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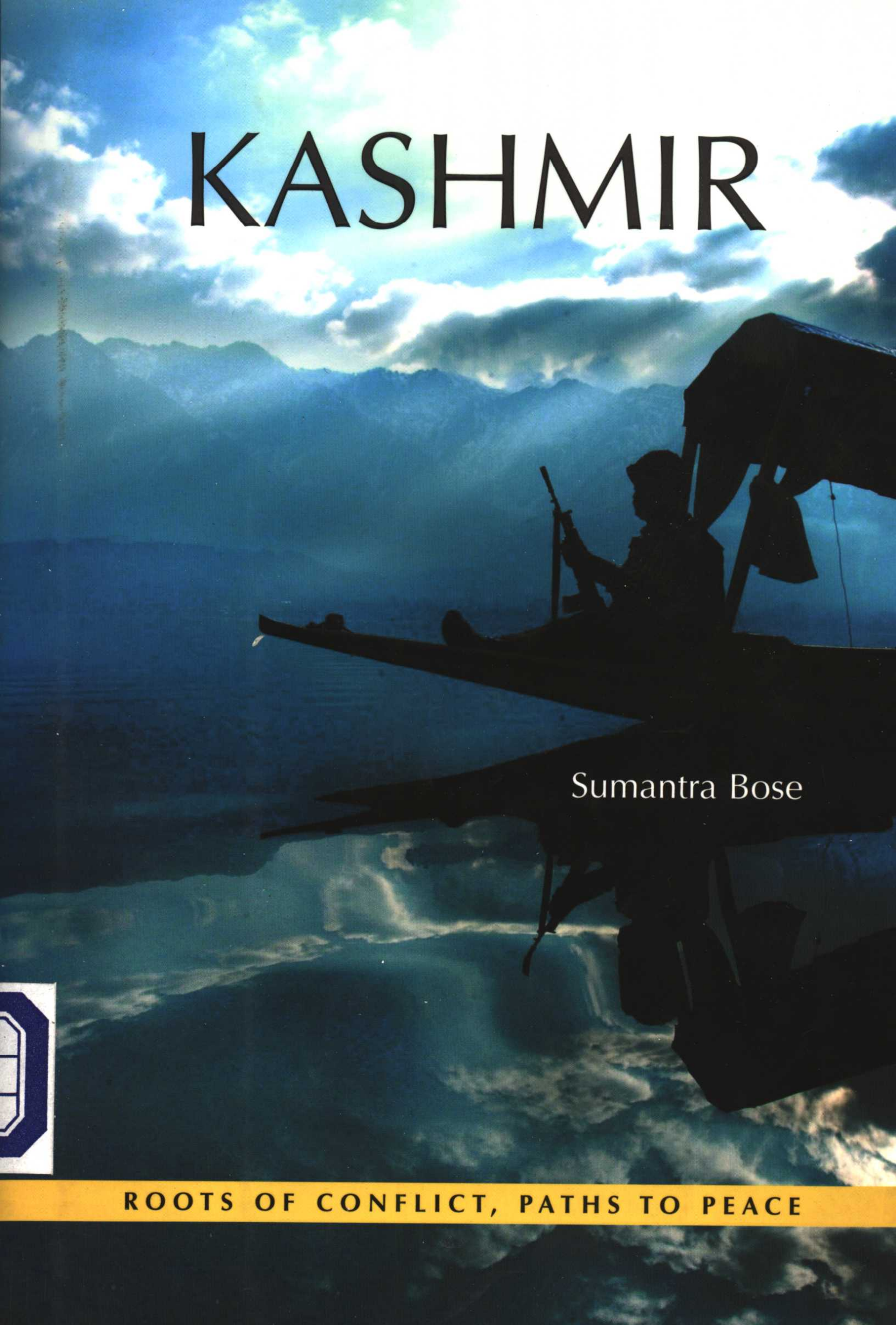

Sumantra Bose

ROOTS OF CONFLICT, PATHS TO PEACE

KASHMIR

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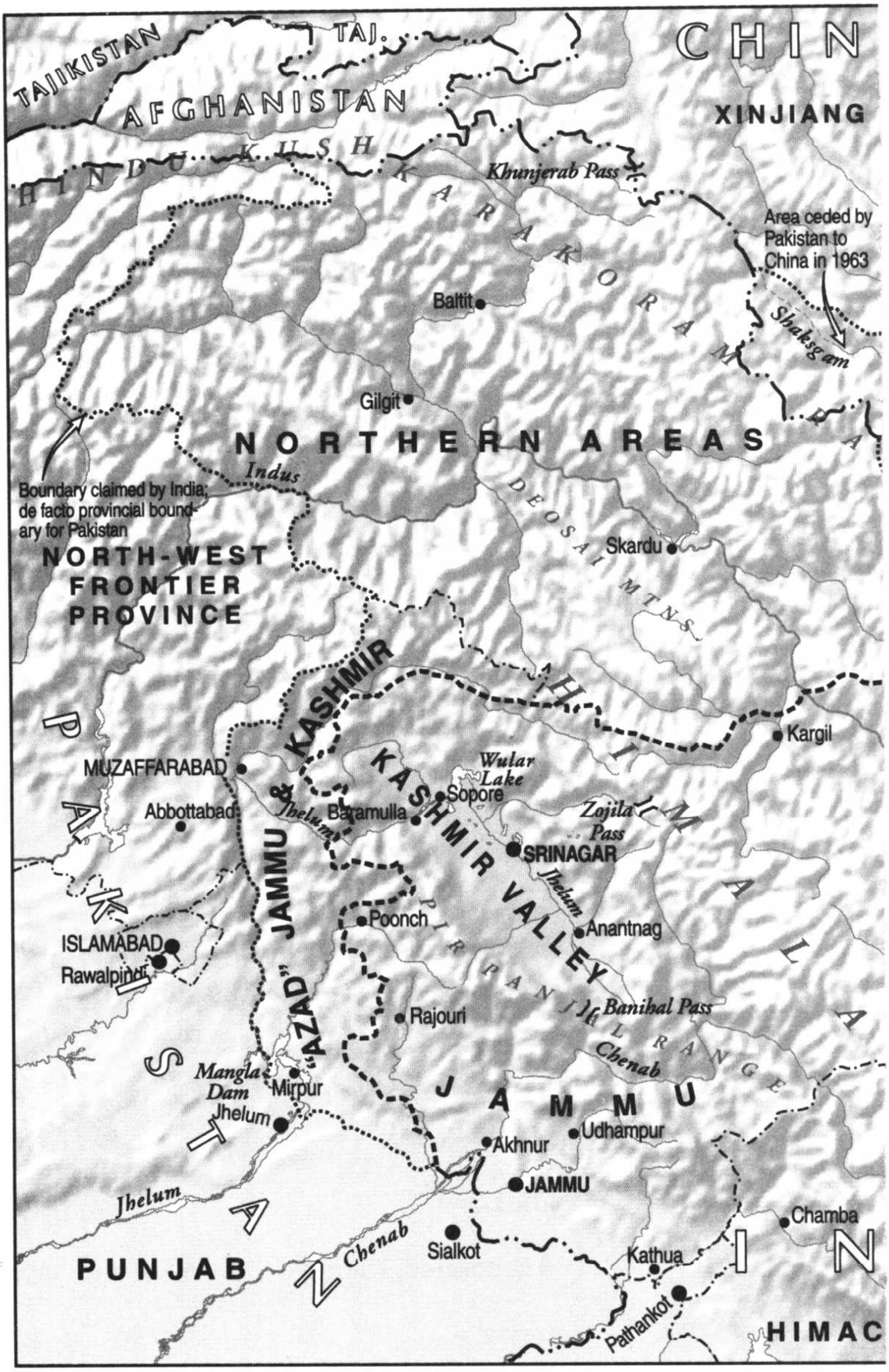
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England

2003

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Bose, Sumantra, 1968–
Kashmir : roots of conflict, paths to peace / Sumantra Bose.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-674-01173-2 (alk. paper)
1. Jammu and Kashmir (India)—History—19th century.
2. Jammu and Kashmir (India)—Politics and government—19th century.
3. India—Foreign relations—Pakistan.
4. Pakistan—Foreign relations—India.
I. Title.
DS485.K23B67 2003
954′.6—dc21
2003049919


TAJIKISTAN
TAJ.
AFGHANISTAN
CHIN
XINJIANG
HINDU KUSH
KARAKORAM
Khunjerab Pass
Area ceded by Pakistan to China in 1963
Shaksgam
Baltit
Gilgit
NORTHERN AREAS
Indus
Boundary claimed by India; de facto provincial boundary for Pakistan
NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE
DEOSAI MTNS.
Skardu
HIMALAYA
KASHMIR
Kargil
MUZAFFARABAD
Wular Lake
Sopore
Abbottabad
Jhelum
Baramulla
Zojila Pass
SRINAGAR
"AZAD" JAMMU & KASHMIR
KASHMIR VALLEY
PIR PANJAL RANGE
Poonch
Anantnag
ISLAMABAD
Rawalpindi
Rajouri
Banihal Pass
Chenab
Mangla Dam
Mirpur
Jhelum
JAMMU
Udhampur
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Chamba
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Chenab
Sialkot
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PUNJAB
Pathankot
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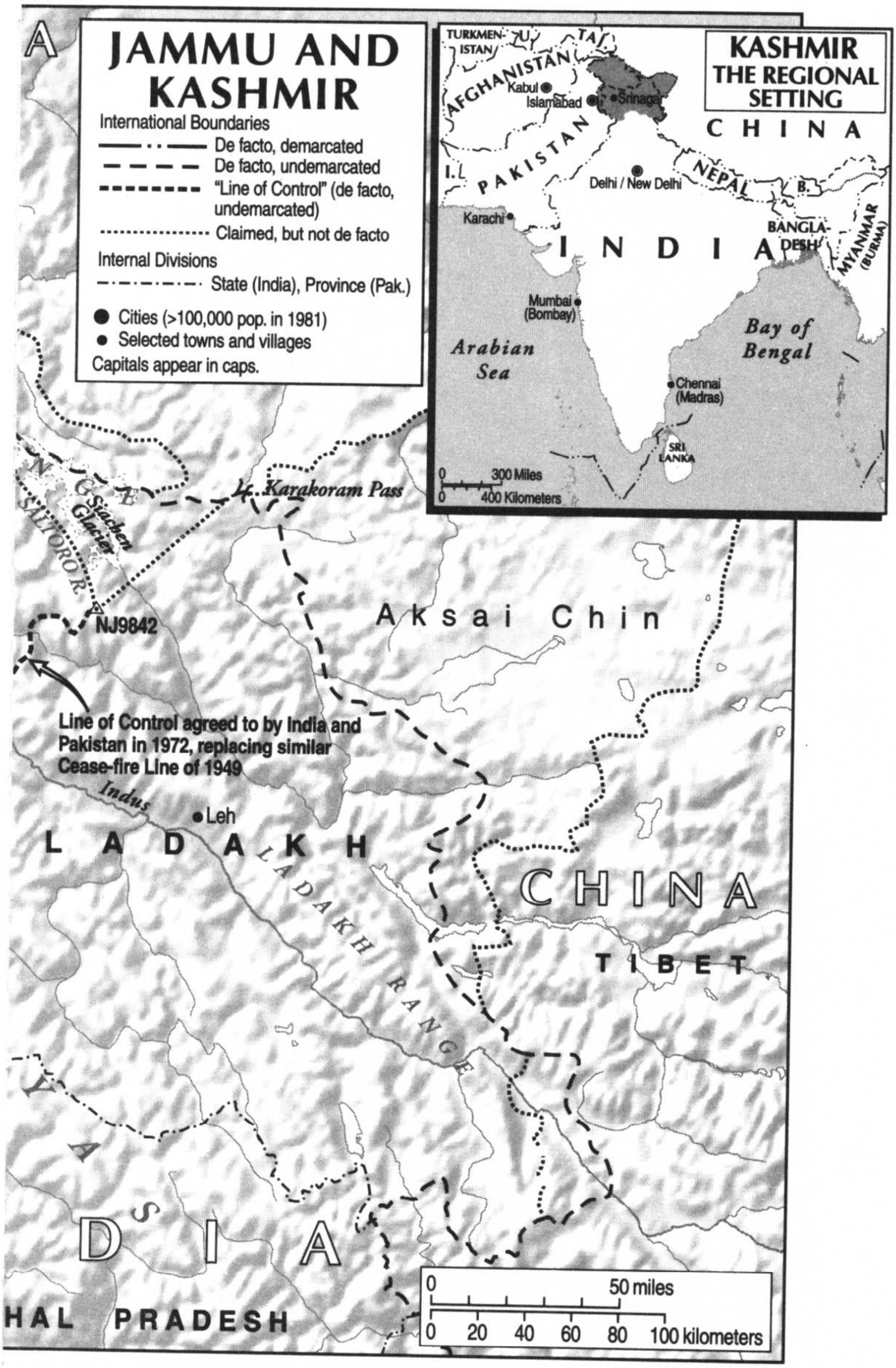
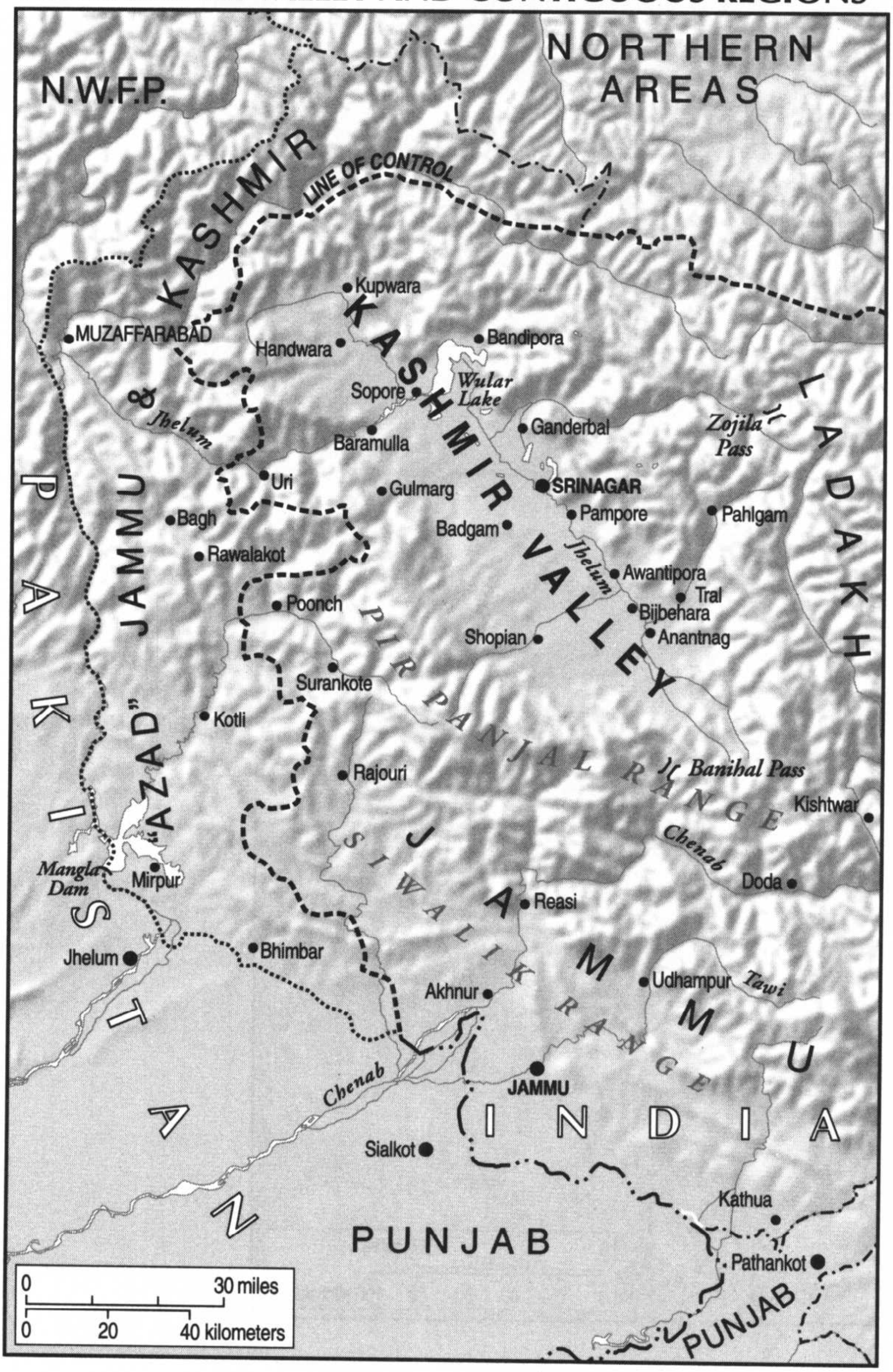


THE KASHMIR VALLEY AND CONTIGUOUS REGIONS



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INTRODUCTION

In our search for a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem, both in its external and internal dimensions, we shall not traverse solely on the beaten track of the past. Mindsets will have to be altered and historical baggage jettisoned.

—ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE,
prime minister of India, January 2002

If we want to normalize relations between Pakistan and India and bring harmony to the region, the Kashmir dispute will have to be resolved peacefully through a dialogue, on the basis of the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Solving the Kashmir issue is the joint responsibility of our two countries . . . Mr Vajpayee, . . . I take you up on this offer. Let us start talking in this spirit.

—GENERAL PERVEZ MUSHARRAF,
president of Pakistan, January 2002

KASHMIR

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DURING THE FIRST HALF of 2002, India and Pakistan mobilized their armed forces in apparent preparation for war, sparking concern in Western capitals and in the international media that a potentially catastrophic conflict was imminent between two countries armed with huge conventional arsenals and some nuclear weapons. The confrontation focused worldwide attention on the dispute between India and Pakistan over the territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), often called simply Kashmir. The dispute is as old as the two states themselves, dating back to the circumstances of their independence from Britain and the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Since the end of the first India-Pakistan war over Kashmir in January 1949, the territory has been divided into Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir (IJK, comprising the regions of the Kashmir Valley, Jammu, and Ladakh), with approximately 10 million people, and a smaller area under Pakistani control ("Azad" Jammu and Kashmir, or AJK, plus sparsely populated regions in the high Himalayas known as Pakistan's Northern Areas), with perhaps 3 million.

The dividing line between IJK and AJK–Northern Areas, which originated as a ceasefire line in 1949 and was marginally altered during India-Pakistan wars in 1965 and 1971, was renamed the Line of Control (LOC) by India-Pakistan agreement in July 1972. During the summer of 1999 a limited war between Indian and Pakistani forces occurred along a particularly mountainous stretch of the LOC after units of the Pakistani army crossed the line and occupied strategic heights on the Indian side. After two months of fierce combat and some gradual gains by India, the Pakistanis re-

luctantly withdrew after an agreement to that effect between U.S. President Bill Clinton and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.[1]

A major change differentiated 1972 from 1999, however. As a publication of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace put it in 1995: "Before 1989, India and Pakistan fought over Kashmir. Since late 1989, it is Kashmiris who have done [much of] the fighting"—and most of the dying.[2] In early 1990 a group of young men in the Kashmir Valley launched a guerrilla revolt against Indian rule under the banner of a movement calling itself the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). The JKLF's stated objective was to liberate IJK and reunite it with Pakistani Kashmir as a single independent state. The JKLF nucleus in IJK had received weapons and training from a JKLF organization located across the border in AJK, as well as from Pakistani military agencies. They were stunned by the enthusiastic popular response their makeshift insurrection received from the people of the Kashmir Valley. The militants were aware of widespread, deep-rooted grievance against India, but they were still taken by surprise by the intensity of mass support for *azaadi* (freedom), expressed in huge pro-independence demonstrations in the Valley during 1990.[3] The guerrilla war rapidly intensified, to a significant degree because of an Indian response of repression and reprisal targeted not just against armed militants but frequently also against "disloyal" civilian communities that aided and sheltered the rebels. The independentist, Muslim but secularist JKLF's dominance of the uprising yielded by 1992–1993 to the rise of a pro-Pakistan, moderate Islamist guerrilla group called Hizb-ul Mujahideen, strongly promoted by Pakistani military authorities.

The struggle continued to evolve. By the mid-1990s the intensity of local support for the insurgency had waned to some extent,

and in the second half of the decade pan-Islamist fighters, primarily from Pakistan, infiltrated into IJK in significant numbers, adding a supra-local, strongly Islamist flavor to the conflict. In the India-Pakistan wars of 1947–1948, 1965, and 1971, sizeable numbers of J&K residents had fought on the Kashmir fronts as soldiers and auxiliaries for both armies. But protracted "low-intensity" warfare in the interior of IJK between thousands of guerrillas and hundreds of thousands of Indian security forces signaled a great transformation in the military and political character of the Kashmir conflict, marking its transition from a stubborn dispute over real estate between two adversarial neighbors to a much more complex, multidimensional problem.

From 1989 to 2002, between 40,000 (official Indian estimates) and 80,000 (claimed by the Hurriyat Conference, a coalition of pro-independence and pro-Pakistan groups) civilians, guerrilla fighters, and Indian security personnel died in violence that gradually spread beyond the Kashmir Valley to affect most of Jammu, IJK's other populous region. According to Indian counterinsurgency sources, in this period, more than 4,600 security personnel were killed, along with about 13,500 civilians (the vast majority Muslims) and 15,937 "militants" (the term for guerrilla fighters) including approximately 3,000 from outside IJK, "mostly Pakistanis and some Afghans." Also in this period, 55,538 incidents of violence were recorded and Indian forces engaged in counterinsurgency operations captured around 40,000 firearms, 150,000 explosive devices, and over 6 million rounds of assorted ammunition.[4]

Statistics, even as remarkable as these, cannot adequately portray the trauma and tragedy that have overwhelmed Kashmir, once a prime tourist destination because of its temperate Himalayan climate and scenic beauty. Life in a society under daily siege is powerfully expressed in the tortured works of a new generation

of Kashmir's writers. Shakeel Shan writes about a friend who went missing in the Valley one night, abducted, in a routine occurrence, by unidentified gunmen:

> Who knows where my friend is?
> Who knows where my friend is hiding?
> Who knows whether he is scared of the dark night?
> Who knows whether he is hungry and unable to stand
> on his feet?
> Who knows whether the place where he sits is not
> damp?

Bashir Manzar writes about the fear that grips a society in the throes of protracted warfare:

> Break the pen, spill the ink, burn the paper
> Lock your lips, be silent, shhh . . .
> Say "I saw nothing" even if you did
> Or else have your eyes gouged out
> Keep humming eulogies, be silent
> It is the season of burying the truth . . .

Another young writer, who prefers to remain anonymous for his own safety, expresses himself as follows:

> I can't drink water because I feel it is mixed with the blood of young men who die up in the mountains. I can't look at the sky because it is no longer blue, it is painted red. I can't listen to the roar of the gushing stream, it reminds me of the wailing mother next to the bullet-riddled body of her only son. I can't listen to the thunder of the clouds, it reminds me of a bomb blast. I feel the green of my garden has faded, perhaps it too

> mourns. The sparrow and cuckoo are silent, perhaps
> they too are sad.

Kashmir's best-known contemporary poet, Agha Shahid Ali, who died as an expatriate in the United States in 2001, expressed a little more hope from his deathbed, in a poem dedicated to a Kashmiri Hindu friend:

> We shall meet again, in Srinagar
> By the gates of the Villa of Peace
> Our hands blossoming into fists
> Till the soldiers return the keys
> And disappear.[5]

The dual purpose of this book is to explain how the Kashmir conflict has come to present such a grave threat to South Asia's peace and to global security in the early twenty-first century, and to shed light on what can be done about this situation. I intentionally move beyond a preoccupation with the origins of the Kashmir conflict and its inter-state territorial dimension, topics that have been the focus of most literature on Kashmir over the past fifty years. I do not argue that the genesis of the conflict is unimportant, nor do I deny that the dispute between India and Pakistan over the contested territory is the crux of the problem. I do argue, however, that the contemporary Kashmir conflict—particularly the strife in IJK, the central aspect of the problem and the primary focus of this book—has much more to do with events that have unfolded in the decades *since* 1947 than with those of 1947 itself. I also argue that an adequate understanding of the Kashmir conflict must widen its focus beyond the inter-state territorial dispute to

take account of the great diversity and complexity of society and politics *within* Jammu and Kashmir.

To convey the essence and the complexity of the conflict as effectively as possible, I try (especially in Chapter 3) to tell the story from the vantage point of those on the ground in Jammu and Kashmir. To do so, I draw on my personal experience over the past decade in numerous localities and frontiers of armed conflict in the three regions of IJK, and on interviews I conducted during my visits there.

The book is structured around three key points and emphases. First, I stress that the roots of the crisis that erupted in 1989–1990 lie in a post-1947 history of denial of democratic rights and institutions to the people of J&K, particularly those of IJK. This is not simply an academic point. Reframing the Kashmir question as a challenge for *democratic* politics and statecraft implies that real and relevant methods of democratic institutionalization and conflict resolution can potentially be brought into play, and that Kashmir is not inevitably doomed to remain trapped in a zero-sum conflict of antagonistic nationalisms.

In other words, a subtly different definition of "self-determination," one that downgrades the fulfillment of national(ist) claims and destinies and upgrades the right of people to live and be governed in accordance with democratic norms, can potentially provide the space for the negotiation of an institutional design which is a compromise between rival, maximalist conceptions of self-determination. In 1929 it was observed that "the Jammu and Kashmir State is laboring under many disadvantages, with a large Mohameddan population . . . practically governed like dumb-driven cattle. There is no touch between the Government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances, and the administrative machinery itself requires overhauling from top

to bottom . . . It has at present little or no sympathy with the people's wants and grievances."[6] Thus the slogan of the first organized political movement in modern Kashmir, which emerged during the 1930s in response to this state of affairs, was "Responsible Government": government accountable to and in the interests of the citizenry. As we shall see, that agenda of institutionalizing "responsible government" remains unrealized seven decades later, and Kashmir's people have not yet made the transition from being subjects to being citizens. The only way to enable them to make this transition is to make up the democratic deficit.

My second point is one of caution and circumspection: achieving a lasting democratic solution is obviously far easier said than done. This is, first, because India and Pakistan have chosen since 1947 to make possession of Kashmir the cornerstone of their respective identities as states. Indian official ideology has claimed that India's identity as an inclusive, secular state would be grievously damaged without IJK, the only Muslim-majority unit of the Indian Union. Why retention of Kashmir, apparently by any means necessary, should be indispensable to the validation of India's tolerant, civic credentials is not clear, since nearly 150 million Muslims live in India *outside* IJK, and their status and treatment could equally serve to validate those credentials (or otherwise). Pakistan was conceived as a homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent, and from its inception Pakistani nationalism has been firmly based on the notion that Pakistan is territorially and ideologically incomplete without Kashmir. Once again, the premise itself is dubious: Pakistan's disintegration along its main ethnoregional fault line in 1971, when eastern Pakistan became Bangladesh, exposed the limitations of the concept of an overarching Pakistan. But the abiding power of both of these flawed constructions to influence minds and policy is a reality. One of the most

important Kashmiri writer-activists of the twentieth century, Prem Nath Bazaz, noted that the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir is "primarily . . . an ideological war," in which the elites of both countries have perceived foundational, nonnegotiable principles of statehood to be at stake.[7] In the maximalist versions, Kashmir is claimed to be India's *atoot ang* (integral part) and Pakistan's *shah rag* (jugular vein). A territory that has only one percent of India and Pakistan's total population has thus been transformed symbolically into the cornerstone of the nationhood of both countries.

The maximalist positions of the Indian and Pakistani ideologies are, however, only one dimension of the Kashmir problem. More than eighty years ago, C. E. Tyndale Biscoe, a British missionary worker who made a significant contribution to education in Kashmir, observed: "To write about the character of the Kashmiris is not easy, as the country of Kashmir, including the province of Jammu, is large and contains many races of people. Then again, these various countries included under the name of Kashmir are separated the one from the other by high mountain passes, so that the people of these various states differ considerably the one from the other in features, manner, customs, language, character and religion."[8]

The missionary was right about the cultural and social multiplicity of J&K. The 5 million residents of the Kashmir Valley are overwhelmingly Muslim (primarily Sunni, with a sizeable Shia minority), inheritors of a distinct regional culture built on mystic Sufi traditions, and mostly Kashmiri-speaking. But the Valley is only one of IJK's three regions, and one of five in J&K as a whole.

To the south of the Valley in IJK lies the sprawling Jammu region, inhabited by about 4.5 million people. Jammu is topographically a formidable mix of plains, low-lying hills, and rugged moun-

tain ranges, and socially a mosaic of religious, ethnic, linguistic, and caste groups. Muslims make up one-third of its population overall, but they are a majority in the three most mountainous of its six districts; Hindus, plus a noticeable sprinkling of Sikhs, dominate the less mountainous and hence more populated areas. The Valley's kind of ethnolinguistic Kashmiri community is found only in one Jammu district and pockets of two others. Most Muslims in the Jammu region belong to other ethnic and linguistic categories: Gujjars and Bakerwals, traditionally mountain pastoralists and herdsmen and speakers of Gojri and Pahadi (a dialect of Punjabi), are a very sizeable component; Rajputs (high-caste Hindu converts to Islam) are another. Jammu's overall Hindu majority is also differentiated along lines of ethnicity, language, caste, and locality. In other words, while the Jammu region as a whole is very different from the Valley, it does not have a unitary regional personality because of its internal heterogeneity.

Ladakh, the third IJK region, covers a huge land mass but is thinly populated because of its harsh terrain and climatic conditions. Even here, however, there is diversity—Buddhists of Tibetan ethnic stock dominate one of Ladakh's two districts, while the other has a strong Shia Muslim majority. Across the LOC, the Pakistani-controlled AJK districts are predominantly Punjabi-speaking and very different in sociocultural terms from the Valley.

It is very important to appreciate that J&K's *social* heterogeneity is reflected in a high degree of *political* fragmentation and complexity. The most basic political cleavage in J&K is constituted not by party loyalties but by much more fundamental fault lines—conflicting national identities and state allegiances. In IJK, three orientations of this type exist: (1) Kashmiri proto-national identity, pro-independence for Kashmir; (2) Indian national identity, pro-India; and (3) Pakistani national identity, pro-Pakistan. The first and