



The Colonial Origins of Ethnic Violence in India (Studies of the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center)

By Ajay Verghese

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The neighboring north Indian districts of Jaipur and Ajmer are identical in language, geography, and religious and caste demography. But when the famous Babri Mosque in Ayodhya was destroyed in 1992, Jaipur burned while Ajmer remained peaceful; when the state clashed over low-caste affirmative action quotas in 2008, Ajmer's residents rioted while Jaipur's citizens stayed calm. What explains these divergent patterns of ethnic conflict across multiethnic states? Using archival research and elite interviews in five case studies spanning north, south, and east India, as well as a quantitative analysis of 589 districts, Ajay Verghese shows that the legacies of British colonialism drive contemporary conflict.

Because India served as a model for British colonial expansion into parts of Africa and Southeast Asia, this project links Indian ethnic conflict to violent outcomes across an array of multiethnic states, including cases as diverse as Nigeria and Malaysia. *The Colonial Origins of Ethnic Violence in India* makes important contributions to the study of Indian politics, ethnicity, conflict, and historical legacies.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This is a truly excellent and original book, deeply researched, carefully argued, and offering a powerful new understanding of caste and religious cleavages and violence in India. Unlike most previous studies, Verghese combines religious and caste violence within a single framework. A model book for comparative historical research in political science." (David D. Laitin, Watkins Professor of Political Science *Stanford University*)

"In this clearly written and closely argued work, Verghese proposes that religious or communal violence is associated with the former princely states, while tribal and caste violence is associated with British colonial rule. This important book challenges prevailing ideas about ethnic violence, and will further research on India and other formerly British colonial states." (Karen Leonard *UC Irvine*)

"In this bold and innovative analysis, Verghese argues that the seemingly endemic problem of ethno-religious violence in India is fundamentally shaped by the different historical traditions of governance and sovereignty in different parts of the country. The breadth and historical depth of data and context makes this a compelling contribution to the literature." (Thomas Blom Hansen, Center for South Asia *Stanford University*)

"This outstanding book is a model of both theory generation and theory testing. Verghese offers fresh hypotheses about the sources of different types of ethnic violence across India, which he rigorously evaluates using a sophisticated comparative case study design that is supplemented by a meaningful statistical test. A major contribution to our understanding of colonialism and ethnic violence." (James Mahoney *Northwestern University*)

About the Author

Ajay Verghese is Assistant Professor of Political Science at University of California, Riverside. Verghese was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University from 2012 to 2013.

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