3

Religion's Furies: Racism in Fundamentalism, Casteism, and Islamophobia

> What I saw in the maternity demonstrates it was a systematic shooting of the mothers ... They went through the rooms in the maternity, shooting women in their beds. It was methodical. (Frederic Bonnot, Head of Programmes, Médecins Sans Frontières)[1]

As I began writing this chapter, in May 2020, news came through from Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, that gunmen had entered a maternity hospital and shot dead twenty-four women and babies and injured many more. The hospital was in a predominantly Hazara area, an ethno-religious Shia minority in a majority Sunni country. The so-called 'Chinese' features of the Hazara mark them out as physically distinct and they are widely discriminated against.[2] These killings were the latest incident in a long line of attempts to terrorize the Hazaras. No organization claimed responsibility for the hospital attack but it has the hallmark of the Islamic State (I.S.), a radical Islamist group that has carried out numerous acts of ethno-religious aggression in many different countries. Radical Islamism is a fundamentalist and violent ideology of religious supremacism. It is usually represented as religiously and politically inspired. In this chapter I show that its violence is also woven with racism.

I address the relationship between religious intolerance and racism through three examples: first, radical Islamism and ethnic persecution in the 'Islamic State' as well as in Pakistan and Iran; second, racism and casteism in India; and third, anti-Muslim racism in India and China. Ethnic persecution carried out in the name of, or against, religious faith is called racism in some countries and in some

circumstances but not in others. Anti-Semitism is widely described as racism, even when Jews cannot be physically distinguished from those who discriminate against them, yet the persecution of the Hazara minority in Afghanistan (and Pakistan), who can be physically distinguished, is rarely labelled racist. It is not my aim to insist that 'racism' is the only or the right term to use in every case of ethno-religious bigotry. It is my intention, however, to claim that it is necessary and useful to identify the role and presence of racism. Where the kind of hierarchical and supremacist essentialism characteristic of racism is at work it should be acknowledged and named. The naming of racism need not displace existing critical categories (such as 'sectarianism', 'communalism', and 'casteism') but, rather, can usefully intersect, add to, and work alongside them. This point becomes especially clear in the second part of this chapter, where I explore the complex interplay of caste, religion, and discrimination, with a focus on the lively Indian debate over whether the term 'racism' is the right choice or not. As we shall see, although there are compelling views on both sides of this debate, as 'racism' is increasingly employed and deployed by Dalit activists as a way of expressing and attracting international and national attention to their social grievances, the ground is shifting: irrespective of the misgivings of some, the meaning of 'racism' is being recast. Finally I turn to anti-Muslim racism. After addressing Hindu nationalist Islamophobia in India, I turn to the example of the ongoing persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang province in China, exploring the connections between the Chinese state's fear of regional separatism and anti-Muslim racism.

Radical Islamism and Racism

> [V]ulnerable communities have been subjected to ethnic cleansing, racism and identity change in plain sight of the international community. (Nadia Murad, Yazidi rights advocate)[3]

The words of Nadia Murad register the fact of genocide in Iraq and Syria. She uses the language of racism to do so, perhaps because she knows that it is a word the 'international community' might listen to, but also because it provides an accurate reflection of the hatred she has witnessed – a hatred enacted in the attempted eradication not simply of Yazidi beliefs but of the existence of the Yazidi themselves.

Racism is a potential within the discourse and practice of supremacism, exclusion, and essentialization that accompanies religious 'fundamentalism'. 'Fundamentalism' refers to a diverse group of purist and purifying religious doctrines that claim to be returning to the roots of religious life. Fundamentalists often appear to be backward-looking, and some quietist and ascetic sects do successfully remove themselves from the trappings of modern life. Fundamentalism can be a peaceful and contemplative disposition. However, this chapter is not concerned with this side of fundamentalism but with its more 'worldly' forms, forms which are politically assertive and engaged. The ideologies of these *radical* fundamentalist movements are typically militant and sectarian, striving to cleanse the corrupted world that they imagine surrounds them. A concomitant feature of this kind of post-traditional traditionalism is its ethno-racial and, sometimes, ethnocidal intolerance.[4]

The most violent and influential manifestation of radical fundamentalism is I.S., the Islamic State, and its affiliates. Although often termed a terrorist group, the Islamic State, as its name tells us, is a state-building project, with associated administrative functions.[5] At its height, in 2015, the Islamic State was about the size of Jordan and had a population of ten million, connecting its de facto capital of Raqqa in Syria to Mosul and farming towns south of Baghdad. It developed a system of regional government and had officials in charge of prisons, security, and economic targets. I.S. lost territory throughout 2016, and its area of direct control was reduced to disconnected strips. But, at the time of writing in early 2021, I.S.'s adherents remain active, not just in the Middle East but globally, and the 'state' itself is capable of resurfacing.

I.S. emerged from the ethno-religious factionalism that came to dominate Iraqi politics in the wake of the US-led invasion of Iraq. The US-backed Shia-dominated government led by Nouri Al-Maliki in Iraq, like the Assad regime in Syria,[6] marginalized Sunni leaders, creating space for militant groups to exploit discontent. I.S. emerged in this political void as an international, multi-ethnic project, drawing Sunni extremists from around the world into a polyglot, revolutionary project. This diversity was combined with a determination to extirpate communities that did not subscribe to its Sunni supremacist and apocalyptic worldview. The Yazidis (a non-Muslim, largely Kurdish, minority) are just one of the many communities I.S. has sought to destroy; others include other ethnic Kurds, Chaldeans,

Syriacs, Assyrians, Turkmen, Kaka'i, and Shabak.[7] As this suggests, I.S.'s project is threaded with racist contempt for entire communities of people deemed to be inherently unworthy and inferior. These 'othered' groups are both narrowly and widely defined: they include the specific minorities just listed but also all Westerners, of whatever faith; all non-believers; all non-Muslims; all non-Sunni Muslims, and all those Sunni Muslims who in some way do not share I.S.'s vision.

I.S. adherents have, on occasion, made attempts to resolve the paradox of being a multi-ethnic community intent on genocide. For example, its propagandists staged and filmed an event in which Yazidi men who had been forced to convert were offered protection.[8] The idea that the film tries to convey is that Yazidi bodies are not the enemy but Yazidi beliefs. However, forced conversions only work against a background of terror. Most Yazidis were treated by I.S. followers as intrinsically and essentially corrupted, sinful, and disposable. This treatment was gendered: Yazidi men were usually killed but Yazidi women and girls were enslaved. The taking of women and girls was, in part, designed to ensure that no Yazidi children could be born. An ethnic bloodline was imagined and, in the bodies of women and girls, it was violated. In a June 2016 report, entitled *They Came to Destroy: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis*, the U.N. Human Rights Council found that Yazidi women and children were being openly sold and bought by I.S. fighters as slaves, including as sex slaves, and concluded that I.S. 'committed the crime of genocide by seeking to destroy the Yazidis through killings, sexual slavery, enslavement, torture, forcible displacement, the transfer of children and measures intended to prohibit the birth of Yazidi children'.[9]

Radical fundamentalism, such as radical Islamism, can be understood as extremist nostalgia: it doesn't just feel an ache in the face of loss; it offers a political and religious programme of action to expel impurities and recreate whatever myth of the past it has constructed. Radical Islamism is a diverse current which ranges from the carnage unleashed by I.S., and similar and associated movements in Asia and Africa, to a variety of sectarian political parties and movements, at which point it overlaps with other Islamist currents that have shaped the politics of many Muslim-majority countries in recent decades. These currents weave together nostalgia, populism, and religious purism. For Ray, in Islamism

> one finds a familiar modernist matrix of issues. Loss of meaning is played against resacralization; loss of community against restoration of community (the umma of Islam); loss of identity against authenticity, faith and the heroic cult of self-sacrifice that will lead to the rule of the righteous.[10]

Eisenstadt was fascinated by the fact that 'contemporary fundamentalist movements are thoroughly modern movements, albeit promulgating anti-modern or anti-Enlightenment ideologies'. Drawing a comparison between Jewish and Islamic fundamentalism he roots their 'renovative utopian sectarianism' in their attachment to 'specific, especially utopian, sectarian heterodox tendencies and movements' which share a 'tendency to construct sharp boundaries between the "pure" inside and the "polluted" outside'. 'Concomitantly', Eisenstadt continues,

> they continually promulgate images of an enemy or ontological enemy, one that is about to pollute them or against whom one should be on constant alert – as for instance the assimilationist Jews and the secular world for the Jewish, especially Haredi-fundamentalists; or the USA, Israel, and Zionism for the Muslim fundamentalists. ... Similar to many other sectarian-ideological movements as well as many authoritarian movements of both the left and the right, the fundamentalist movements also exhibit a very low threshold of tolerance for ambiguity on both personal and collective levels.[11]

Eisenstadt's reference to a 'low threshold of tolerance for ambiguity' implies that fundamentalism is always sectarian. But this is not the same thing as declaring fundamentalism is necessarily racist. What can be said is that the more political and radical forms of fundamentalism provide fertile soil for sectarianism to turn into racism.

In the Middle East, the polyphobic nature of Islamic fundamentalism builds on the intersection of existing patterns of prejudice, religiously defined state-building, and European colonial practices of ethnic control and classification.[12] Del Re's study of the path towards a 'Middle East without minorities', shows how the Ottoman community and legal traditions that accommodated minorities (the millet and dhimma systems) were translated under European colonialism into systems of ethnic demarcation which made minorities vulnerable to accusations of being outside of, and alien to, the nation.[13] As this implies, I.S.'s own brand of extreme intolerance emerges from a landscape that had already been shaped by ethnic intolerance. The mountain settlements of the Yazidi which were surrounded and assaulted by I.S. were not, as many media reports suggested, their 'ancient' or 'natural' home but had been established as places of safety and retreat from previous persecutions.

This history should not be misread or misunderstood as indicating that there is something timeless or typical about recent atrocities. Rather it is to make the point that radical fundamentalism is a long and widely established tool of governance. As explained later in this chapter, contemporary India provides many examples of the marriage of state-building and Hindu fundamentalism through 'anti-Muslim politics'. Intolerance, including racism and what Bhatt and Mukta call 'Aryan primordialism', has been to the fore in various depictions of Hindu nationalism.[14] Something similar has been witnessed in Israel, where a secular state overseas Jewish fundamentalist colonization of Palestinian land. Fundamentalism is a worldwide phenomenon. Surveying contemporary Christian fundamentalism in the southern states of USA, Leonard describes it as 'theology for racism'.[15] Yet although fundamentalism is global, its Islamic variety has been uniquely far-reaching and world-changing. For whereas fundamentalism has shaped the political landscape in a number of non-Muslim nations that remain substantially secular, its presence in many of the world's fifty or so 'Muslim countries' has gone deeper: it has reconstituted the relationship between religious authority and the state and created semi- or non-secular polities, ranging from the semi-theocracies of Saudi Arabia and Iran to a range of Islamizing countries.

Ray, following Sivan, argues that politicians in Muslim-majority states have mobilized fundamentalism as a mechanism of control. Thus, he suggests that fundamentalism

> is a viable political programme only in the context of a modern authoritarian state in which religious observance is a matter of official mobilization rather than personal preference. Islamic 'fundamentalism' is a populist and statist doctrine that derives its rationale from the capacity of the modern state to regulate socio-cultural life.[16]

However, Ray also points out that the attempt to co-opt fundamentalism arises from state 'legitimacy and mobilization problems': unleashing this unpredictable force does not necessarily reflect

state power but rather state weakness and disorganization. The Islamization of Pakistan provides an example of the uncertain and politically fraught nature of the 'populist and statist' deployment of fundamentalism. With the partition of India, Pakistan was founded as a homeland for Muslims and, hence, as a unified nation where the primordial attachment is to religion rather than ethnicity. Yet the birth of Pakistan – indeed, the idea of Pakistan – is intimately associated with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the 'father of the Nation' who, in a speech delivered in 1947 a few days before independence, declared that 'You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the state.' The paradox of a nation defined as a religious homeland yet espousing inclusivity soon came under strain.[17] However, it was the attempts of politicians in subsequent decades to conscript, specifically, radical fundamentalist Sunni Islam as a political ally that ended Jinnah's vision. One such politician was General Zia-ul-Haq, who ruled Pakistan from July 1977 to August 1988, and often fanned the flame of Islamism to secure state power. Thus Haq believed, writes Nasr, that 'a state that is construed as a legitimate Islamic actor can both ride the tiger of Islamism and harness its energies in the service of the state'.[18] This policy, rather than healing the country's ethnic divisions, has exacerbated them. For example, in 1986 Haq strengthened the existing blasphemy law, adding a clause that the penalty for blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad would include 'death, or imprisonment for life'. Since accusations of blasphemy are easy to make and hard to disprove, the law has been co-opted as a way to settle scores and to justify attacks on minorities.[19] Another way Haq tried to 'ride the tiger' was by funding fundamentalist religious schools (madrassas), through a compulsory religious tax, deducted every year and deposited in the government's zakat account. Although education reform has been a priority over recent years, even in state schools critics complain that the curriculum remains 'intolerant, narrow-minded and biased (even bigoted)'.[20] In his 2003 survey of the curriculum in state schools, the peace activist Abdul Nayyar concluded that 'mainstream education' in the country was 'parochial, exclusionary, hate mongering'. He identified four themes that thread their way through mainstream provision and textbooks: 'Pakistan is for Muslims alone'; 'Islamiat is to be forcibly taught to all the students, whatever their faith, including a compulsory reading of Qur'an'; 'The ideology of Pakistan is to be internalized as faith, and hate created against Hindus and India'; 'Students are urged to take the path of Jehad [*sic*] and *Shahadat* (martyrdom)'.[21]

To further illustrate the interplay of state-building, Islamist fundamentalism, and ethnic exclusion, I draw on the insights of Pakistan's former ambassador to the USA, Husain Haqqani. Challenging radical Islamists and/or the state in Pakistan can be dangerous. Haqqani has been reviled in Pakistan because of his criticisms, and in 1999 he was kidnapped and held for two months by Pakistani intelligence agents. He now lives in exile. Haqqani is clear that the 'disproportionate influence wielded by fundamentalist groups in Pakistan is the result of the state sponsorship of such groups'. He explains that by 'manipulating social and cultural divisions and using a divide-and-rule strategy the government is able to create a sphere in which it becomes the arbiter in any conflict. The state and its wings thus act as an agent of identity mobilization and intensifies sectarian conflict.'[22] Sectarianism, in as much as it involves the violent exclusion of discrete 'othered' communities, creates patterns of prejudice that fix difference. In such circumstances, racism can be thought of as a presence, a potential, and a destination. To put it another way, as divisions harden, and inequalities become essentialized, the idea of racism begins to emerge. This emergence is not just a reflection of the objective presence of racism but of it being called on and evoked within rhetorics of resistance. It is telling that hostility against the Ahmadis, a heterodox Pakistani Muslim community whose 'essential difference' to other Pakistanis is purely doctrinal, has been described as 'a form of sectarian racism'.[23] It may be objected that this is a misuse of the term: Ahmadis do not have any distinguishing characteristics other than their faith. Yet it provides an example, which we will encounter again in the discussion of 'caste racism' in India, of the mobility and power of the idea of racism. The case of the Ahmadis – who number about four million in Pakistan – is important because they were subject to the first sectarian suppression organized by the Islamizing state. From the early 1950s radical fundamentalists were agitating against them, in part because of their reputed wealth and prominence, and demanding that the Ahmadis be defined as a non-Islamic sect. The government conceded to this demand and a 1974 constitutional amendment legally forbade Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslim. Since then Ahmadi communities have been subject to regular attacks, leading to many thousands of them joining other minority groups in fleeing the country. The case of the Ahmadis indicates how the persecution and othering of a group

can begin to take on some of the characteristics of racism, even in the absence of ethnic, let alone racial, criteria.

In part it is the 'minoritarian' nature of Pakistan that explains why the state has focused on religion as a binding force. No one ethnic group is numerically dominant in Pakistan and there exists what might be termed a struggle for power, or a delicate and continual process of negotiation, between groups and individuals who claim to voice the concerns of the main communities (Punjabis and Pashtuns being the largest). In Islamizing states with one dominant ethnic majority the ethno-nationalist role of religion can be more ambiguous. This is particularly true in Turkey and Iran where Islamist regimes have superseded secular nationalist regimes. As noted earlier, in Turkey, minority identities were repressed under secular-nationalist regimes. The coming to power of an Islamist party briefly promised a shift from assimilationism towards pluralism. However, this early promise was not sustained. A similar judgement may be made about the arrival of a post-secular state in Iran. The Pahlavi dynasty (1925–79), was nationalist, secular, and often blatantly racist (see also Chapter 1). Asgharzadeh explains that

> Under Reza Khan's rule, the officially sanctified Iranian history rapidly replaced the existing oral and written histories of various ethnic groups and nationalities. Based on the dominant racist ideology, all peoples living in Iran were to have the common 'Aryan ancestry.' The non-Persian nationalities were written new histories in line with an Aryanist racist ideology ... They were required to be assimilated to 'the superior Aryan/Persian race and culture,' and if they did not acknowledge the 'superiority of Aryan/Persian race,' they would then become subjected to humiliation, marginalization, and exclusion.[24]

Most sources suggest about 60 to 75 per cent of Iran's population is Persian. There is debate about whether the Islamization of the country, since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, has carried forward existing ethno-nationalist, Persian-centric forms of exclusion or brought improvements for minorities. As this implies, ethnic groups in Iran (Arabs, Kurds, Azeris, Gilakis, Mazandaranis, Baluchis, and Turkmen), along with religious minorities (such as Sunni Muslims, Bahá'í, Zoroastrians, and Christians), have a complicated relationship to the Islamic Revolution. At times, the universalist claims of Islam have been to the fore, promising equality, particularly for Muslim minorities and recognized religious minorities (Zoroastrians, Jews,

and Christians). Contrasting the new regime with the secularism of the past, and addressing the Kurdish people of Iran in 1978, the country's leader-in-waiting, Ayatollah Khomeini, declared that

> The great Islam has condemned all sorts of discriminations and hasn't allocated special rights for any group in particular. Piety and devotion to Islam are the only markers of man's dignity ... In the bosom of Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran all nationalities have the right for determination of their own cultural, economic, and political destinies ... in their own localities.[25]

'Some minorities welcomed the Islamic revolution', Blyth writes 'believing that it would grant them autonomy', but, she adds, the also found that the new system 'discouraged anything distinctive t a minority – language, religion, culture, territorial identification' Blyth aligns what she calls the 'racialization' of Iran's minorities to hardening of discourses of exclusion and Persian-centrism, processe that she also exemplifies by reference to officially sanctioned anti Semitism.[26] Asgharzadeh argues that the 'ruling group sees itsel as representing a unified, "authentic," and "essentialized" Irania nation whose fixed parameters are defined by Iran's geographica borders, Persian language, and Islamic faith (Shi'ism)'.[27]

As so often in discussion of racism in Asia and Africa, claim and counterclaims about the existence of racism in Iran take plac in the absence of the kind of on-the-ground research that migh capture the experiences of ordinary people. However, filtering ou government and anti-government polemic, there is a consisten pattern of reliable reports from Iran suggesting that, as in Turkey the Islamic Republic's post-secular 'tolerance' is very limited. Th exclusion of non-Shia, non-Persian, and non-Farsi-speaking group appears entrenched and ongoing. The continuous flow of refugees many from minority backgrounds, out of Iran provides compellin evidence of persecution. Thus, for example, the Bahá'í community' decades-long experience of suppression and exile continues. Th Bahá'í faith, the largest minority religion in Iran, has been officiall branded a subversive political organization. The criminalization o the Bahá'í has led to hundreds being arrested and imprisoned. A with many other religious minorities, the Bahá'í are a multi-ethni group, yet, through processes of state stereotyping, essentializatior and categorization, they have become ethnicized. A Bahá'í researc

organization notes that the community has been subject to vilification by the construction of an 'us versus them' narrative and 'efforts to "dehumanize"' Bahá'í in the media, as well as 'the organization of hate groups, and "preparation" for extermination'.[28]

The interplay of political power and Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan and Iran has led some commentators to argue that Islamism is a political not a religious phenomenon. Thus Ahmad argues that, despite their spiritual pretensions, 'the fundamentalist movements are primarily political rather than religious intellectual movements', for their main goal is 'to *capture* political life'.[29] This kind of argument imagines religion and politics as essentially different and so fails to acknowledge how they overlap. For some, it is an attractive thesis because it makes room for the hope that the violence associated with fundamentalist Islam is an aberration and nothing to do with 'real Islam'. In a paper titled 'Non-Muslims in the Islamic state', drawing solely on selected verses of the Qur'an, Berween typifies this wishful disposition. Writing in 2006, Berween ignores contrary evidence in telling us that 'an Islamic model is ideal for governing multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-ideological societies' and that '[t]hroughout Islamic history, Muslims have never had problems with non-Muslims except for a few minor incidents that can be classified as non-Islamic or which were provoked by the non-Muslims themselves'.[30] In the context of the ongoing violence inflicted on diverse minorities under diverse fundamentalist and Islamizing regimes, there is an unworldly quality to these remarks. A more plausible response is to admit that religious-fundamentalist state-building allows a diversity of interpretations, some of which are multicultural, but most of which have, in practice, been 'multi-phobic'. In numerous parts of the world, 'multi-phobia' has been allowed to define and dominate the meaning of both 'Islamic government' and 'fundamentalism'. Combining faith and activism, political fundamentalists have engaged in supremacist and populist praxis to cleanse the polluted, unbelieving, world. This purification promises a bright new day for those comfortable with intolerance and dogmatism but a bleak future for everyone else.

Casteism and Racism

A caste is something that one is born into and, for many, it defines the parameters of the possible. Castes are social, occupational,

and, at least in India, religiously defined, fully or semi-endogamous communities. People in different castes are not physically distinct (though in South Asia skin colour can have caste connotations), nor do castes have the linguistic and cultural differences associated with other aspects of ethnicity. The definition of racism I have been using in this book roots it in ethno-racial power, supremacism, and essentialism. This suggests that discrimination based on caste ('casteism'), however bad it might be, is not racism. But there is a problem with this definitional demarcation. For not only does caste-based prejudice – especially against the group once known as the 'Untouchables', now known as 'Dalits' (a self-designation that can be translated as 'the oppressed') – often, in practice, resemble racism, but at least some of those campaigning against 'casteism' claim that what they experience *is racism*.

The question of who gets to define racism is being called into question. The Indian civil rights activist Teesta Setalvad asks, 'is it not time that we fill and feed such terminology with our own histories and thereby deepen their meanings?' Setalvad goes on to explain:

> within political science and sociology circles, racism has come to typify and describe systems of inequality and discrimination. The condition of the 160 million Dalits more than fulfils the description of the conditions used to describe racism. The term is now being invoked to show how the same kind of dehumanising prerequisite (in terms of definition) that are used to describe, understand and protest against racism are more than fulfilled (thousand times over) when we speak of untouchability and caste-based discrimination.[31]

Another attempt to 'fill and feed' what many might regard as a foreign terminology can be heard in the Dalit Lives Matter campaign, an adaption of Black Lives Matter. Dalit Lives Matter echoes earlier international borrowings, notably the Dalit Panthers, founded in 1972, as well as depictions of Indian 'apartheid', such as Chandra Bhan Prasad's *Reflections on Apartheid in India*.[32] Powerful international terms are being claimed here; 'racism', 'Black Lives Matter', and 'apartheid' are words designed to spark attention and indignation in India and across the world.[33]

There are good reasons why caste is associated with India. Caste as a social issue is to the fore in India as nowhere else. At the end of this section I introduce other countries where caste exists but is more hidden. Another focus to note is that, although caste exists

amongst Muslim, Sikh, and Christian Indians, my remarks concern the majority Hindu population. There are four principal castes, each, traditionally, assigned with a distinct social-occupational-religious role. These distinctions have grown ever weaker over the past century, but they retain enough purchase that it is necessary to reprise them. At the top are the Brahmins, associated with learned and priestly occupations; then there are the Kshatriyas (military and land-owning) and Vaishyas (merchants, farmers). Boys of these three castes undergo the ritual of being 'twice-born', in a kind of spiritual rebirth, and so are distinguished from women and the bottom caste, the Shudras, whose occupational roles include manual work and domestic service. The Dalits are outside, or rather beneath, this system, their 'untouchability' being associated with their lack of caste. Caste discrimination is illegal in India and there have been a variety of ambitious measures to challenge casteism and provide affirmative action for what the Indian government categorizes as 'Scheduled Castes' (Dalits), 'Scheduled Tribes' (tribal peoples) and 'Other Backward Castes'. However, these strides in legal protection, quota systems, and other benefits have not been matched by the kind of cultural shift that would lift the everyday burden of caste or 'castelessness'. When Setalvad writes of dehumanization taking place a 'thousand times over' she is pointing to ongoing and daily acts of discrimination. Amnesty International's 'Halt the Hate' campaign recorded that, in 2018, 65 per cent of all hate crimes committed in India, including numerous killings, were against Dalits.[34] Some of these attacks took the form of lynchings.[35] The pervasive nature of anti-Dalit feeling is best understood at a local level. Purushotham and Margaret's study of Anantapur District in the state of Andhra Pradesh offers the following vivid vignette.

> The dalits were not just denied entry into the temples. They were not even allowed to stand in the premises of the temples. Their mere touch and shadow were considered polluting ... [Villagers] do not tolerate any dalit entering into the hotels or tea bunks, sitting along with others and using the plates, cups and saucers. In many villages even today, separate glasses and plates are kept outside the tea shops and hotels. The dalits have to use those tumblers and plates to take eatables and to drink coffee or tea. The eatables are thrown into the plates without touching the plate. After consumption, they should themselves wash the glasses and plates and place them back at a place fixed for them ... Access to the sources of drinking water posed a very big problem for dalits. They could not share clean, potable water with others. The tanks, wells, bore taps are not open to dalits which are operated by upper caste people.[36]

As this account makes clear, it is not Dalit ideas, behaviour or history that is objected to but the bodies of Dalits. They are held to be intrinsically unclean and their presence a form of pollution. The occupational roles traditionally assigned to Dalits reflect and, in part, explain this antipathy. Dalits have traditionally worked in 'debasing' occupations such as leather work and what is called 'manual scavenging', which is the task of cleaning latrines; that is, removing human excrement with hand, shovel, and broom.

The treatment and experience of Dalits is not static and varies from place to place. In urban and non-conservative environments, the kind of treatment I have just described is likely to appear shocking and old-fashioned. Dalit opinion is equally diverse, with many perspectives on their 'plight' and on the Hindu caste system. In 2014, forty of the eighty-four national parliamentary seats reserved for Dalits were won by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) party led by Narendra Modi (who claims to be from one of the officially designated 'Backward Castes'). For some Dalits, the BJP's project of 'freeing' India's economy through neoliberal reform promises opportunity and change: the fixed subordination of the past being contrasted with the fluidity and riches of Modi's brand of Indian capitalism. The modern history of the Dalits can be narrated as a story of change and improvement: as a history of gaining rights and the heroic efforts of Dalit leaders. One of the first and most revered of these leaders was Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956). For Purushotham and Margaret, until 'Dr. Ambedkar's advent on the political scene of India, the lives of dalits were unbearable and miserable, as they were condemned to slavery, segregation and untouchability'.[37] In part, like later activists, Ambedkar saw his task as translating the treatment of the 'Untouchables' to an international audience. In correspondence with W. E. B. Du Bois in the 1940s, he wrote that there is 'much similarity between the position of the Untouchables in India and of the position of the Negroes in America'.[38]

Another of Ambedkar's tasks was to challenge the racial justification of the Dalits' lowly status. For, despite the fact that, today, the caste system is usually discussed in religious and social terms, its interpretation is imbued with an ethno-racial character and was

deeply influenced by British colonial racism. British colonial rule brought with it a set of racial ideas to make sense of India's existing social hierarchy. One of the core theories claimed that the supposedly light-skinned Brahmins were descendants of Aryan invaders and were racially different from the dark-skinned 'indigenous' population. The influence of this theory helps explain why, in his seminal essay 'Annihilation of Caste' (1936), Ambedkar devoted so much energy to showing that the caste system 'does not demarcate racial division'.[39] The contributions to Robb's ground-breaking edited collection *The Concept of Race in South Asia* nearly all concern the way colonial theories overlaid and misread Indian realities.[40] They also concur in framing this process in terms of the imposition of a modern, rigid and systemizing, intellectual structure upon less bounded and more 'fuzzy' Indian traditions of human difference. Chakrabarty has also linked the advent of modernity with the essentialization of Indian ethno-religious categories. To make this argument he first cites Kaviraj's depiction of the traditional boundaries between communities in India as complex and uncertain:

> Communities were fuzzy in two senses. Rarely, if ever, would people belong to a community which would claim to represent or exhaust all the layers of their complex selfhood ... [Their identity] would be fuzzy in a second sense as well. To say their community is fuzzy is not to say it is imprecise. On the appropriate occasion, every individual would use his cognitive apparatus to classify any single person he interacts with and place him quite exactly, and decide if he could eat with him, go on a journey, or arrange a marriage into his family.[41]

Chakrabarty goes on to explain that the publication of British colonial decennial Indian censuses from 1872 was a significant moment in the reification and fixing of identities. Increasingly, what had been 'fuzzy' became static and rigid.

> The censuses and other similar reports then reconstituted the meaning of 'community' or 'ethnicity' and gave Indians three important political messages all of which are entirely commensurable with liberal political philosophy as we know it. These messages were: (a) that communities could be enumerated and that in numbers lay one's political clout; (b) that the social and economic progress of a community was a measurable entity, measured in the case of Indian censuses by their share in public life (education, professions, employment, etc.), and (c) that this enabled governments and communities to devise objective tests for the relative 'backwardness' or otherwise of a community.[42]

As this implies, the censuses fed into the possibility of fair representation in public life and employment but also reduced communities to discrete entities, cementing the terms of caste and communal difference. Dharampal-Frick and Götzen make a similar point when they describe how the 'non-dogmatic and less ideologically weighted understanding of the plurality and contextually contingent nature of Indian communitarian society was radically transformed' by colonialism. As an example of this transformation they look at the misreading of Indian traditions of caste colour symbolism. In the caste system each caste is associated with a varna and, hence, a colour (the Brahmins' varna was white, Kshatriyas' red, Vaishyas' yellow, and Shudras' black; Dalits are without varna). Although, as Dharampal-Frick and Götzen point out, varna 'signifies "category" or "quality", and "color" only in a symbolic, ritualistic context', it 'gave rise to an influential rendering (which still holds sway), interpreting it as denoting skin color or pigmentation, so that the fourfold conceptual hierarchy could be explained as with racial categories'.[43] Ambedkar complained that 'European students of Caste have unduly emphasised the role of colour in the Caste system', a mistake he put down to the fact that they were 'impregnated by colour prejudices' so 'they very readily imagined it to be the chief factor in the Caste problem'.[44]

However, the implication that racism was simply imposed on the caste system by ignorant outsiders does not square either with the alacrity with which these racial myths were taken up by Indian thinkers or the profound challenge posed by Setalvad and others that 'caste racism' can and should be identified irrespective of the presence of race or ethnicity. Imposition and diffusionist models are also challenged by the eminent historian of Hindu nationalism, Christophe Jaffrelot, who argues that 'diffusionist theories' fail to grasp the processes of 'strategic emulation', in which nationalist intellectuals adapted European racial theories and blended them with new interpretations of Hindu tradition, so that a 'racism of domination by the upper castes appears natural'.[45]

When, in 1875, Dayananda Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj ('Noble Society') he was part of a wider 'Hindu revival'. As Baber explains, Dayananda drew on Western ideas of 'Aryan' (hence

'Arya') superiority 'to articulate the idea that the Hindus were clearly the descendants of the Aryas who themselves were an elect and primordial people'.[46] The word 'Hindutva' (translated as 'Hinduness' or Hindu nationalism) later came to be given to the militant assertion of Hindu identity. The label was popularized in the 1920s, by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, as a cultural, racial, and religious expression of nationalism. In *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (1923), Savarkar wrote that Hindus were 'not only a Nation but also a race-*jati*' (a race-group) and that 'all Hindus claim to have in their veins the blood of the mighty race incorporated with and descended from the Vedic fathers'.[47] Hindutva ideology, as summarized by Parel, is founded on the myth of India and Hindu culture and people as 'the creation of a racially superior people, the Aryans':

> They came to be known to the outside world as Hindus, the people beyond the Indus River. Their identity was created by their race (*jati*) and their culture (*sanskriti*) ... They created a culture – an ensemble of mythologies, legends, epic stories, philosophy, art and architecture, laws and rites, feasts and festivals. They have a special relationship to India: India is to them both a fatherland and a holy land.[48]

One of the impacts of the hybridization of colonial and nationalist Hindutva racism has been to simultaneously ossify and modernize the associations between light skin and high caste status.[49] For although these associations can be framed as a foreign misreading of Indian tradition, they have been adopted and adapted into contemporary Indian culture in the context of the globalization of whiteness as a symbol of beauty and consumer capitalism (discussed in Chapter 5). These interconnections help to explain the widespread contemporary preference for 'fair' skin in India, as seen in advertising, films, and matrimonial advertisements. They may also help explain the 'anti-Black' prejudice that is directed at African students in India.[50] According to the Dalit politician Udit Raj, 'colour prejudice is an offshoot of the bigger evil of casteism in India'. Raj goes on to argue that the 'hold of the caste system in India is deep, dark skin is the skin of the lowest castes, traditionally the subjugated people and, therefore, disagreeable'.[51] Amongst some Dalit activists, consciousness of 'colour prejudice' has, in turn, provoked 'racial' pride and defiance. One of the paradoxical afterlives of colonial racist theory, which imagined India's ancient past in terms

of invading light-skinned Aryans imposing their will on dark natives, has involved its rescripting into an anti-racist, anti-Brahmin polemic. Some Dalit activists, eschewing notions of a pleasantly 'fuzzy', tolerant, pre-colonial 'traditional' India, have arrived at essentializing and ahistorical arguments claiming that racism is a core attribute of Hinduism, even that India is 'the original home of racism'.[52] In a pamphlet designed to connect African American and Dalit struggles, V. T. Rajshekar, founder of the now defunct magazine *Dalit Voice*, wrote that

> the caste system, and the Black Untouchables' demeaning position in relation to it, stemmed from the conquest by the fair-skinned Aryans of the original Black peoples of African genesis. Instituted as a mode of social control over various populations and applied on an ethnic or racial basis, the caste system was originally racist in nature.[53]

Rajshekar's outspoken opinions led to him being arrested several times 'for creating disaffection between communities'.[54]

The debate about racism and casteism in India came to international prominence in the lead-up to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances (WCAR) held in Durban in 2002. In 1996 the Committee of the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination had already declared that 'the situation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes falls within the scope of the Convention'.[55] Dalit activists wanted to use the conference to strengthen governments' obligations to anti-casteism and, more broadly, to bring caste discrimination to the attention of the world. The Conference Draft Programmes of Action demanded that governments 'redress discrimination on the basis of work and descent', and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan raised the topic of caste in the WCAR's opening plenary.[56] Despite this, the Indian government was able to block consideration of the topic. In a statement the Government of India declared:

> We are firmly of the view that the issue of caste is not an appropriate subject for discussion at this conference – it is neither legitimate nor feasible nor practical for this World Conference or, for that matter, even the UN to legislate, let alone police, individual behaviour in our societies.[57]

Many scholarly voices backed this position. Some, like the eminent Indian sociologist, André Béteille, argued that '[t]reating caste as a form of racism is politically mischievous; what is worse it is scientifically nonsensical', and that it was 'bound to give a new lease of life to the old and discredited notion of race'. Béteille also argued that it would 'open up a Pandora's box of allegations of racial discrimination throughout the world'.[58] In similar vein, D. L. Sheth suggested that depicting casteism as racism reflects a 'colonial mentality of attempting to understand Indian reality through western categories of analysis'.[59] These arguments can also be discerned in the contribution of Dharampal-Frick and Götzen, though they are more explicit in accusing Dalit anti-racist activists of incubating 'the racist virus' by 'stigmatizing and transfixing caste as a racist institution'.[60]

The controversy stirred by the Indian government's actions at the Durban conference has provoked debate about how caste relates to racism. Whilst Dharampal-Frick and Götzen worry about 'stigmatizing' caste, Dalit activists worry that caste is not stigmatized enough. For some, the translation of casteism into racism has been a conscious attempt to reframe the former in ways 'the international community' can grasp. Bhimraj explains that there no 'alternative language' that can make 'the international community understand the horrors of the caste system'.[61] Majumdar cites revealing reflections from two anonymous US-based Dalit activist sources:

> Racism is the connotation [that] is easily conveyed to the western culture. The white man or a black man in a western situation can understand and relate to the issue. With the caste system, they may not know how serious or how bad it is.
>
> [Y]ou have to translate casteism ... [and convey] this is not racism, but it's worse than racism.[62]

As this implies, the language of racism is not necessarily being employed by Dalit activists in ignorance of debates about its applicability in India but rather from an appreciation that words are not just descriptions but also tools. 'Racism' is a powerful lever and a call to action, and, through its employment and deployment, its meaning can shift and broaden. Umakant and Thorat's edited collection, *Caste, Race and Discrimination: Discourses in International Context*, published in association with the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, provides one of the best windows onto the range but also the critical

self-awareness of the activist debate. Many of the contributors argue that racism should not be reduced to 'race prejudice' and assert the right and the necessity of reimagining racism beyond race and ethnicity. For Teesta Setalvad it is to 'racism, and not the theory of race, that the Dalit movement as a whole seeks to link its condition and demand world understanding, international condemnation and, yes, support'.[63]

Earlier in this book I set out the argument that the concept of racism needs to be untied from an exclusive relationship with race and opened out to address the worst kinds of ethnic discrimination. In part this argument is based on 'facts on the ground': whether we like it or not, the idea of racism has been expanded to include ethnicity. The idea that casteism might also be called racism both resonates with and challenges this conceptual expansion. It resonates with it because it provides a powerful example of how the idea of racism is being put to work 'beyond race'. Yet it challenges it too, for by throwing into view the variety of ways social difference is naturalized and hierarchies are created, it asks 'why stop at ethnicity?' Rather than trying to police this debate, and to insist on a 'one size fits all' definition of racism, it is necessary to acknowledge that there is not one, global, debate on racism but many, each connected to but also rooted in particular circumstances. Rather than seeking some kind of international 'normal', we should admit that definitions are ongoing and that different, even incommensurable, anti-racist activisms may co-exist.

The fluidity and particularity of lexicons of discrimination need to be acknowledged and respected. This suggests a point of difference with those who argue, like Chakrabarty, that 'communalism' in India is a word that 'works as a surrogate for "racism"'.[64] Chakrabarty does not explain why 'racism' is real and communalism is a 'surrogate', though he makes the intriguing claim that 'the popular word "racism" has the advantage of not making India look "peculiar"'.[65] But India is 'peculiar'; so too China, Russia, Britain, the USA, and all points in between. The question is how we can acknowledge and discuss racism in these places whilst recognizing their distinctiveness and the fact that, in each of them, the meaning of racism is a site of intellectual and political struggle. A plural modernities approach may help us to understand this contested terrain. In India, such an approach pushes us towards focusing less on a singular historical root for racism and more on entangled

twentieth- and twenty-first-century narratives, in which caste has become increasingly politicized and economically instrumentalized. New transformations and ruptures with the past are changing the meaning of caste and eroding its borderlines. In part this reflects the way neoliberal regimes of flexible labour have tumbled workers together from many different backgrounds, but it also reflects what has been called the 'secularization' or 'politicization' of caste.[66] Jaffrelot explains that the politicization of caste has led to caste groups, including Dalits, increasingly acting as 'interest groups'.[67] A distinctively modern and distinctly Indian caste-based mass politics has emerged, leading to what Rao calls the 'reorganization of caste under political modernity'.[68] In contemporary India, significant government resources and assistance are apportioned to communities who are in tribal, 'scheduled' or 'backward' caste groups. This has led to campaigns by some communities to gain official recognition as belonging to one of these groups. To give a sense of the complexity and urgency of the issues at stake, consider the campaign by members of the Gujjar tribe in Rajasthan, who are currently classified as among the 'Other Backward Classes', to be reclassified to the 'lower' category of 'Scheduled Castes' (the same as Dalits). This is a political not a religious demand. Being reclassified would bring material rewards, such as greater access to government jobs. In May 2008 five days of rioting broke out in support of this demand, leaving thirty-eight people shot dead by police.[69] Such disturbances are not uncommon in India. As caste has transmuted into a device for allocating resources, its spiritual dimensions can appear to have become irrelevant. The caste system and prejudice based on caste are changing, which in turn suggests that the connections being forged between casteism and racism may also be in a state of flux.

However, whether Dalit anti-racist activism gains ground over the coming decades or not, it has already shown why debates on ethnic and racial discrimination need to acknowledge the injuries of caste. In this sense, the Indian debate is a global leader. The lively controversy about caste that takes place in India makes it distinct from other societies where caste exists but is little talked about. It might be objected that this does not entirely apply to Japan, where activists representing the Burakumin, a former outcaste group, are well organized and have used a variety of international platforms to highlight their experience, frequently employing the language of

racism to do so.[70] However, in most countries where caste systems function, the topic is shrouded in silence. Thus, for example, although caste has a profound impact in a number of regions and countries in West Africa, anti-caste activism there remains limited.[71] One of the better-known outcaste groups are the Osu of Igboland in Nigeria. Dike writes that they 'are regarded as sub-human being [*sic*], the unclean class, or slaves'.[72] Yet Nwaka explains that 'many Igbo scholars who feel genuinely concerned about the caste problem in Igboland hesitate to write or speak against or about it'. The reasons for this, Nwaka explains, are twofold: 'fear of being associated with the caste, or because of the doubtful supposition that the "dying problem" is best left to time, education, Christianity, and modernization to eradicate. Research on the subject is therefore hampered by its sensitive nature.'[73]

A simpler explanation also presents itself: outcaste and low-caste groups have very few allies, either in their own country or abroad. They are friendless and unrepresented. This is the case with the Pygmy peoples of Central Africa who, at least in some regions, continue to be treated as a slave-caste. More generally it is reported that 'devaluation of their culture, denial of rights, looting and violence are what numerous Pygmies are now subject to every day'.[74] In North Africa, issues of caste discrimination are particularly acute in Mauritania where caste is bound up with issues of race, slavery, and Islamism. Bullard writes that 'racism runs deep' in Mauritania but that opponents of racialized caste and slave systems run the risk of being denounced as apostates and anti-Islam. To exemplify this point Bullard recounts the case of Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir. On 2 January 2014, this

> young Mauritanian engineer from the northern industrial city of Nouadhibou published a denunciation of caste-based racism, which he framed as a call for religious reform. He dared to challenge the discrimination against Moulamines, the lowest of the low in Mauritanian society, and did so by provocatively criticizing some of the Prophet Mohammed's acts. The government perceived his demand that Mauritanians cleanse their religion of racism as a fundamental attack on mainstream Mauritanian identity. He was promptly arrested and charged with apostasy, which is a capital offense.[75]

In 2019, after five and half years in detention, Mkhaitir was released and now lives in exile.[76]

National clichés perpetuated in the international media associate certain problems with certain places. Caste and India are routinely paired off, leaving the rest of the world free to ignore the problem. The religious association of caste with Hinduism means that, in India's Muslim neighbours, caste remains an especially sensitive topic. Gazdar reports that in Pakistan there is 'little tolerance in the public domain of any serious discussion about caste and caste-based oppression'. He also tells us that 'such talk' is silenced 'by shouts of "we are all Muslims" and "caste is another country" – it being obvious which country that might be'.[77] However, some Pakistani activists and intellectuals are refusing this narrative and are not only raising the topic but exploring the complexity of caste in Pakistan.[78]

The association of caste both with India and with a dying, pre-modern past helps explain why its widespread nature has been ignored. The idea that caste is a throwback is even more misleading than the fallacy that it is 'India's problem', for it allows a 'leave it alone' attitude to dissemble as a solution. Caste, it is fondly imagined, will naturally burn away in the fire of progress and modernization. However, as we have seen in the case of India, caste can become integrated with new political and economic patterns. Caste is not disappearing but changing, and as it changes so too will its relationship with racism.

Anti-Muslim Politics and Racism in India and China

Just as radical Islamism can essentialize and subjugate in ways that turn religion into a vector for racism, so too do anti-Muslim attitudes and practices. This framing might suggest a head-on collision, but my two examples of anti-Muslim racism come from places (India and China) that, far from being centres of Muslim fundamentalism, are better characterized as having pluralist and politically secular Islamic traditions. The interplay between the global spectre of Islamic fundamentalism and regional anti-Muslim sentiment has created a complex geography of persecution and grievance. In this new geography, certain places and events stand out, such as the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and of Bosnian Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. My focus on India and China is designed to capture the politicization and ethno-racialization of religion in ostensibly secular states. There is a large body of scholarship that suggests that 'communalism' in India (which refers to religious violence), is politically mobilized by the state and other political actors.[79] The Chinese government's internment of Muslims in Xinjiang province is also politically driven and recognizably modern, being part of its wider campaign against separatist factions that threaten national unity.

Anti-Muslim politics in India

According to India's National Crime Records Bureau, on an average day in 2017, 161 riots occurred in India and 247 people were killed or injured.[80] It was not an exceptional year: bloody conflict is a daily event in India. Across 2017, 723 of these riots were classified as 'communal', the term used for inter-religious clashes, most of which are between Muslims and Hindus.[81] Yet, unlike the other riots recorded, which were largely sparked by struggles over land and caste rights, anti-Muslim violence challenges the presence in India of many of its own citizens (about 200 million Indians are Muslim). Moreover, this violence has, at times, appeared to be officially endorsed, particularly under the national and regional government of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Thus, for example, in February 2020 Delhi's police refused to intervene for several days in an ongoing communal riot that took place in a once mixed neighbourhood and that left fifty-three people dead, mostly Muslims. The riot was sparked by protests against a new citizenship law, passed in 2019, that gives citizenship to illegal migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, but only if they are not Muslim. The area was left physically divided, with many Muslim families fleeing.

Blogging for *The Times of India* in June 2020, columnist and ex-army officer Saroj Chadha noted, in the wake of the George Floyd murder in Minneapolis, that 'overzealous Indian liberals, media persons and others have been quick to equate the plight of black men in the USA with that of Muslims in India'.[82] Ironically, among Chadha's reasons why the two cases are different was that, unlike Muslims in India, Blacks in the USA are not in league with foreign powers and have never carried out what he called 'ethnic cleansing' against non-Black citizens. Thus a depth of suspicion and dislike of Muslims is revealed, even as the charge of racism is refuted. Until recently Chadha's worries would have appeared to be misplaced: in

contrast to the concerted attempts of some Dalit activists to make use of the idea of racism, antipathy to Muslims has been framed in a variety of ways – as communalism, sectarianism, and ethnic conflict – but rarely as racist. However, there are signs that the language of racism is beginning to make inroads into the debate on anti-Muslim violence.[83] These anti-racist voices often draw on the fact that Hindu nationalism has, as noted in the previous section, a heritage of racist theorization.

The threat of 'foreign' religious influences, notably Islam, was a key motif in the founding texts of Hindutva. This theme has been sustained across the decades, as has the related idea that large Muslim families are a demographic challenge to Hindu dominance. The title of U.N. Mukherji's *Hindus: A Dying Race* (1909) warned that Muslims were a multiplying, alien presence.[84] It is a demographic worry that is still heard today. Baber explains that Mukherji deployed 'existing stereotypical images of the Muslim male as particularly lustful and sexually driven' in order to 'simultaneously create and tap into a reservoir of guilt among the presumably effete Hindu male who was accused of being unable to defend his motherland and "his women"'.[85] Mukherji's writings also reflected how such fears are often laced with a kind of grim admiration. The 'superiority of the Mohammedans', Mukherji wrote, 'is entirely due to their religious revival and systematic moral training'.[86] In 1925, the militant paramilitary organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, or National Volunteer Organization) was founded to strengthen and defend Hindu culture. Today its membership has been put at about five million.[87] As the strict, hyper-masculine bearing of RSS suggests, Hindutva is not simply *anti*-Muslim: it seeks to resist by repetition, claiming for itself the manliness, single-mindedness, and discipline it associates with Islam, a process Jaffrelot refers to as 'simultaneous emulation and stigmatization'.[88] Jaffrelot has shown how Hindu nationalism has a long and mutually enforcing relationship with Islamic fundamentalism. In the 1920s, South Asian pan-Islamism 'triggered the creation', he argues, of Hindutva militancy, and again, 'in the 1980s, Islamic proselytism, which appeared in a more fundamentalist light since the Iranian revolution, fuelled a Hindu nationalist counter-mobilization'.[89]

However, the interplay of 'fundamentalisms' in India takes place on uneven terrain, with the minority Muslim population routinely 'othered' as an un-Indian presence. Baber concludes that

'in India religious markers have been deployed historically not just to demarcate ethnic boundaries but also in the long run to initiate a process of "racialization" of such differences'.[90] Many commentators argue that the boundaries between Muslim and Hindu in India are getting higher and harder. In 1996 Jaffrelot described the ideology of Hindutva as a 'racism of domination' but not 'a racism of extermination'.[91] But by 2003, in the wake of what were widely held to be politically orchestrated riots in Gujarat (involving the chief minister in Gujarat, and future prime minster of India, Narendra Modi) which left more than 1,000 dead, Jaffrelot wrote of a 'veritable ethnic cleansing'. He continued: 'Countless flyers circulated, appealing to Hindus to awake to the essence of who they were – and many did'. He quotes from some of them:

> We do not want to leave a single Muslim alive in Gujarat ... Annihilate Muslims from Bharat ... the Muslim kings forced Hindu brethren to convert and then committed atrocities against them. And this will continue to happen till Muslims are not exterminated ... Now the Hindus of the villages should join the Hindus of the cities and complete the work of annihilation of Muslims.[92]

Many anti-Hindutva voices in India have turned to labels derived from the West, such as 'fascism' and 'Islamophobia', to depict Hindu nationalism. Mahmood calls the 2020 Delhi riots 'India's Kristallnacht', and argues that 'Modi and his Hindu supremacist party BJP's strategy is to relentlessly demonise, terrorise and marginalise its Muslims to reduce them as sub-humans and redefine Hindus as the "real" Indians'.[93] Mahmood's focus on anti-Muslim violence as a political 'strategy' points to a common thread in these accounts, namely that the violence is anchored, not in ancient enmities or imported racisms, but in the way modern mass politics in India has become bound up with the 'production' of communal (and caste) identities and conflicts. In *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, Brass explains that communal riots

> have had concrete benefits for particular political organizations as well as larger political uses. Hindu-Muslim opposition, tensions, and violence have provided the principal justification and the primary source of strength for the political existence of some local political organizations in many cities and towns in north India linked to a family of militant Hindu nationalist organizations.[94]

The main political organization in this 'family' is India's largest political party, the BJP. Pointing to evidence that shows how communal violence clusters around election times, Jaffrelot argues that Hindu nationalists have 'codified' the 'ideological pattern' of Hindu resentment and 'employ it for electoral means in the course of campaigns laying the ground for the outbreak of violence':

> Their goal is to provoke such kinds of riots in order to polarise the electorate along the religious cleavage more effectively ... which generally leads the Hindu majority, with a heightened sense of Hindu identity, to vote more in favor of the BJP. This explains the correlation between the election calendar and the cycle of riots.[95]

The modernity of this project spills well beyond its instrumentality in electoral cycles. In *The God Market*, Nanda explored its economic dimensions and showed how entrepreneurial capitalism has become wrapped up in a newly assertive Hinduism, creating a nexus of consumer-spiritual opportunities.[96] Hindutva, writes Banji, 'cannibalises and harnesses the tactics and vocabularies of anti-terrorism, anti-imperialism, digitisation and development' in 'a compulsively modern manner', thus drawing together a lexicon of transformation and resistance that looks back to look forward.[97] In this angry, febrile atmosphere, identity becomes coterminous with grievance, and suspicion of Muslims is made to appear a patriotic and religious duty.

Anti-Muslim racism in Xinjiang

Since the 9/11 attacks in New York, the Chinese government has been conducting an 'anti-terrorist' campaign, focused on the Muslim population of Xinjiang province, in the country's northwest.[98] Muslims across Xinjiang, which borders a number of predominantly Muslim countries, are mostly Uighur but include other, smaller, Muslim minorities. They have been subject to mass internment, surveillance, and maltreatment. One expert on the region, Adrian Zenz, calls it 'the largest incarceration of an ethnic group, basically since the Holocaust'.[99] At the time of writing about one million Muslims are said to be imprisoned in 're-education' facilities. Although denied by the authorities, first-hand witness statements indicate that the state is enforcing a regime of pregnancy control, including sterilization and abortion of 'hundreds of thousands'.[100] Since 2004, Uighur-language schools at the secondary and elementary level have been subsumed into Chinese-language schools, severely limiting the use of the Uighur language as a medium of instruction.[101] There also appears to have been widespread destruction of mosques and a ban on burqas, veils, and 'abnormal beards'.[102] Xinjiang is also being subjected to a high-tech regime of control. In 2017 new rules required car owners in Xinjiang to install GPS devices so that their vehicle's movement could be tracked. In 2019, *The New York Times* reported on 'the first known example of a government intentionally using artificial intelligence for racial profiling' by introducing a system of 'advanced facial recognition technology' in order 'to track and control' Tibetans and Uighurs, both ethnic groups with distinctive facial features.[103]

The maltreatment of Xinjiang Muslims – who are linguistically, culturally, and, as peoples of Turkic origin, often physically distinct from the majority Han population of China – is clearly racist. The campaigns against them essentialize and target a whole community, conflating national identity, separatism, and terrorism, and representing not just Xinjiang Muslims' culture and religion but their demographic existence as a threat to the Chinese state. Enze Han, a specialist on China's border regions, explains that discrimination against the Uighur links political suspicion, economic marginalization, and cultural stereotyping:

> Because Han Chinese are more dominant in the private sector in urban areas, hiring favors Han Chinese or ethnic minorities who can speak the Chinese language well; many job advertisements explicitly state that only Han Chinese can apply. Thus Uighurs who have gone through the Uighur education system have a strong disadvantage in finding jobs in the private sector ... many Han Chinese also tend to think of Uighurs as backward, dirty, lazy, and ungrateful for the economic development brought to Xinjiang by the Han Chinese. In addition, oftentimes Han Chinese associate the Uighurs with criminal activities and consciously distance themselves from them.[104]

The enmity is frequently two-way. Many of the Han Chinese in Xinjiang are immigrants, encouraged to settle there by the government, and they are treated as unwelcome aliens by some Uighur. Enze Han reports that Uighurs 'do not hesitate to show disgust and contempt toward Han Chinese whenever possible' and that the 'mutual discrimination is cyclical and self-reinforcing'. The

division between Uighurs and Han communities extends to many areas of life, including where people live, eat, and take their leisure. The ethnic rift even applies to what time people say it is. Whilst Han adopt the unified time zone imposed on the whole country by the communist state in 1949, Uighur tend to use 'Xinjiang time', which is two hours behind 'Beijing time'. As Enze Han explains, Han people 'stubbornly stick to the Beijing time despite its inconveniences, to show their loyalty toward the Chinese state and their separation from the Uighurs'. He recalls one Han interviewee telling him '"we have our own time, they have theirs, and we do not intermingle with each other"'.[105]

The crackdown on separatism in Xinjiang (or East Turkestan as it is called by Uighur nationalists) has intensified over the past decade but has a long history. In the twentieth century two short-lived moments of independence – the Turkish Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan (1933–34) and the East Turkestan Republic of 1944 – and a succession of riots in the region attest to the enduring nature of the struggle between Chinese and 'East Turkestan' nationalism. In 1996 the Chinese state initiated a campaign called 'Strike Hard' to root out separatism. Quranic schools and religious students were targeted, leading to riots that left many dead. This campaign, like more recent ones, was directed at separatism, viewing Uighur Islamism as a vector for anti-Chinese nationalism. The long-term solution being enacted by the state is to change the demography of Xinjiang. The recent restrictions on Muslim women's reproductive rights have taken place against the background of a decades-long resettlement programme which has seen millions of Han relocated to live in Xinjiang. Whereas in the 1950s Han made up about 6 per cent of the population, today that figure is around 40 per cent.

The oppression of the Uighur has led some foreign critics to conclude that the Chinese state is Islamophobic.[106] Many of these critics suggest that Western Islamophobia, which stereotypes all Muslims as a terrorist threat, is being copied or mirrored in China. However, state repression in Xinjiang is better explained by reference to the Chinese state's conflation of separatism and Islam in Xinjiang and the specific challenge this presents to the state-sanctioned myth of a unified China. Western constructions of Islamophobia, in which a feared Muslim 'other' is stereotyped as an exotic menace, have little relevance in China. Islam has been part of China's national story for many hundreds of years. A comparison of Uighur Muslims with the largest of China's Muslim minorities, the Hui, is instructive. The Hui (who are sometimes referred to as 'Chinese Muslims') are spread across China and have long been held to be integrated into Chinese society. In 1988, Dru Gladney, an American anthropologist who has studied Hui communities across China, was moved to argue that 'the Chinese have only been harsh toward their Muslim groups when the most radical politics prevailed', concluding that China has shown 'favouritism towards minorities'.[107] The coming into being of Hui identity, facilitated by the Chinese state's interest in categorizing and incorporating 'ethnic minorities', throws into question attempts to frame the treatment of Muslims in China as a repetition or echo of Islamophobia in the West. However, the date of Gladney's remarks is significant: they were made before the situation in Xinjiang took its current dark course. Interviewed in 2014 he still insisted that the Chinese state is not, in a simple or undifferentiated way, 'anti-Islam', but he acknowledged that, in certain circumstances, it can be:

> Clearly, there are many avenues of religious expression that are unfettered in China, but when you cross these very often nebulous and shifting boundaries of what the state regards as political, then you're in dangerous territory. Obviously this is what we see in Xinjiang and in Tibet.[108]

The trajectory of anti-Muslim racism in China must be understood in the context of China. Neither the motivations nor the techniques of control that guide this trajectory can be explained by the 'copying across' of a Western lexicon. The quote from Zenz used at the start of this section, comparing the internment camps to the 'Holocaust', is itself an example of this problem. Political re-education and reform camps have been part of the Communist Party's system of control since the early 1950s, and today there are numerous such centres across China. They are sites of forced re-education and often forced labour, but they are targeted at those deemed to be subversive rather than at ethnic groups; harsh and unjust as they are, they are not extermination camps. As we saw in Chapter 2, China's long history and uneven experience of state-building have conspired to create the conditions for the intermingling of Han supremacism and a suspicion of destabilizing, unpatriotic elements. The past two decades have also seen the complex, ambivalent position of Muslims in China change as representations of Islam have become more negative and wedded

to images of dissent and unassimilable difference. Indeed, reports suggest that Hui Muslims living in Xinjiang may have been swept up into the region's internment camps, victims of new fears that construct all Muslims as potentially seditious.[109] Anti-Muslim racism in China is an unfolding story and it appears to be worsening, destabilizing centuries of co-existence and transmuting Muslims and Han into opposing ethno-racial communities.

Conclusion

> All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a White has no superiority over a Black nor a Black has any superiority over a White except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood.[110]

In 623 CE, Muhammad delivered his farewell sermon and took the opportunity to offer a message of Muslim equality. Universalist religions, like Islam, which proclaim a message of salvation for all humanity, are doctrinally anti-racist. So why is the history of religion so full of tales of discrimination, conflict, and racism? In part it is because religion is inherited: most people follow the faith of their parents and wider community. This means that ethnicity and race are mapped onto religion. When religious supremacism is added to the inheritance – with unbelievers cast as inferior or wicked – then it is easy to see why religion and racism might go hand in hand. This is an old story but what we have seen in this chapter is that it is not an unchanging or undifferentiated one but intimately woven with the emergence of different modernities. I have explored the relationship between religious intolerance and racism through three very different examples. What connects radical Islamist racism, racism and caste in India, and anti-Muslim racism in India and China is that these are all modern contexts and modern persecutions. Thus I have been tracing the emergence of radical and radicalizing 'belief systems' that have been shaped by rapid social change, nationalism, mass politics, and state-building.

I hesitate over the phrase 'belief systems' – hence the quote marks – because religion and racism tend to meet at the level of practice

rather than ideology. Today racism is publicly reviled in every quarter and even far-right groups are often careful to curate a tolerant public image. Thus, for example, I quoted earlier from Hindutva ephemera, street flyers, rather than official BJP sources, which tend to be more cautious with their language. Islamic State propagandists and leaders, although they issued open instructions to their followers to kill any and all unbelievers, were careful to portray I.S. as a multi-ethnic band of brothers.[111] We have to look at what is done rather than what is said in order to encounter the reality of religious racist intolerance or, indeed, racist anti-religious intolerance.

The past two decades have witnessed numerous religiously inspired massacres of ethno-racial communities and a number of attempted genocides, whilst in China a vast internment camp system has been constructed to imprison 'troublesome' minorities. Perhaps I am naïve, but I find it shocking that these events have occurred during my lifetime; indeed during the lifetime of the students I teach. I imagine that future generations will ask why they inspired so little reaction: how, in the age of the internet, when it was boasted that the world was at everyone's fingertips, could we live through massacres, genocide, and mass internments and remain so silent? I don't have an answer to this. All I feel certain of is that the question will be asked. Perhaps if we begin to understand these events for what they are – acts of mass racist violence – we will find a way of challenging them.

Further Reading

Laura Robson, ed. *Minorities and the Modern Arab World: New Perspectives* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016).
Religion provides the main axis of ethnic identity across the chapters of this compelling collection. It is indicative that several of the chapters deal with minorities who have, in large part, or almost in total, fled their homelands, such as the Jews of Egypt and the Chaldean Christians of Iraq.

Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience* (London: Hurst, 2015).
Jaffrelot explores, with admirable clarity, the tensions between the multi-ethnic nature of Pakistan and the rise of Islamism.

This is a scholarly and sombre account which unpacks the shifting, paradoxical relationship between state and clerical power and ethnic affiliation.

S. Thorat and Umakant, eds. *Caste, Race and Discrimination: Discourses in International Context* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2004).
Published in association with the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies in New Delhi, this is an even-handed collection that includes key texts from both sides of the debate, including a number arguing against treating casteism as racism. It also provides an excellent overview of Dalit activist perspectives and the attempts to bring the issue to the attention of the United Nations.

Angana P. Chatterji et al., eds. *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India* (London: Hurst, 2019).
A wide-ranging collection that addresses the economic, ethnic, political, and international dimensions of contemporary Hindu nationalism in India. There are a number of books that seek to dissect this phenomenon, but the fast-paced nature of events means it is useful to read one of the more recent ones.

Enze Han, 'Boundaries, Discrimination, and Interethnic Conflict in Xinjiang, China', *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 4, 2 (2010), 244–56.
Enze Han provides an ethnographically detailed portrait of tensions between Han settlers and Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. Written before the recent wave of internments, Han's paper shows how ethnic tensions in the province are negotiated in everyday life.

Dru Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (London: Hurst, 2004).
Muslims in China are diverse and ethnicized in diverse ways. Gladney's book is an important corrective against stereotypes of Chinese Islamophobia and a major study of how ethnic identities are constructed and reconstructed by the state and its subjects.

4

Political Sites of Racist Modernity: Communism, Capitalism, and Nationalism

This chapter explores the relationship between racism and communism, capitalism, and nationalism. The non-Western stories of these 'isms' cannot be accurately narrated as a set of derivative discourses.[1] I begin with communist modernity and racism in the USSR and then turn to capitalist modernity and racism in Indonesia. Both of these large, diverse, and complex societies provide many histories of racism and anti-racism. I argue that racism in the USSR took the form of ethnopolitics, in which suspicion of threats to the state merged the political with the ethnic. In Indonesia I consider the connections between capitalism and racism both for capitalism's winners and for its losers, focusing first on hostility to Chinese Indonesians, widely stereotyped as wealthy, then on the exploitation of the people and land of West Papua, the western half of the island of New Guinea, which has been part of Indonesia since 1963.

The contemporary world is defined and divided by politics and nations. In the late twentieth century, some eager scholars announced the demise of both: a supposedly 'post-political' age was imagined that was also an era in which nations and nationalism were to be superseded by transnationalism and globalization.[2] Tracing modern racisms shows that not only are nations and nationalism far from over, but the most virulently exclusionary, supremacist, and ethnically essentialized forms of nationalism – what may be called racist nationalism – are an active part of twenty-first-century politics. Politics, racism, and nationalism are rarely separable, but notions of the nation as having an ancient and blood-based lineage have a particular importance in the debate on racism in East Asia. To