,000 active party members.[19] The only polling data we possess on patterns of religious voting show that, just before Kerala's first election in 1957, the Hindu vote was split 27% to 42% between the Nair- and Christian-dominated Congress and the Ezhava-dominated Communist Party, with 28% of Hindus not expressing a preference. By comparison, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, 50% of Hindus expressed a preference for Congress before the 1957 elections, with those Hindus who opposed Congress dividing their votes among several smaller, weaker, caste-based parties.[20]

Kerala's state politics from 1957 to 1967 revolved around attempts by the Congress and Communists to win political power, either outright or through short-term coalitions with smaller parties. One major difficulty that both the Communists and Congress faced in trying to build coalitions was that their official stances against "communalism" made it politically very difficult to reach out to the Muslim League, which enjoyed solid support in Muslim majority areas in the north of the state. In the 1960 state elections, the Congress leadership became worried enough about its electoral prospects to make an informal electoral understanding with the Muslim League. After Congress did unexpectedly well in the 1960 elections, however, the Congress unceremoniously abandoned the league to form a government with a more acceptable "noncommunal" party.

In the mid-1960s the leaders of the Ezhava-dominated Communist Party finally realized that to win power they would need to form more lasting coalitions with explicitly ethnic parties. In September 1966 the Communist

[17] Ibid.
[18] Jitendra Singh, quoted in Sen Gupta, *Communism in Indian Politics*, p. 186.
[19] Mammen, *Communalism vs. Communism*, p. 103.
[20] Indian Institute of Public Opinion, *Monthly Public Opinion Survey* 16–19 (January–April, 1957).

leaders therefore met in Ernakulam with the leaders of six other parties, including the Muslim League, to discuss the possibility of a "United Front" alliance to contest the 1967 state elections. These negotiations were successful and the resulting alliance transformed Kerala politics: the United Front swept to power in the 1967 elections, gaining 117 of 133 seats. In response to their dramatic electoral defeat, the Nair- and Christian-dominated Congress Party quickly organized its own, multiethnic coalition. Congress made a particular effort to win over the Muslim League from the United Front. Mrs. Gandhi publicly moderated her earlier criticisms of the league and announced that the league was "not out and out communal" and was therefore an acceptable coalition partner.[21] Local Congress leaders assured the league that if it supported them in the future, there would be no repeat of Congress's 1960 postelection betrayal.

In the 1990s, though the names of the coalitions have changed, the two main competitors for political power in Kerala are still a Communist (Ezhava-led) coalition, now called the Left Democratic Front (LDF), and a Congress (Nair- and Christian-led) alliance, now called the United Democratic Front (UDF). Over the years, as party splits have occurred among all Kerala's ethnic parties, both coalitions have become genuinely multiethnic, although the majority of any one ethnic group usually votes with one coalition or the other. For example, from 1974 to 1986 a breakaway faction of the Muslim league supported the Ezhavas (Communists), while most Muslim representatives continued to vote with the Nairs and Christians in the Congress. The LDF and UDF coalitions in Kerala are so finely balanced and electoral margins so narrow that governments usually have a majority of only a few seats in what is now a 140-seat assembly. This outcome, of course, gives individual MLAs and minority parties a great deal of political leverage, which they can use if their group's interests are not being effectively addressed.[22]

The electoral demography of Kerala is especially favorable toward the Muslims, who are concentrated in the north of the state. Since the

[21] E. J. Thomas, *Coalition Game Politics in Kerala* (New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, 1985), p. 69.

[22] For example, in 1982, shortly before a crucial vote of confidence the house's only independent member demanded, and got, a new district (with the MLA's hometown of Patanamthitta as district headquarters) as the price for his support. "Kerala: Tightrope Act," *India Today*, February 28, 1982, pp. 33–34; "Rocking the Boat," *India Today*, November 30, 1982.

1960s this geographical concentration, combined with bloc voting on the part of the Muslims, has allowed the Muslim League to control 14 to 20 seats in the 140-seat Kerala Assembly. Given the continued strength of caste cleavages between the Nairs and Ezhavas, this puts the league in a very powerful position. Muslim politicians are not shy about broadcasting their importance as kingmakers. State Industries Minister E. Ahmad claimed in 1983 that "Without Muslim League support no one can rule Kerala for a day."[23] More recently C. H. Mohammed Koya, the longtime leader of the Kerala Muslim League, openly boasted that "We [the league] will decide who – the Congress or the Communists – should rule the state."[24]

These claims are only a slight exaggeration, and what Horowitz terms "multi-polar fluidity" – a situation where three or more ethnic parties exist, with shifting coalitions among them – has existed in Kerala since the 1960s.[25] On two occasions the league has brought governments down when it felt the Muslims were not being fairly treated: in the late 1960s, over the issue of Communist favoritism to Ezhavas, and then again in 1987, over what it saw as UDF (i.e., Nair-Christian) threats to Muslim employment preferences.[26] To avoid such defections, the prudent Congress or Communist coalition leader takes great care to appoint Muslims to important ministries such as Education (which Muslims held from 1967 to 1980) and to address all widely held Muslim concerns. In contrast to the North, for instance, Muslims in Kerala have been able to have textbooks that portray Muslims as disloyal Indians removed from the school system.[27] One indicator of Muslims' substantial political clout in Kerala is their control over government expenditure: at one point during the 1990s, Muslim ministers were reported to head departments responsible for 60% of the state budget.[28]

[23] *India Today*, January 15, 1983, p. 59.

[24] E. M. S. Namboodiripad, "Coming Full Circle," *Frontline*, November 3, 1995, pp. 93–94.

[25] Donald A. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[26] Nairs and Christians resent the fact that the richer sections of the Ezhavas and Muslims are eligible for state affirmative action programs, and have consistently tried to introduce economic criteria into these programs to exclude well-off Ezhavas and Muslims and include poorer Nairs and Christians. "Polarisation of Forces in Kerala," *Hindu*, February 23, 1991.

[27] *India Today*, December 1–15, 1980, pp. 39–40.

[28] *Sunday*, February 27–March 5, 1994, p. 45.

Hindu nationalist movements based in northern India have over the years tried to replace Kerala's caste cleavages with an overarching Hindu identity that would help them displace the Congress and Communists. In the early 1980s the BJP/RSS organized several events designed to bring Nairs and Ezhavas together around Hindu themes, including a mass ceremony in the port city of Cochin that attracted 500,000 participants.[29] The BJP also launched a campaign in 1992 to try to persuade Hindus in the UDF to throw out their Muslim cabinet members, who, it alleged – no doubt, tongue in cheek – were "religious fundamentalists."[30]

These Hindu nationalist mobilization efforts have failed. Even before independence Hindu nationalists found it extremely difficult to gain a foothold in Kerala, and Dilip Menon reports that Ezhavas, who "continued to see themselves as a community apart, rather than as Hindus," jeered the leader of the Hindu Mahasabha when he came south to address an SNDP meeting in 1930.[31] Since independence the caste cleavage has been sustained in Kerala by both state employment preferences for backward castes (extended in 1957) and the activities of strong social and political organizations that grew up in the preindependence era. The backward caste associations have dramatically expanded their scope and influence since independence. In the early 1980s, for example, the Nair Service Society had 4,000 branches throughout the state, large financial reserves, 1,125 schools, 23 colleges, and various hospitals and hostels. Access to these benefits was available to those who invested in a Nair identity.[32] Keralan voters, guaranteed access to numerous practical benefits on the basis of their caste affiliations, including large-scale affirmative action programs and access to credit unions and educational and health benefits, have unsurprisingly been unwilling to abandon these for membership in some ill-defined Hindu community. Keralan Hindus' generally low level of enthusiasm for a Hindu political identity is demonstrated both by their voting preferences (the Hindu nationalist BJP's share of the vote in Kerala has consistently been less than 1%) and by their tendency to tune out of national Hindu events such as the

[29] *India Today*, April 30, 1982, p. 49.
[30] *Malayala Manorama*, May 1, 1992, translated in *India Speaks through Its Regional Press*, May 27, 1992, p. 10.
[31] Dilip Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India: Malabar, 1900–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 107.
[32] *India Today*, January 15, 1983, p. 59.

televising of the Hindu epic Ramayana in Kerala (ratings were among the lowest in India).[33]

The Effects of Party Fractionalization in Kerala

The level of Hindu-Muslim violence in postindependence Kerala has been very low. From 1950 to 1995, according to the data I collected with Ashutosh Varshney, there were 19 reported Hindu-Muslim riots in Kerala in which 16 people died and 290 were injured. Controlling for population, Kerala has a moderate level of riots (0.65 riots per million) and an extremely low level of casualties (0.55 deaths per million in Hindu-Muslim violence since 1950), a rate far lower than that in states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh

This development cannot be explained, as is sometimes argued, by a long state tradition of religious syncretism or by the region's supposed culture of nonviolence.[34] The 1921 Mappila rebellion in Malabar was one of the worst outbreaks of communal violence ever in British India, with Muslim peasants attacking and murdering Hindu merchants and landlords. Recent research by Theodore Gabriel on ethnic conflict in North Malabar has also uncovered a considerable number of Hindu-Muslim riots in the 1920s and early 1930s: in 1932 Hindus attacked Muslims for not voting for their candidates in local board elections in Mattanur, and in March and November 1934 serious riots broke out near Cannonore.[35] Postindependence levels of general political violence in Kerala have also been high, with political party workers often attacking and murdering their rivals. In the early 1980s, for example, 138 people were killed in over 1,000 violent clashes between party workers.[36]

Nor can Kerala's low level of violence be explained by the absence of issues likely to precipitate violence. In states such as Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, for example, Hindu-Muslim riots are often blamed on the recent influx of "Gulf Money," brought back by Muslims who work in the

[33] *India Today*, March 31, 1993, p. 45.
[34] C. Gouridasan Nair, for example, refers to "the Malayalee's cosmopolitan nature and religious tolerance . . . dating back to the millennium preceding the Christian era." *Frontline*, July 17, 1992.
[35] Theodore Gabriel, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in North Malabar, 1498–1947* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edward Mellen, 1996), p. 293.
[36] *India Today*, August 31, 1983, pp. 30–31.

Persian Gulf, and who are then alleged to use their newfound wealth to try to dominate politics and build ostentatious mosques, which threaten the local Hindus. Yet no state has been so affected by this influx of money from the Gulf as Kerala. From 1975 to 1987, 1,100 new mosques were built in the state, and many of these were substantial *pucca* buildings that replaced small unobtrusive *niskara pallis* – prayer huts built in crowded market areas.[37]

Hindu nationalist organizations have also made many attempts to unify Kerala's Hindus against religious minorities, using exactly the same techniques that have led to riots elsewhere in India. In the past three decades, the RSS has organized major demonstrations against the creation of the Muslim-majority Malappuram district in 1969, attempted to use force to take control of the disputed Thali Temple/Mosque in 1968, and agitated against state expenditure during the visit of the pope to Kerala in 1986.[38] In 1992, during the height of the agitation over the Ayodhya mosque, both Hindu and Muslim extremist organizations from outside Kerala organized provocative marches throughout the state.[39]

The reason why the level of Hindu-Muslim violence has been so low, despite the existence in Kerala of antiminority mobilizations similar to those that have led to violence elsewhere in the country, is that high levels of party fractionalization have forced successive governments to order the Kerala police force to prevent attacks on minorities in the state at all costs. The Muslim minority's leaders in the state are well aware that they hold the balance of power between the UDF (Nair-Christian) and LDF (Ezhava) coalitions and are quick to demand action whenever they feel their security is in jeopardy. In 1992, as the Ayodhya mosque agitation was reaching dangerous levels throughout India, the Indian Union Muslim League under Sulaiman Sait threatened to bring the Congress-led UDF government down unless there was a speedy overhaul of the police and bureaucracy and strong action against those who sought to incite anti-Muslim riots in Kerala.[40]

[37] Some of these new mosques have shopping complexes attached, which raises suspicions that they may be built to circumvent zoning restrictions on shops. Since 1957, with the exception of religious buildings put up on government land, there have been virtually no building restrictions on mosques, churches, and temples in Kerala. "Petrodollar Mosques in Kerala," *Muslim India* 5, no. 60 (December 1987), p. 554; *India Today*, August 31, 1983, pp. 30–31.

[38] For details of these various agitations, see K. Jayaprasad, *RSS and Hindu Nationalism: Inroads in a Leftist Stronghold* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1991), pp. 182–202.

[39] "A Flare-up in Kerala," *Frontline*, August 14, 1992, p. 122.

[40] *Frontline*, September 11, 1992, pp. 30–31.

After some clashes in Trivandrum in which the Muslim League felt the UDF government had not intervened firmly enough, the league invited leaders of the rival LDF coalition to a party dinner and warned that "We are taking stock of the situation. We may take a definite stand very soon."[41]

Given the importance of the Muslim swing vote in Kerala since the mid-1960s, such threats work. In Kerala, unlike in states in the North of India, police and local officials are left in no doubt that riots must be prevented if at all possible and quickly stopped if they do break out. On the very rare occasions where individual officers have not taken action to protect Muslims, they have been suspended or given punitive transfers. From 1967 to 1973, during which time 131 Hindu-Muslim riots (which led to 1,142 deaths) occurred throughout India, the only senior police official to be severely punished for negligence in connection with a communal riot was in Kerala. While police officials in states such as Gujarat were let off with written warnings for allowing hundreds to die, the Kerala government sharply criticized, then suspended a deputy superintendent of police for his negligence in the 1971 Tellicherry riots, in which no one was killed.[42]

Most Hindu mobilization efforts in Kerala do not turn into riots because they are met with a massive deployment of police, backed up where necessary by the Kerala Armed Police and Central Paramilitary forces. In Kerala, unlike most states (where riot-prevention instructions are issued only to district-level officers), detailed riot-prevention plans are given out to every station officer.[43] A book written by an author sympathetic to Hindu nationalists, reviewing the failure of the movement in Kerala, complains that the heavy-handedness of the police has prevented the RSS and Bharatiya Janata Party from effectively organizing in the state. During the Thali temple agitation in 1968, for example, district magistrates announced preventive curfews and restrictions on movement to prevent activists reaching the site, and during the following year the police arrested 1,500 RSS volunteers who were demonstrating against the creation of the Muslim Mallapuram district.[44]

On the rare occasions when Hindu-Muslim riots have broken out since Muslims became pivotal in Keralan politics, they have been met with swift

[41] *India Today*, August 15, 1992, pp. 29–30.

[42] *Lok Sabha Debates*, November 21, 1973, pp. 7–18; *Times of India*, December 11, 1973.

[43] *Ninth Annual Report of the Minorities Commission, 1-4-1986 to 31-3-1987* (New Delhi: Controller of Publications, 1989), p. 96.

[44] Jayaprasad, *RSS and Hindu Nationalism*, pp. 186–89.

and determined police action. In sharp contrast to states in the North, I have been able to identify no occasion where the Kerala police hesitated to break up anti-Muslim violence or intervened on the side of Hindus against Muslims. Most riots last only as long as it takes for the police to rush reinforcements to stop the violence. After riots broke out in Tellicherry in 1971 the police quickly cordoned off the town and then rushed in armed reinforcements.[45] In Trivandrum in 1985 the police opened fire to disperse large mobs that seemed to be on the brink of a riot.[46] News reports indicate that 80% of Hindu-Muslim riots in the state since the mid-1960s have been stopped within a single day, 95% within two days. In contrast to some riots in other states such as Bihar in the 1960s, or Gujarat, almost all the deaths in riots in Kerala occurred due to police firing rather than as a result of anti-Muslim pogroms. And almost all the deaths (88% of deaths in Hindu-Muslim riots) occurred on the first day of the riot, signaling that the police acted quickly and firmly rather than letting violence drag on for several days.

If anything, successive LDF and UDF governments have at times been accused of doing too much in order to retain Muslim political support, and we can point to several instances where Muslim attacks on Hindus have met with only a weak administrative response. In 1983 UDF Chief Minister K. Karunakaran ordered the police to withdraw from the capital city of Trivandrum just before Muslim organizations launched a demonstration that led to large-scale looting. Reports indicated that Karunakaran was worried because his Muslim League coalition partners were in discussions with the LDF, and so he overruled local police officers who argued that a strong police presence was necessary.[47] Another example of Muslim League influence over law enforcement came in 1991, when Ramesh Chandrabhanu, the deputy inspector general of police for northern Kerala, was transferred after only two months in the job for reprimanding some Muslim League activists involved in a clash in Kasargod.[48] And when in 1992 a commission of inquiry into incidents earlier that year at Palakkad (when Muslims attacked a BJP sponsored *ekta yatra*, or unity procession) indicted some politically connected Muslims, the ruling United Democratic Front, heavily reliant upon Muslim political support, quickly shelved the first report and

[45] *Times of India*, December 30, 1971.
[46] *Times of India*, December 23, 1986.
[47] *India Today*, January 31, 1983, p. 43.
[48] *India Today*, February 29, 1992, pp. 37–38.

announced a fresh "judicial probe" that was no doubt expected to come up with politically more acceptable answers.[49]

Tamil Nadu: Caste Polarization and Hindu-Muslim Peace

Caste Mobilization in Preindependence Madras

The southern state of Tamil Nadu, 130,000 square kilometers in area and with a 1991 population of 56 million, was created in 1956 after a lengthy and sometimes violent agitation by Telegu and Tamil speakers who wanted their own states to be carved out of the multilingual colonial-era boundaries of Madras state. Eighty-five percent of Tamil Nadu's population speaks Tamil as its mother tongue, with a further 9% speaking Telegu at home and Tamil outside. In 1991, 89% of the state's population was Hindu, with 5.5% Muslim and 3% Christian. Hindus are divided into several broad caste groups: the Brahmins (3%); the advanced backward castes and lower backward castes (51–67% depending on which figures one believes); and the Scheduled Castes (20%). The Muslim minority is concentrated in a few districts and highly urbanized, with 63% of Muslims living in towns compared with 32% of Hindus and 39% of Christians. Tamil Nadu's literacy rate of 73.7% in the 2001 census is better than the Indian average of 65.4%, while the proportion living in poverty (35%) in the state is around the Indian average.[50]

In Madras, as in Kerala, powerful backward-caste movements emerged in the first few decades of the 20th century. Their leaders complained about the existing Brahmin dominance of government employment and higher education. The Brahmins, 3% of the Madras population, held from 60% to 79% of the jobs in four major departments of the Madras government and accounted for around 70% of the graduates from the University of Madras.[51] Backward-caste leaders urged the government to guarantee political representation for the "non-Brahmins" in new provincial

[49] "Communalism Infects Kerala Too," *Hindustan Times*, May 25, 1992.
[50] Figures from *Statistical Outline of India, 2000–2001*, and Statement 32, "Ranking of States and Union Territories by Literacy Rate and Sex: 2001," in *Census of India 2001 Provisional Population Totals: Paper 1 of 2001*.
[51] S. Saraswati, *Minorities in Madras State* (Delhi: Impex, 1974), pp. 48–49. In 1912, according to figures provided by Irschick, Brahmins held 55% of deputy collector positions, and 82% and 73% of subjudge and Munsif positions. Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916–1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 13.

assemblies lest the Brahmins discriminate against them in politics as well as administration. Although there is today some doubt about the degree of government discrimination against non-Brahmins, given that few other communities were literate in English at the time, few question the skill of non-Brahmin leaders in adopting existing British administrative labels and using them to ask sympathetic senior officials for a larger share of the state's resources.

The concept of "non-Brahmin" was introduced by British administrators in Madras in the 1870s, as a way of lumping together a large number of Hindu castes against whom the Brahmins religiously discriminated, and which were believed at the time to be racially distinct in origin. In 1881, J. H. Nelson, in his influential book *The Madura Country* argued that it was "necessary to legislate separately for the non-Brahman castes, as being in all essential respects separate and distinct from, and incapable of association with, the Brahman." Nelson believed that the British had unwittingly supported the Brahmin version of caste relations when they had first arrived in Madras and recommended redressing the imbalance between the two categories by uncovering the "real" Hindu laws and customs. By 1900, Irschick argues, two beliefs had become entrenched in Madras government circles: the separateness of the majority "non-Brahmins" from Brahmins, and the unfair treatment of the non-Brahmins at the hands of the Brahmins, unfair treatment in which the colonial state had at times been an accomplice.[52]

When limited self-government for British India was discussed during the First World War, educated members of the Tamil-speaking Vellala caste and the Telegu-speaking Reddy and Kamma castes, together with Nairs from what would become northern Kerala, pressed for "fair treatment for the non-Brahmin majority," lest Home Rule mean Brahmin Rule. Since 1912 an association of non-Brahmin elites in Madras city had petitioned the government to provide jobs and scholarships for non-Brahmins. Now elite non-Brahmins formed the "Justice Party," skillfully playing on the British colonial government's desire to use the non-Brahmins as a political counterweight to the growing power of the Brahmin-dominated independence movement.[53] The colonial government in Madras met most of the

[52] This section draws on Eugene F. Irschick, *Tamil Revivalism in the 1930s* (Madras: Cre-A, 1986), chap. 1. J. H. Nelson, *A Prospectus of the Scientific Study of the Hindu Law* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1881), p. 148, cited in Irschick, *Tamil Revivalism*, p. 23.

[53] On this issue, see Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, chap. 3.

Justice Party's demands and reserved 28 seats for non-Brahmins out of the 98 elected seats provided under the 1919 constitution. After the 1920 elections the government named the Justice Party the winner and invited it to form Madras's first elected provincial government.

Once in office, the Justice Party succeeded in passing or persuading the colonial government to pass a large number measures that gave government jobs, seats in the provincial Assembly, and places in educational institutions to non-Brahmins.[54] The 1922 employment rules it introduced, for instance, limited Brahmins to 2 positions in every 12 appointments, with non-Brahmins guaranteed 5 positions, Muslims 2, Anglo-Indians and Europeans 2, and others 1.[55] Although the rules allowed Brahmins to fill other communities' places if no qualified candidate from the other community was available, a system of checks ensured that Brahmins could not block the quotas completely, and their percentage of government employment therefore dropped substantially over the next two decades. By 1947 Brahmins occupied only 40.5% of the 2,876 senior government positions in the state and 27.7% of the 68,886 junior civil service jobs.[56]

The introduction of educational grants and preferences in government employment for non-Brahmins in the 1920s set off a process of caste fusion in politics, as many caste leaders petitioned for their castes to be recognized as part of the now advantageous "non-Brahmin" category. In some cases these were the same castes that had after 1901 fought to avoid the label of "backward." As a result of the success of these petitions the number of castes who received formal government recognition as "non-Brahmin" rose to 245 by the mid-1920s, compared with 45 castes before the reforms.[57] Non-Brahmin associations were also founded in Madras to fight for more concessions for the group. The most important of these was the Self Respect Association, founded in 1926 by E. V. Ramaswami Naicker (EVR). The association's Tamil-language newspaper *Kudi Arasu* (People's government)

[54] These measures included recommending the appointment of special "protectors of non-Brahmin subordinates in public services," whose job it was to protect the non-Brahmins from Brahmin discrimination. Andre Beteille, "Caste and Political Group Formation in Tamil Nadu," in Rajni Kothari, ed., *Caste in Indian Politics* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Reprint, 1995), pp. 245–82.

[55] Scheduled Castes received a one-twelfth quota in 1927, at the expense of the "other" category. *Report of the Backward Classes Commission Tamil Nadu, vol. 1, 1970* (Madras: Government of Tamil Nadu, 1974) [Chairman S. Sattanathan], p. 27.

[56] Ibid., p. 90.

[57] Irschick, *Tamil Revivalism in the 1930s*, pp. 36–37.

provided much of the ideological underpinning for the increasingly influential non-Brahmin movement.[58]

Postindependence Politics in Tamil Nadu

Politically the backward-caste movements were temporarily eclipsed in the 1930s. After the successes in the early 1920s, conflict began to sharpen between Telegu and Tamil speakers within the non-Brahmin movement over the ministerial appointments and patronage.[59] The Justice Party's opposition to the "Brahmin" Congress Party ultimately led to the party becoming too closely aligned with British colonialism.[60] As a result the Congress Party had a convincing victory in the 1937 Madras provincial elections. Crucially for the later development of politics in Tamil Nadu, however, the two key achievements of the non-Brahmin movement – government preferences for the backward castes and the aggregation of many small castes in strong backward-caste social organizations such as the Self Respect Association – remained intact into the postindependence period. As Atul Kohli puts it, this preindependence "development of a cleavage between the Brahman and anti-Brahman forces opened up the political space for later anti-Congress developments."[61]

Although Congress had originally condemned preferences for the backward castes as a colonial plot to "divide and rule," it found that the constituency for "backward castes" had become so well entrenched by 1947 as a result of two decades of preferences that it had to retain and then even extend the system.[62] In Tamil Nadu, 69% of government jobs and places in higher education are now set aside for members of disadvantaged castes, and the number of castes included under the "backward" label continues to rise.[63] And in 1944 the remnants of the Justice Party joined with the Self

[58] See also Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, chap. 8, "The Intellectual Background of Tamil Separatism."

[59] Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, pp. 257–58.

[60] Narendra Subramaniam, "Ethnicity, Populism and Pluralist Democracy: Mobilization and Representation in South India" (Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, 1993), p. 115.

[61] Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent*, p. 158.

[62] Irschick, *Tamil Revivalism in the 1930s*, pp. 68–70; P. Radhakrishnan, "Backward Class Movements in Tamil Nadu," in M. N. Srinivas, ed., *Caste: Its Twentieth Century Avatar* (New Delhi: Viking 1996), pp. 110–34. See my discussion in Chapter 4 for more details on the failure of the attempts to abolish reservations in postindependence Madras.

[63] Subramaniam, "Ethnicity, Populism and Pluralist Democracy," p. 67. According to press reports, the number of backward communities eligible for reservation in Tamil Nadu increased from 150 prior to 1970 to 310 in 1994. "Racketeering in Quotas," *India Today*, November 15, 1994, pp. 36–42.

Respect League to form the Dravida Kazhagam (DK), under the leadership of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker. Originally the DK operated very much like the SNDP or NSS in Kerala, as a social organization and political pressure group rather than as an organized political party. It railed against the influence of "Brahmanism" and the "North," forces it tended to conflate. After a major split within the organization in 1949, however, Naicker's heir apparent A. N. Annadurai took three-quarters of the party's members with him and founded the Dravida Munnetra Kazhigam (DMK), or "Progressive Dravidian Federation," which rapidly turned itself into a political party.

The DMK won 50 out of 234 seats in the 1962 state elections, a respectable second to Congress, which had 138 seats, but party leaders were frustrated that they had lost many close contests in constituencies where smaller parties such as the Swatantra Party and the Muslim League split the anti-Congress vote. In 1967, therefore, just before the election the DMK reached an agreement on seat adjustments with the Muslim League and a few other small parties.[64] The agreement with the Muslim League was possible because, from the very beginning of the Dravida Kazhagam in the 1940s, the organization had made an effort to seek Muslims as an ally in the greater battle against the Brahmins and northern domination. One of Annadurai's earliest political decisions, for example, was to distance his organization from Congress Party members who attacked Muslims in Tiruvannamalai town and a neighboring village in 1948. Muslims were welcomed into the reading rooms and local clubs organized in the 1950s by the DMK as part of the overall strategy to bring all Tamil-speaking non-Brahmins together into the same political movement.[65]

In the event the 1967 seat adjustments were unnecessary. The DMK, bolstered by a 1965 mass movement in Tamil Nadu against the imposition of Hindi as the only national language, won 40% of the vote and 138 seats, compared with Congress's 47 seats, and formed its first government. Since the 1967 elections, Tamil Nadu has been dominated by the DMK and

[64] Marguerite Ross Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 136.

[65] Narendra Subramaniam points out that "EVR used the term 'Tamil' to exclude only Brahmins explicitly and the Schedule Castes implicitly. Such a notion of the Tamil community could be used to appeal to Muslims and Christians on the grounds that only the DK, not the Brahmin Congress party, would be truly tolerant of them." Subramaniam, "Ethnicity, Populism and Pluralist Democracy," p. 126.

(after the DMK split in 1972) its rival the AIDMK (All India AnnaDravida Munnetra Kazhagam). These parties tend to be divided between more advanced and less advanced backward castes, the DMK having excluded the lowest backward castes during its early years.

The DMK's short-term worries about losing three-way electoral battles during the 1967 elections led to what has ultimately become a more permanent interethnic alliance with the Muslims. From 1962 to 1974 the DMK was in a formal electoral alliance with the Muslim League, and, according to Subramaniam, "the two parties were so closely allied that their organizations became virtually indistinguishable."[66] Since that date there has been no formal alliance, but each of the two major parties in Tamil Nadu seeks Muslim votes and each has several Muslim Assembly members. Because Muslims are concentrated in a few towns and districts, Muslim support was the critical factor in the DMK's strong showing in Dindigul district and electoral victories in the towns of Vaniyambadi, Ambur, Tiruvannamalai, and Tirupathur. Muslims have also been a key swing vote in Madras corporation elections.[67] Subramaniam also argues convincingly that part of the DMK's success among Muslims lay in the fact that Tamil nationalism was not a religious ideology and thus, unlike Hindu nationalism in the North, allowed Muslims to retain their religious identity while integrating themselves politically with the dominant group.[68]

Hindu-Muslim Violence in Tamil Nadu

As in Kerala, the postindependence level of Hindu-Muslim violence in Tamil Nadu has been very low, despite a substantial number of Hindu-Muslim riots before independence, including the 1882 riots in Salem district, 1889 riots in Madras, an 1891 riot at Palakod, 1910 riots at Uthamapalayam, and a series of riots in the 1930s.[69] There have also been periodic attempts by Hindu nationalist organizations in recent years to mobilize Hindus around anti-Muslim issues. In the early 1980s, RSS activists, many from outside Tamil Nadu, launched a major anti-Muslim agitation after several hundred ex-untouchables, seeking to escape the economic and social

[66] Ibid., pp. 269–71.
[67] Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South Korea*, p. 288.
[68] Subramaniam, "Ethnicity, Populism and Pluralist Democracy," pp. 269–71.
[69] See J. B. P. More, *The Political Evolution of Muslims in Tamilnadu and Madras, 1930–1947* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1997), pp. 90–102, and "Formation of Conciliation Boards," UPSA GAD 413/1914.

constraints of their traditional Hindu status, converted to Islam in the village of Meenakshipuram. In 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1995 there were also organized attempts by both Hindu and Muslim militants to incite violence in the town of Nagore, the site of a famous Muslim shrine that attracts a large number of Muslim and Hindu worshipers. And in 1996 Hindu nationalists tried to take a Vinayaka Chaturthi procession past a sensitive mosque in Triplicane.

These various efforts at religious mobilization attempts have been unsuccessful because the continuing depth of cleavages around castes has lead to highly competitive party politics in which Muslims are a key swing vote. As a result, the parties in government ordered their state police forces to prevent Hindu-Muslim violence that might threaten their political coalitions. In 1982, for instance, when RSS supporters and Muslims and Scheduled Castes confronted each other near Meenakshipuram, large-scale violence was averted because of a massive deployment of police patrols through the affected villages and by the state government's threat to use the National Security Act to arrest those suspected of involvement in the clashes.[70] In the 1996 Triplicane mobilization, the police refused to allow the procession to go by the Ice House mosque and insisted on an alternate route. The police also banned a planned public meeting after the idol immersion ceremony on the grounds that it might lead to communal disturbances. When the Madras High Court turned down the Hindu Munnani's appeal against the alternate route and ban on the public meeting, the Munnani canceled the procession in protest.[71] In Nagore, the police managed to stop violence during attempts in 1989, 1991, and 1993 to cause violence in the town of Nagore and only failed in 1995 because many officers had been temporarily sent to Madurai in connection with the visit of the Chief Minister. The immediate spark for the violence was the assault by some Hindus upon an elderly Muslim man and a young Muslim woman outside the home of Thanga Muthukrishan, a prominent local Hindu activist. Muthukrishan later denied all responsibility and claimed he had only been trying to alert the Hindus about the dangers of "violent activities of Muslims with foreign help." As soon as the riot broke out, police officers were rushed into the town and quickly managed to stop the violence.[72]

[70] "Conversion Backlash," *India Today*, July 15, 1982, pp. 34–35.
[71] *Hindu*, September 20, 1996. The Hindu Munnani means "Hindu Front," and was founded in 1982 in Tamil Nadu to "defend Hinduism" by the RSS after conversions of low-caste Hindus to Islam.
[72] "Trouble at Nagore," *Frontline*, August 25, 1995, pp. 94–97.

Fifteen out of sixteen Hindu-Muslim riots (94%) in Tamil Nadu since the electoral breakthrough of the DK in the 1960s have been stopped within a single day, with all the casualties taking place on the first day of rioting, largely due to police firing. One example from 1979 illustrates the state's firm response to communal violence. In the early morning of June 4, 1979, a Hindu-Muslim dispute in the small town of Palacode led to the burning of 14 shops and 27 huts. By 10:00 A.M. the same morning, the local police had used rifles and tear gas four times, imposed a curfew, blocked outsiders' entrance to the town, and was rushing in units of both the Tamil Nadu Police and the Central Reserve Police. The violence stopped.[73]

Bihar: Delayed Lower-Caste Mobilization

Caste Mobilization before Independence

By almost any indicator, Bihar, with an area of 174,000 square kilometers and a population of 83 million (2001), is one of the most socially and economically backward states in India: its literacy rate is the lowest of any major state (47.5% compared with the national average of 65.4%); its percentage of the population below the poverty line (55%) in 2001 was the highest in India.[74] The proportion of Hindus in Bihar is exactly the same as India's, 82 percent. The state has long been dominated by powerful Brahmin, Bhumihar, Kshatriya, and Kayasth upper castes, who today account for around 16% of the population and as recently as 1951 owned 78% of the land. Numerically the largest group is the backward castes (c. 50%), dozens of castes whose traditional occupations were as cultivators and herders. The ex-untouchables or Scheduled Castes account for 14% of the population, around the same size as the state's substantial Muslim minority (15%). The state also has a large Hindu Tribal population (9%), almost all of which lives in the mineral-rich South.[75]

[73] "Report of Shri T. S. Venkataraman, Assistant Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities, Madras, on Communal Disturbances in Palacode, Dharmapuri District," in *Second Annual Report of the Minorities Commission (For the year ending 31st December, 1979)* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1980), pp. 62–69.

[74] Figures from *Statistical Outline of India 2000–2001*, and "Ranking of States and Union Territories by Literacy Rate and Sex: 2001," in *Census of India 2001 Provisional Population Totals: Paper 1 of 2001.*

[75] Ramashray Roy, "Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar," in Rajni Kothari, ed., *Caste in Indian Politics* (Delhi: Orient Longman Reprint, 1995), pp. 215–41. While this book was being written, the southern part of the state was carved off to form the new state of Jharkhand.

Prior to independence, in sharp contrast to Tamil Nadu and Kerala, caste conflict in Bihar was largely a contest among the elite Kayasths, Rajputs, and Brahmins, rather than between upper and lower castes. There were several reasons for this. First, and most important, the colonial government in Bihar instituted no political reservations, employment preferences, or educational reservations for the backward castes. Politics therefore reflected the interests of the Hindu and Muslim upper castes that dominated the narrow property-based franchise (c. 5% of adults could vote before 1935 and c. 14% thereafter). The narrowness of the franchise meant that caste issues were overshadowed in the early part of the century by a quite different conflict: the fierce competition among Bihari and Bengali Hindus and Bihari Muslims for jobs in the administration. For a century before 1911 Bihar had been ruled from the state of Bengal, and well into the 20th century Bengali Hindus occupied many of highest positions open to Indians in the Bihar civil service and police, to the annoyance of the increasing number of English-educated Bihari Hindus. While governments in the 1930s in Madras, Travancore, and Cochin were concentrating on the division of jobs, political power, and educational scholarships between "non-Brahmins" and "Brahmins," politicians in Bihar were instead preoccupied with the relative gains and losses of "Bihari Hindus," "Bihari Muslims," and "Bengali Hindus." In the 1930s and 1940s, compared with perhaps 100 questions asked in the Bihar Legislative Assembly about these three groups, only a handful were concerned with the relative status of middle- and lower-caste Hindus.[76]

Postindependence Politics

The paradox of Bihar politics after independence, Paul Brass pointed out in the mid-1970s, was that although caste was the chief principle of political mobilization, "caste solidarity has not been pronounced at the state level and has not taken organized form." Some backward castes were mobilized within the Congress Party, but only as junior partners in what were essentially upper-caste faction fights. In the late 1960s for example the Congress Party in Bihar was divided between Kayasthas, Rajputs, and Bhumihars (all upper castes) on one side of Congress and a Brahmin–backward-caste

[76] See, e.g., *Bihar Legislative Assembly Debates Official Report*, no. 1, March 5, 1938, pp. 220–22.

faction on the other.[77] The Congress Party, itself led by factions of upper-caste Brahmins, Kayasths, and Rajputs, dominated Bihar politics well into the 1980s not so much because it was strong as because the degree of middle- and lower-caste cohesion was so low that the opposition parties were weak. Parties such as the Communists, Janata Dal, and Praja Socialist Party disliked each other as much as they did the Congress. The anti-Congress vote in Bihar fluctuated between 65% and 70% of the total votes cast in elections to the state assembly held after 1967, but the fact that the opposition was divided along caste lines meant that Congress was still able to form almost all of Bihar's governments.[78]

Only on two occasions before the late 1980s was the Congress Party's dominance truly threatened. In 1967–68 and 1977–80 smaller parties put aside their disagreements to form coalition governments dominated by backward castes. Although these governments both collapsed under the weight of ethnic factionalism, they were nonetheless important because, especially in the case of the 1977–80 government of Karpoori Thakur, they helped to polarize Bihar around *backward-* and *forward*-caste identities. In 1979 Karpoori Thakur made a lasting impact on Bihar politics by introducing large-scale reservations for the backward castes, based on the southern model. The upper-caste backlash to Thakur's proposals and the countermobilization efforts by new backward-caste organizations in Bihar helped for the first time to bring some political cohesion to Bihar's backward castes. The government preferences that were instituted for backward castes in Bihar in the 1980s helped to encourage backward-caste political mobilization and a wider sense that "backwards" were a distinct social category.

In the late 1980s, many of the young backward-caste politicians who had been active in the 1979–80 agitations over the government preferences for the first time successfully forged a new Janata Party coalition in Bihar that combined the most important backward and Scheduled Castes. These castes, amounting to 25–30% of the electorate, allowed Janata to challenge the Congress, but the ethnic base of the party was still too small to

[77] Paul R. Brass, "Radical Parties of the Left in Bihar: A Comparison of the SSP and the CPI," in Paul Brass and Marcus F. Franda, eds. *Radical Politics in South Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1973), pp. 326–27. Shree Nagesh Jha, "Caste in Bihar Politics," *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 14, 1970, pp. 341–44.

[78] The Congress share of the vote was 41.4% in 1962, 33.1% in 1967, 30.5% in 1979, 23.6% in 1977 (when the Janata Party won election after the emergency), and 34.2% in 1980.

guarantee electoral victory. Laloo Prasad Yadav, the Janata Dal's charismatic state leader, therefore made ultimately successful efforts to woo the Muslims from Congress. Muslims, disgusted with Congress after its weakness in protecting Muslims during the 1989 Bhagalpur riots, defected en masse to the Janata Dal in the 1989 elections. The Muslim votes were sufficient to give Yadav a stable majority in the Bihar Assembly. His Janata government was the first in 34 years to complete its full 5-year term; in 1995, again with Muslim support, it easily won reelection.[79]

Hindu-Muslim Violence in Bihar

Bihar has been one of the most violent states in India since independence, both in terms of the absolute and per-capita number of Hindu-Muslim riots and deaths. In several particularly large riots many hundreds of people have died in violence lasting perhaps a week or more. The common element in all these large riots, according to the independent inquiries that have been set up to investigate them, has been hesitation or outright negligence on the part of the police, especially an unwillingness to use firearms to shoot at Hindu rioters attacking Muslims. The inquiry into the 1979 Jamshedpur riots (in which 120 people were killed) found that in one incident, "Not a single Hindu could be identified as having been injured or killed as a result of the 108 rounds of firing by the Bihar Military Police in a Muslim *basti* [slum]."[80] The Balasubrahmaniam inquiry into the 1981 Biharsharif violence (48 dead) likewise concluded that "while goondas had a free time, burning and killing, only a single police bullet found a target, and that one was not aimed at anyone in particular but hit a wholly innocent person." Balasubrahmaniam found that the police had been negligent in posting police pickets, stopping traffic coming into the affected area, and in not firing against rioters.[81] He concluded that the senior police officers in the town had given no clear direction to their men during the first two days of the riot and that documents they produced that claimed to prove otherwise were fabricated.[82]

[79] "Laloo's Magic," *India Today*, April 30, 1995, pp. 26–35.

[80] *Times of India*, September 14, 1981, pp. 1, 9.

[81] Leaked extracts from the report, published in *Muslim India* 2, no. 21 (September 1984), pp. 425–26.

[82] Leaked extracts from the report, published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 18, 1984, pp. 266–67; *Muslim India* 2, no. 21 (September 1984), pp. 425–26.

What accounts for this hesitation and unwillingness to use force on the part of the police? The police delay action because it believes, often with good reason, that the rioters enjoy government protection. Behind all three of the largest riots in Bihar – Ranchi, Jamshedpur, and Biharsharif – there is evidence that the party in power interfered either directly – for example, by ordering a procession to go ahead when the local police pleaded for cancellation – or indirectly, by failing to give clear orders to the state police and local magistrates that violence had to be stopped as soon as it broke out.

This interference was because, prior to the mid-1980s, the depth of the division among Bihar's backward castes meant that it was often the upper-caste, Hindu nationalist Jana Sangh Party that was the swing vote in Bihar politics. In 1967, for example, the Jana Sangh was part of the United Front coalition in Bihar when Congress, intent on highlighting divisions within the coalition between the pro-Urdu Communists and the anti-Urdu Jana Sangh, introduced a bill that would have made Urdu the state's second official language. This bill provoked widespread and inflammatory anti-Muslim protests and demonstrations on the part of the Jana Sangh's main organizational backer, the Hindu nationalist RSS. The Jana Sangh refused to agree to tough action against these demonstrations, and the coalition government faced the prospect of losing political power to the Congress if it pushed the issue and the Jana Sangh left the government. Given the strong political backing enjoyed by the RSS, it is hardly surprising that when a Hindu-Muslim riot broke out after an RSS-led anti-Urdu procession in the town of Ranchi in August 1967, the local police hesitated. The commission of inquiry found that the local police delayed firing at the RSS and Jana Sangh rioters, and delayed calling in the army, because they were on the phone to Patna trying to get the Sinha ministry's permission to take action. In the meantime, dozens of Muslims were massacred.[83]

In Jamshedpur in 1979 the link between a Hindu swing vote and a weak state response to Hindu-Muslim violence was even more direct. The local district magistrate wanted to ban a Hindu nationalist procession planned through the town. But he was overruled – and only backed down after receiving written instructions from the chief minister's office – because the Janata government of Karpoori Thakur needed to retain the votes of

[83] *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Communal Disturbances, Ranchi-Hatia (August 22–29, 1967)* (1968). See also Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 260–69.

the Hindu nationalist Jana Sangh members of the Bihar Assembly in an upcoming vote of confidence.[84] Once violence broke out, the police reportedly did nothing because a Jana Sangh MLA from the ruling Janata coalition party, Dinanath Pandey, was alleged to be helping to organize the riot.[85]

Riot inquiries in Bihar, although often criticized for being cover-ups, have in fact made it abundantly clear that political backing for those doing the rioting is the main reason Hindu-Muslim riots continue. After the 1967 Ranchi-Hatia riots in Bihar, for example, the Dayal commission of inquiry recommended that, in order to avoid future riots the "State government should warn local officials of expected trouble, should not undermine local officers or attempt to interfere with them."[86] Because Bihar police officials and district magistrates know that many rioters enjoy political protection, they dither by comparison with their colleagues in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In Bihar, riots in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s dragged on for five or six days or even longer, and the longer the riot, the higher the death toll. Half of all deaths in Hindu-Muslim violence since 1950 have taken place in a few large riots that lasted a week or more.

Only in the mid-1980s, as middle-caste parties began to provide real competition for Congress in Bihar, turning Muslims for the first time into a key swing vote, did the state's attitude to riot prevention begin to change. Laloo Yadav's government repaid Muslims for their votes in 1989 when it arrested the BJP leader Ram Krishna Advani the moment he set foot in the state on his "Rathyatra" procession to reclaim the Ayodhya mosque.[87] In 1992, when riots broke out throughout India after the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque, Bihar's Janata Dal government ensured that the state remained peaceful. Laloo Yadav, when asked why Bihar had had been so quiet despite its woeful record of past riots, explained how his government had arrested returning militants from Uttar Pradesh (the site of Ayodhya) before they could reach their towns and villages, and how he had threatened all district magistrates and station house officers with the loss of their jobs if they allowed any riots to break out in their towns. "The political will of the state government" he said, "was clear."[88]

[84] "Meddling Politicos, Inept Officials," *Times of India*, April 22, 1979.
[85] *India Today*, May 1–15, 1979, pp. 12–13.
[86] *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Communal Disturbances, Ranchi-Hatia (August 22–29, 1967)*, pp. 102–3.
[87] "Laloo's Magic," *India Today*, April 30, 1995, pp. 26–35.
[88] Laloo Prasad Yadav, *Business India*, January 18–31, 1993, p. 44.

Yadav has also expressed his determination to stop riots in more personal ways. In 1992 he slapped a police officer he felt was negligent in not stopping anti-Muslim violence in the town of Sitamarhi and spent several days going round the town and neighboring villages reassuring local Muslims, disbursing relief, and reviewing security arrangements.[89] As soon as clashes broke out in the sensitive town of Biharsharif in July 1993, Yadav deployed two companies of central paramilitary forces and 32 fixed and 6 mobile police response teams to prevent further violence.[90] The chief minister has also brought a new openness to the discussion in the state parliament over the failings of the Bihar police and administration. He accepted the findings of an inquiry into the 1989 Bhagalpur riots (which took place before Yadav became chief minister) despite the fact it criticized a number of senior police officers and administrators, including the district superintendent of police and an inspector general of police.

Conclusion

In his fascinating study of why religious conflict between Muslims and Christians did not break out in the Yoruba region of Nigeria, though it did elsewhere in the country, David Laitin found the answer in the policies the colonial state followed in Yorubaland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The colonial government in Yorubaland – but not elsewhere in Nigeria – allocated political power and material resources to leaders from "ancestral cities." Local elites used these city identities to secure concessions from the colonial government, and in turn these leaders gave protection and access to land to those Yorubas who identified themselves with an "ancestral city" identity. The ancestral city identity, given new life because it served the interest of both the colonial state and Yoruba elites, came over time to have both practical value as well as what Laitin, borrowing from Gramsci, terms "ideological hegemony" over Yorubas.[91] The continuing strength of ancestral city identities in Yorubaland has inhibited the development of Muslim-Christian cleavages that have broken out with increasing frequency elsewhere in Nigeria.

[89] *Telegraph*, October 12, 1992.

[90] *Sunday Times of India*, July 4, 1993, p. 13.

[91] David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), especially pp. 150–60. Even as Muslim-Christian conflict has worsened in most of Nigeria the late 1990s and early 2000s, peaceful ethnic relations in the Yoruba region have continued.

In south India, as in Yorubaland, the colonial government's promotion of an identity ("non-Brahmin") that cut across religious boundaries has also had profound effects on postindependence ethnic politics and ethnic conflict. In south India the early strength of the backward movements helped reduce anti-Muslim violence in two ways. First, as I have explored in some depth in Chapter 4, the "non Brahmin" political movement (usually called backward caste today) has explicitly identified and mobilized many Muslim castes – such as Labbai Muslims in Tamil Nadu – as part of a larger "backward" community fighting for justice against the upper castes. Second, the colonial government's promotion of political, economic, and educational reservations for backwards in the 1920s was to have important effects on the postindependence pattern of party competition in the South. By instituting political, employment, and educational preferences for backward castes in the 1920s and 1930s, a full half century before these policies were introduced in the North, the colonial government encouraged the growth of social and political organizations around these identities. These organizations – the SNDP and Nair Service Society in Kerala, and the Dravida Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu – were crucial in explaining the early emergence of strong opposition parties to Congress after independence.

The fact that strong middle- and lower-caste parties have long existed in the southern states with the lowest levels of Hindu-Muslim conflict is not, as I have shown in this chapter, accidental. High levels of party competition combined with strong backward-caste movements that regard Muslims as acceptable and valuable coalition partners puts Muslims in an extremely good position to demand security as the price of their votes. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the Communists and the DMK were only able to win power by actively wooing Muslim voters. Similarly, in recent years, parties such as the Janata Dal in Bihar and the Samajwadi party in Uttar Pradesh have only been able to win power by building coalitions that include Muslims. Because these parties rely so heavily on Muslim votes, they have in turn taken strong action to protect Muslims from communal violence.