the review

The National

Lines of control

Like Palestine, Kashmir has served as a call to arms for countless acts of Islamist violence. Reporting from Srinigar, Basharat Peer describes life inside a rallying cry

On November 27, the second day of the attack on Mumbai, five terrorists in their mid-twenties were holding hostages in Nariman House, an orthodox Jewish centre in India's financial capital. As army commandos were preparing to launch an attack on the building to rescue the five hostages, a military helicopter circled overhead and a crowd of onlookers gathered. At about this time a populist Hindi-language news network, India TV, received a call from a terrorist inside the Jewish centre who introduced himself as Imran Babar, a 25-year-old. He spoke Urdu with a smattering of Hindi words in a Pakistani Punjabi accent; he had called to "explain why he was there."

Babar, who came from Multan in Pakistan, delivered a mostly familiar list of grievances in a combative but controlled tone. He referred to the state-aided 2002 pogrom in Gujarat, which claimed the lives of some 2000 Muslims, described the wrongful arrests and detentions of various Indian Muslims, and complained of the daily injustices that afflict Muslims in India. The words he used most frequently were *Zulm*, the Hindi and Urdu word for oppression, and *Itihaas*, the Hindi word for history.

The Mumbai terrorists claimed to be part of a previously unknown terror group called the Deccan Mujahideen, whose name suggested a "home-grown" Indian outfit. But the scale and sophistication of the audacious assault on Mumbai pointed to the involvement of one of several militant groups armed by Pakistani intelligence and created to fight against India in Kashmir; Indian authorities have since blamed Lashkar-i-Taiba, a Pakistan-based militant group that has carried out bloody attacks in Kashmir and, more recently, inside India.

I watched the video of Imran Babar's phone call on a website at my parents' house in Srinagar, the Kashmiri capital, a day after he called India TV. His voice and accent betrayed his lower-middle-class origins in Pakistani Punjab, far from the Deccan Plateau in southern India – even as he spoke of the oppression of Indian Muslims. But I was struck when he turned to Kashmir, saying: ""What was the Israeli Army chief doing in Kashmir? What is he to the Indian government? An uncle?" His voice was growing agitated and he shouted, "Was he there to teach what the Israelis do in Gaza and what they did to Bait-ul-Muqadas [the al Aqsa Mosque]?"

Here was a Punjabi terrorist who claimed to speak in the name of Kashmiris and Palestinians alike, assuming the mantle of oppressed communities to rationalise the murder of innocents in hotels and train stations. I was rattled, sitting in Srinigar, watching the loud theatre of terror drown out the complexities of life in Kashmir – watching the cause of Kashmiri independence become linked, in the mind of the world, with the deeds of jihadists in Mumbai.

Kashmir, continued on **4** ➔

TheNational

review the saloon

Art gives you wings

The Art of Can fashions a cocktail of Red Bull and art. The mixture is neither energising nor drinkable

Eyes on the prize: Michael Turda won top honours at the "Art of Can" exhibition, which asked artists to ponder one of the eternal themes — Red Bull. Courtesy Red Bull

The more one stares, the more sharply cautionary the image becomes. Teeth are bared; the eyes, wide and feverish. The skin is International Klein Blue. The whole face must measure a couple of feet from chin to hairline; it commands the visual field like a hysteric seizing you by the lapels. The caption, a cloudy Plexiglas tablet which manages to look somehow holographic, says: *Redbullized*, by Hind Almari Maitha Demithan. And indeed, nothing could better evoke the throb of clammy panic produced by actually drinking Red Bull – that queasy overload of sugar, caffeine and synthesised bullbile extract which powers perhaps a billion overdue university essay crises a year. To this extent, *Redbullized* is a triumph: the essence of the drink, captured on canvas.

I'm at Galleria in the Mall of the Emirates for Dubai's second The Art of Can exhibition. This, for the uninitiated, is an art prize devoted to the glorification of an energy drink. As even Dalal Harb, Red Bull's UAE communications manager, concedes, "the connection between the work of art and Red Bull, as an energy drink – maybe it's not that obvious." An odd event, to be sure (I am bathed in silver light and surrounded, to my surprised and sartorial disadvantage, by hired sylphs in evening-gowns), and no less so for being duplicated in dozens of cities around the globe. There's an Art of Can in Miami, another in Salzberg: uncanny doppelgangers of more august, establishment art gatherings. One might suspect some satirical intent if The Art of Can weren't everywhere else as well. From Austria to New Zealand, aspiring artists are cutting and crimping the signature blue cans, dreaming up variations on those heraldic butting steers and generally sending their imaginations aloft on hyper-stimulated pinions. And here's the really clever part: to enter the contest, you need to produce a piece that chimes with the Red Bull brand. It would appear that the company has found a free and inexhaustible source of advertising concepts. Fiendish, no?

The supply of ideas showed no sign of drying up in Dubai, at any rate. There were 122 pieces on show this year, a remarkable haul that becomes still more striking when you consider the prizes up for grabs. Even the high-minded ADACH has offered a Range Rover and a TV appearance to the winner of its forthcoming Nabati poetry contest. Yet what did Red Bull have to stump up for its 122 original artworks? The first prize is a choice between a week's worth of exhibition space in the UAE or a workshop with an international artist. No cash, no luxury goods. The offer touches the contestants in their most vulnerable spot: their creative aspirations. One feels instinctively protective towards them.

The artwork provokes similar sentiments. It ranges from the ingenious through the workmanlike to the possibly insane. There's an inevitable crop of bulls, winged animals and macho critters – scorpions, legendary monsters and the like. One piece titled *Passing Through Solids* consists of a shop mannequin in a beige denim suit; Red Bull cans are, for no obvious reason beside the terms of the contest itself, poking through huge eyelets in its clothing. In *Tribal Red Bull*, a pygmy figurine fashioned from reclaimed aluminium sits on the ground in a grubby headband and loincloth, a drink can by its side; it looks utterly dejected. One doesn't like to look too closely at *Completing Time and Space*, a wall-mounted figurative sculpture so concertedly horrific it could have sprung from a Clive Barker novel.

There's little doubt about who belongs on the podium, at least. Myke Turda, who carries the contest, is both the judges' and the popular favourite. His enigmatically titled gouache effort, *I Am Legend*, depicts a white-clad horde of men scrambling to catch a floating Red Bull can. Its intricacy and confident draughtsmanship announce Turda as a lifelong comics aficionado, though something about the stylised way his figures are struggling also gives the piece an odd air of socialist realism. Second prize goes to Rodel Noja, whose *Meet the Myth* is a can sculpture of a dragon climbing onto the back of an armoured centaur; its execution is undeniably deft, which doesn't make it any less bewildering. And in third place is Jerry Maninang, whose cutaway relief image of lovers, stars, skyscrapers, cassettes and trees all bursting out of a Red Bull can recalls in its psychedelic exuberance one of Alan Aldridge's 1960s record covers for The Who.

Grist for conspiracy theorists is supplied by the fact that all three winners are members of Guhit Pinoy, a UAE-based art collective headed by none other than Turda, a 37-year old graphic designer based in Abu Dhabi. Yet the explanation for their "sweep", as Turda calls it with pride, is simple enough. He ran a three-line whip on the contest; Guhit Pinoy swamped the pool of submissions. When I spoke to him a couple of days after his victory, he hadn't made his mind up about the prize but said he was leaning towards the exhibition. That's the spirit, I thought, ride Red Bull for all the publicity they're worth and do it on your own terms. Just one question: does Turda have enough suitable art to show? "I still need to fix some of my works," he says. "I think since Red Bull is sponsoring this exhibit I need put some funky touches in my painting... make it more modern and, you know, trendy."

Ah well. I'm sure he'll do his sponsors proud.

★ **Ed Lake**

It would appear that the company has found a free and inexhaustible source of advertising concepts

Work at the exhibition ranged from the ingenious to the workmanlike to the possibly insane. Pawan Singh / The National

Read once if you're busy

A YouTube sensation takes the misery out of driving in Dubai

Signs posted around Dubai had drivers flashing their lights and driving twice round roundabouts. Pawan Singh / The National

Among the estimated 65,000 videos added to YouTube on November 5, 2007 was a three-minute, fifty-two-second film called *Go around twice if you're happy*. It opens in a carpentry shop. Indian workers are assembling signs. Next we're in a grocery store, where some off-camera person asks the cashier: "Do you have any rice bags? We need to make some sand bags." Then one of the signs is placed by the side of the road in the residential outskirts of Dubai.

At this point, we still don't know what the signs say. Judging by the soft light, it's late afternoon. A deconstructed, instrumental version of *Mack the Knife* (it sounds more like circus music than a pop standard) starts playing in the background, and cars passing the sign start honking.

After a while, the sign's text is revealed: "beep your horn if you're in love" (written in English and Arabic). The rest of the short repeats this conceit. Passing cars flash their lights, then the sign is displayed: "flash your lights if you're broke". Elsewhere in Dubai, hazard lights blink, and the sign is unveiled: "turn on your hazzards (sic) if you'd rather be in bed". Windscreen wipers move back and forth. Cut to the sign: "flick your wipers on if you're feeling it".

Just as the premise starts to wear thin, *Go around twice* delivers its titular *piece de resistance*. The last sign is placed at a roundabout. A silver 4x4 goes around twice; a red Jeep goes around twice; a taxi goes around twice; the chipper, wheezy *Mack the Knife* becomes appreciably more cacophonous. We know, of course, what the sign says, but the reveal still prompts a smile. Better yet: afterwards, we witness a large, dusty construction vehicle making the happy circuit. Halfway through his second lap, he is joined by what appears to be an Aramex courier on motorcycle, who makes three laps before heading back down the road from whence he came, the last strains of the music ushering him out.

For the first few weeks after it was posted, *Go around twice* received a slightly above-average trickle of visitors: random stumblers-upon and friends of the creators rated it highly and recommended it to their friends. Then after a few weeks it was made a selected video on YouTube's main page. This drew visitors by the thousands, earned links from blogs and so on. Today it has been viewed over 900,000 times, "favorited" 4,579 times and commented on 2,718 times.

Most comments were simple congratulations of the sort that must account for 50 per cent of the text posted on YouTube: "very good!!!", "this was so sweet!!", "that is sooo kool", "LOVELY!!!"). Some were odd ("I usually go around traffic circles three times or more. I think once I did five... it was worth it"), others almost wholly tangential. A small debate broke out as to whether the construction vehicle was a bulldozer, a loader, an excavator, or a backhoe. Whatever it was, user OhThePain111 questioned the motives of its driver: "The construction worker was probably getting paid by the hour anyway," he noted. "And if I was that taxi driver hell yes I'd go around twice."

Go around twice ends with just one screen informing us that the film was written and directed by Vincent Fichard and Matthew Jones, who used the handle "vincentandmatthew" to post it to YouTube. The only other video on their user page is an anti-litter short for Greenpeace. Several weeks ago, I registered for a YouTube account just to send them a message, but no one ever responded. Eventually I tracked down Fichard, a Frenchman in his thirties, through the eerie wonder of Facebook, and we set a date to talk.

He told me that he and Jones met at FP7, an advertising company based in Dubai (Jones has since returned to his native London). "I was fed up with Europe, with France, and I've been here four years now," Fichard explained. The duo made *Go around twice* over one weekend as an entry for last year's Mini (yes, like the car) Film Festival in Dubai. "After the YouTube response," he recalled, "we thought we were going to win for sure, but we didn't even make the shortlist.

I asked him about the video's suggestion that driving in Dubai might be, with the right frame of mind, more than an annoying daily grind: an expressive human act. "I don't know," he responds. "I used to think it was funny, the driving here, but now I'm kind of scared. I worry. I try my best, but it's getting too hard on my nerves. I think about my wife crashing.

"But maybe I'll get used to it. Dubai is interesting. You change your opinion every year. My first year, I didn't get it. For some reason my second and third year were good, then I met my wife. Now I'm thinking of moving. It's complicated. I'm gonna give myself another year."

★ **Peter C Baker**

review the week

!!! the big idea

A fund of one's own: Nicolas Sarkozy, shown here speaking in Abu Dhabi, has just started a French sovereign wealth fund — with a defensive twist. Karim Sahib / AFP

Border patrol

Clay Risen examines France's backwards sovereign wealth fund

Mention the term "sovereign wealth fund" in Washington or London, and the typical image you evoke is of a hushed, hypermodern office full of be-robed Gulf State bankers moving huge sums of money into offshore investments – and away from their domestic economies, where, until recently at least, such monies posed a real risk of sparking rampant inflation.

Now the French President Nicolas Sarkozy is trying to flip that image on its head by importing and revamping the sovereign wealth fund model – and he's pushing the concept in a curiously defensive direction. In an October 21 speech before the European Parliament, Sarkozy urged his continental neighbours to create their "own sovereign wealth funds, which would make it possible to defend national interests and European interests."

Sarkozy didn't go into details in his speech, but a few days later, the French president ordered the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (CDC), a government-led investment agency, to create a new National Strategic Investment Fund, which will take short- and long-term stakes in French companies. And while he didn't say how large the fund would be, some French media outlets were reporting it to tally up to €100 billion.

"I will not be the French president who wakes up in six months time to see that French industrial groups have passed into other hands," Sarkozy told a meeting of business leaders in the French city of Annecy. Europe, he said, "mustn't be naive, mustn't leave its companies at the mercy of all predators, mustn't be the only one not to defend its interests, not to protect its citizens."

Sarkozy's fear of foreign capital is nothing new. From Abu Dhabi's $7.5 billion stake in Citigroup to Qatar's stake in Barclays, Western publics have assumed that such ventures constitute hostile takeovers of American and European economies by Gulf states. Sarkozy's plan just takes that fear to its logical extreme: crowd out sovereign wealth funds by creating your own.

Needless to say, Sarkozy's scheme is a far cry from the traditional model followed by Qatar or Singapore; rather than investing abroad, it invests at home, and its goal is not growth but industrial protectionism – a "sovereign wealth shield," as Forbes put it. While France's fund is still the first of its kind, at least one nation, Turkey, is considering following its lead. This sets a dangerous precedent for European leaders quavering over the coming economic hurricane. Rather than providing an economic bulwark, the Sarkozy model, should it spread, will only make a global recovery more difficult.

The National Strategic Investment Fund, which France plans to have in operation by year's end, shows how easily a simple idea can be distorted to fit political ends. Traditionally structured sovereign wealth funds are investment vehicles designed to put a country's coffers to good use – preferably in stable foreign assets like US treasury bills. That way the money can grow at a predictable rate while reducing the inflation risk that large pots of money can pose to fast-growing, smaller economies like those found in the Gulf.

In recent years, of course, some sovereign wealth funds have taken on higher risks by investing in the private sector, buying stakes in private equity firms and the banking sector across Europe and the United States. (Ironically, Sarkozy's warning against encroaching foreign funds comes at a time when, according to Morgan Stanley, losses in the financial sector, combined with slower growth at home, are making many funds wary of investing abroad.)

Despite fear-mongering in the West, such investments were never really bids at gaining control, but were rather attempts to find higher growth rates than those available through T-bills – though even today, foreign direct investment by sovereign wealth funds accounts for just one per cent of their total holdings.

For many sovereign wealth fund managers, concentrated private-sector holdings are downright unattractive, because such investment can have a distorting effect that impedes the search for consistent, safe returns. Indeed, the sovereign wealth fund model is conservative at heart: eschew unnecessary risks and tread as lightly as possible (and not just for financial reasons – fund managers are fully aware of the political risk they run in buying stakes in Western firms); take long-term positions in solid assets; and take advantage of the interconnected global economy to spread investments around, thereby minimising risk posed by regional tensions or economic slides.

Sarkozy reverses this model, though it's not clear he understands his departure from form. In a speech last month in Argonay, France, he said: "What the oil producers do, what the Chinese do, what the Russians do, there is no reason why France should not do." But in his Annecy speech, he said that the National Strategic Investment Fund will look inward, not out, investing large stakes, often for short periods, in French firms at risk of being purchased by foreign "predators".

> ***What the oil producers do, what the Chinese do, what the Russians do, there is no reason why France should not do***
> *Nicolas Sarkozy*

To an extent, this is what the CDC already does. Founded in 1816, it was designed to help France recover from the disastrous Napoleonic wars by investing government funds in public infrastructure projects. It later expanded to administering savings deposits and pension funds, offering insurance and providing equity financing for small businesses. Today the €60 billion (Dh283 billion) office is one of the largest players in the French stock market.

The CDC's role as the nation's super-bank has often run up against pressure to use the money for political ends – by buying protective stakes in "national champions" and other strategically important companies at risk of foreign acquisition, or simply to shore up the economy by taking positions in weakening firms. It usually co-operates – most recently it put €2 billion (Dh9.4 billion) into Dexia, the struggling Franco-Belgian bank.

But Sarkozy wanted something "more active, more offensive, more mobile" than the CDC, he said at Annecy, and so he created the National Strategic Investment Fund to finance "innovative and bold industrial projects."

That sounds great, but that's not all the president has in mind. Sarkozy has also said he wants to create a structure that could emulate Paris's 2004 intervention to prevent the purchase of the French engineering company Alstom by Germany's Siemens. Of course, the Alstom rescue runs directly counter to the borderless regime of global finance in which traditional sovereign wealth funds operate. In short, for political and security reasons, the French put up public funds to stop the market from doing its work.

The Alstom intervention was supposed to be an emergency action. But Sarkozy's fund institutionalises the government's capacity to block purchases by foreign firms, presumably at the whim of the French president and his advisers.

To be fair, the CDC head Augustin de Romanet de Beaune told the Financial Times, "If the sovereign funds of China, Singapore and the Middle East want to come and invest with us, to become co-investors, they are welcome." But such openness runs counter to the spirit of Sarkozy's own remarks, which imply that he sees any large foreign presence in the French economy as a threat to national security.

That, by any definition, is protectionism – precisely what the global economy does not need right now. For one, such talk draws a political line in the sand, raising fears of "foreign capital" at a time when international co-operation is vital. In much the same way that the 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act in the United States led to reciprocal barriers going up across Europe and an almost immediate worsening of the global economic situation, Sarkozy-style sovereign wealth funds could lead to cascading restrictions on foreign direct investment.

Second, Sarkozy's model has the potential to prop up firms that could benefit greatly from new ownership. Weak companies are weak for a reason, and if domestic investors are unwilling or unable to step in, why shouldn't foreign firms do so? A central premise of international finance is that the global economy benefits when capital is able to move across borders in search of the most efficient investments. Sarkozy's inverted sovereign wealth fund erects an enormous roadblock to such movement.

And third, the French model stands to create a politically charged investment environment fraught with intense lobbying pressure for the government to extend protection to (or withdraw protection from) companies or entire industries.

France is still the only European country to establish a sovereign wealth fund, though European Commission President José Manuel Barroso has called the plan "extremely interesting." It might not be long before others follow France's lead. After all, the underlying sentiment – that foreign (particularly extracontinental) capital is anathema to domestic economies – is a theme that has arisen repeatedly across Europe. In 2005, Germany's Social Democrats demonised foreign private equity investors as "locusts" and sought heavy restrictions.

More recently, in October Italy's centre-right government announced it was creating rules to limit sovereign-wealth-fund investment and even to create a two-tiered system of acceptable and unacceptable national funds. And in a recent poll by Germany's *Stern*, a majority of respondents in that country said they would be willing to see the government take stakes in strategic industries like utilities and banks to block foreign acquisition.

The arbitrary distinction between domestic and foreign capital highlights the real problem with Sarkozy's plan: it is motivated not by economic or even security concerns, but by the purely symbolic threat of French companies being owned by anyone other than the French. That's no way to run a modern global economy, and no way to dig out of a global recession.

Clay Risen is the managing editor of Democracy: A Journal of Ideas and the author of the forthcoming A Nation on Fire: America in the Wake of the King Assassination.

the tangled web

Yes, we have no *monedas*!

Welcome to the world's strangest economic crisis. Argentina in general – and Buenos Aires in particular – is presently in the grip of a *moneda*, or coin, shortage. Everywhere you look, there are signs reading, "*NO HAY MONEDAS*." As a result, vendors here are more likely to decline to sell you something than to cough up any of their increasingly precious coins in change. I've tried to buy a two-peso candy bar with a five-peso note only to be refused, suggesting that the two-peso sale is worth less to the vendor than the one-peso coin he would be forced to give me in change. When my wife went to buy a 10-trip subway pass, which retails for nine pesos, she offered a 20-peso note and received 12 pesos in bills as change. This is commonplace—a daily, if not hourly, occurrence. It's taken for granted that the peso coin is more valuable than the two-peso note.

No one can say what's causing this absurd situation. The government accuses Argentines of hoarding coins, which is true, at least to some extent. When even the most insignificant purchase requires the same order of planning and precision as a long-range missile strike, you can hardly blame people for keeping a jar of *monedas* safe at home. The people, in turn, fault the government for not minting enough coins. In fact, the nation's central bank has produced a record number of *monedas* this year, and the problem has gotten even worse. Everyone blames the bus companies, whose buses accept only *monedas*. (Buenos Aires' 140-plus bus routes are run by a number of separate, private companies.) These companies, exploiting a loophole in the law, run side businesses that will exchange clients' bills for *monedas* for a three per cent service fee. This is legal, but the business community also routinely complains of being forced into the clutches of a thriving *moneda* black market – run by the local mob, or the bus companies, or both – in which coins sell for a premium of between five per cent and 10 per cent. The bus companies steadfastly deny any involvement in this racket, but their claims were undercut by the discovery of a hoard of 13 million coins, amounting to five million pesos, in one company's warehouse this October.

Joe Keohane
Slate
slate.com

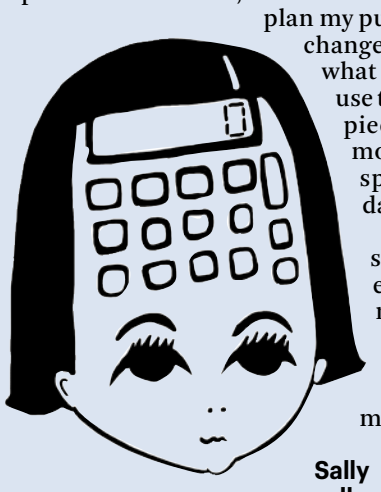
Calculating

And now, I long for a purse full of coins. If me and C don't have *monedas* then we can't take the bus or do our laundry in the apartment block machines. Every morning we check to make sure he has the coins to get to work, and home again. We decide how we will each travel that day, how many buses we will need to catch, whether we can use the drier as well as the washing machine this week. We make plans to try and get more coins for the next day. We compete to see who can get the most.

I am sure that this sounds ridiculous to anyone who hasn't tried to live in Buenos Aires – "What do you mean you can't get coins?" Friends who visit temporarily, seem to enjoy the challenge. And I am happy that they do: the best gift they can give me is a pocketful of change when they leave. But when you have to play the *monedas* game every single day it gets a bit stressful. It ain't funny when you're trying to get home from work in the dark or in the rain and the only way to take a bus is to first find a kiosk where you can buy some sweet (that you don't want) with a $2 note and get one peso in change... you are likely to be turned down repeatedly.

And so I am forced to perfect my convincing, "*No, no tengo monedas*," along with every other shopper I know.

Sometimes I will own up to having 20 centavos if I might land a peso coin in return, but that is as far as my 'honesty' goes. I will plan my purchases so that the total means change that clinks. I will even work out what I must buy to be able to actually use the washing machine: 50 centavo pieces will not do. And after some months of this, I am getting rather spiffy at mental arithmetic and dare I say it, at lying.



So what with the *monedas* mission, our search for the best prices, plus the quest to discover "the most delicious in the barrio", our little shopping trips are our daily mind gym workout.

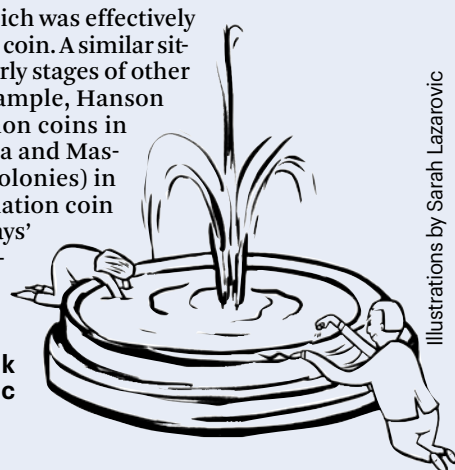
We calculate. And I become more calculating.

Sally
sallycat.wordpress.com

The problem of small change in early Argentina

In terms of the relative amounts of low-denomination coins that were minted in Potos, Tandeter reports that, in the mid-1700s, 85 per cent of the minting was done in *plata doble* (ie, coins of four reals and higher). By the same token, Romano (1998, 117) explains that most of the coins minted in the Spanish colonies in America during the 18th century were of high denomination, with the eight-real (peso) pieces amounting to at least 95 per cent of the annual issues of silver coins both in Mexico and in Peru.

Dargent Chamot reports the reluctance of the Superintendent of the mint of Potos in 1784 to issue large quantities of *cuartillos*, considering them too costly to produce. In general, *cuartillos* were issued in very limited amounts, and only later in the period (in Potos, starting only in 1794). One way to get an idea of the high purchasing power of the denomination structure that was predominant in the region is to compare the value of silver coins with the level of nominal wages for unskilled rural workers. For example, at the time, a slave in the rural areas near Buenos Aires would normally receive an allowance of one real per week to buy "soap and tobacco." A free rural seasonal worker (a peon) had an average wage of around four pesos per month (although monthly wages fluctuated significantly across workers, from two to seven pesos). This monthly wage implied a daily wage of around one-and-a-half reals that amounted to three coins of half real, which was effectively the smallest denomination coin. A similar situation took place in the early stages of other monetary systems. For example, Hanson reports that, of the common coins in circulation in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts (both British colonies) in 1742, the lowest-denomination coin represented about three days' wages for an unskilled labourer at the time.



Illustrations by Sarah Lazarovic

Huberto Ennis
The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond's Economic Quarterly
richmondfed.org

the review

40

Per cent of the Indian prison population that is Muslim. Muslims make up 11 per cent of the country's population

Indian soldiers question a rickshaw driver carrying a passenger to hospital in Srinagar on August 26. Tauseef Mustafa / AFP

Bashir Ahmed Bhat, an Indian Kashmiri Muslim, at a hospital in Srinagar on December 1. Tauseef Mustafa / AFP

This summer there dawned a realisation that non-violent politics could help Kashmir achieve far more than insurgency had accomplished

➔ **Kashmir,** continued from **1**

The direct linkage of Kashmir and Palestine – two occupied territories, open wounds that sit side-by-side in the minds of those driven to violent jihad – was jarring. In the West Bank and Gaza, my Palestinian friends tell me, Kashmir is a distant, vague place of discontent. And in Kashmir, there is little talk of Palestine, though one might find the works of Edward Said and a few other Palestinian writers in bookstores.

But the September visit of Avi Mizrahi – the chief of ground forces in the Israeli army – to Kashmir, to which Babar referred in his call from Nariman House, made the front pages of all Kashmiri and Pakistani newspapers. India and Israel have shared defence co-operation since diplomatic relations between New Delhi and Tel Aviv were established in 1992. The ties have become stronger in recent times, and India has become the largest purchaser of Israeli arms, spending some $5 billion (Dh18.4 billion) since 2000. Indian forces use Israeli unmanned aerial vehicles for intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance, particularly in Kashmir.

To Pakistan-based Islamist terror groups, such co-operation is further evidence of a conspiracy against Muslims – a view on full display in a fiery speech delivered in August by the founder and leader of Lashkar-i-Taiba, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, a middle-aged former university professor who sports brown-tinted glasses and a henna-dyed beard. In his address at al Qudsea mosque in Lahore, Saeed, the most forceful proponent of a jihad for the liberation of Kashmir – and against "all infidel forces" – began with mention of the "Jewish oppression" of Palestinian Muslims and exhorted Muslims to battle against the American and Nato forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province.

But for South Asian jihadists like Saeed, my homeland remains the paramount cause, the rallying cry for holy war. For more than half an hour in his August address, now visible on YouTube, Saeed spoke of Kashmir, his voice heated with passion. "Kashmiris walk towards mosques and they are fired upon, bodies fall on streets. The Indian soldiers have closed down the grand mosque of Srinagar. Pakistan has forsaken them. Muslims on this side of the line of control [the de facto border separating Indian and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir] have to stand up and fight for your Muslim brothers in Kashmir. We will help them. If we have to sacrifice not 5,000, but 50,000 men, we will. And the brutes in Islamabad don't realise it. How can you be so insensitive anymore?"

Journalists carry the Associated Press photographer Mukhtar Khan to a hospital in Srinagar after he was beaten by police on Sunday. Rouf Bhat / AFP

Kashmiri Muslim protesters hurl stones at Indian police during a protest in Srinagar on September 9. Rouf Bhat / AFP

Political discontent in Kashmir dates back to the partition of India and Pakistan. The agreement of accession to India signed by Hari Singh, the Hindu maharaja of the majority-Muslim state, provided for a measure of Kashmiri autonomy that has since been steadily eroded as India extended its control over Kashmir, putting Kashmiri leaders in prison and installing puppet administrators. Two wars, several insurgencies and countless political manoeuvres have failed to settle the issue of "ownership" in Kashmir, and beginning in the mid-1990s pro-Pakistan militant groups have come to the forefront of the rebellion against Indian rule, sidelining secular Kashmiri separatist groups who long ago laid down their arms. Peace talks between India and Pakistan, ongoing since 2004, have made little progress, and the conflict in Kashmir has now claimed some 70,000 lives, many of them civilians – and inspired innumerable acts of violence beyond Kashmiri borders.

India has traditionally seen Kashmir as an "integral part" of its territory, and long refused to even consider independence, though Indian leaders have occasionally spoken of granting more autonomy to the province, with few results. For most Indians, Kashmir remains the "crown of the country", a place where Bollywood movies were filmed and Indian tourists went on summer holidays, at least until the armed rebellion broke out in 1990.

The official Indian position, somewhat ironically, sees the possession of the Muslim-majority state as an affirmation of Indian secular pluralism – an implicit rebuttal to the two-nation theory that held Hindus and Muslims could not live together and led to the bloody partition of British India and the formation of Pakistan.

Indian rule in Kashmir, however, has displayed few traces of such high-flown idealism. Violence in Kashmir has decreased since 2003 – Kashmir police estimate there are now fewer than 500 active militants in the province – and tourists from India have returned, but the alienation of Kashmiris has not diminished, even though India had come to believe that the province had been "pacified". This summer a dispute erupted after the state government agreed to transfer 100 acres of land around a pilgrimage site in Kashmir – a cave containing a phallic ice-formation said to be a manifestation of Shiva – to a Hindu trust. The incident triggered months of protests that quickly evolved into a mass mobilisation in favour of independence from India, with hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris taking to the streets between mid-July and mid-September.

What was most startling was that these protests were peaceful. Not a single bullet was fired on the Indian soldiers, which made the Islamist militants who have fought Indian forces for much of the past decade appear suddenly irrelevant. Kashmir, it seemed, had made an overwhelming transition from insurgent violence to Gandhian non-violent protest. But the Indian police responded the only way they knew how, attempting to disperse the protests with escalating violence.

Between August 11 – when a senior separatist leader, Sheikh Aziz, was killed in northern Kashmir while leading a protest – and mid-September, the police opened fire on and killed as many as 50 protesters and injured more than 700 in scores of incidents in Srinagar, the towns of Baramulla and Bandipora and in various villages. Non-violent separatist leaders were placed under house arrest. By the time I flew home to Kashmir from New York in the middle of September, Srinagar was silent and sullen, hunched like a wildcat. Indian paramilitaries and police were spread across one of the world's most militarised cities, armed with automatic rifles and tear gas guns and edgy in their concrete bunkers and on street corners. One afternoon after I arrived home, I watched a few thousand Kashmiris stand on the streets near the city centre, facing the paramilitaries and police, and chant for an hour: "We Want Freedom! Go India! Go!" Nobody threw a stone or tried to break the barriers.

Kashmir has seen much death and violence in the last two decades, and the restraint I saw that afternoon was striking. I thought back to the protests in 1990 that followed India's assumption of direct control over Kashmir and its removal of the state government: then, too, people took to the streets peacefully, and their protests were put down by violence. Between 50 and 100 Kashmiri civilians were killed at Srinigar's Gawakadal bridge in January 1990 when police opened fire on a march, and some 300 protesters died in that month alone. Many young men I had interviewed over the years pointed directly to these killings to explain their decision to join the militant

the 5

Per cent of Indian government employees that are Muslim

An Indian soldier stands guard as voters in Jammu and Kashmir wait in line at a polling station along the Line of Control on November 23. AFP

groups that escalated the conflict in the years to come.

This summer there dawned a realisation that non-violent politics could help Kashmir achieve far more than insurgency had accomplished: India had the resources and the might to put down any number of insurgents, but could not be blind to the political costs that came with images of unarmed protesters sent to hospital by Indian police.

It was to SMHS hospital in Srinigar that the wounded were taken by the score. The hospital complex, a series of caramel concrete blocks, is surrounded by old buildings with rusted tin roofs and scores of pharmacies; inside, a constant roar of cars and buses droning past and auto rickshaws honking flows from the adjacent road. The casualty ward has a strong phenyl smell, and the cries of the sick and the wails of relatives echo against its concrete walls.

In casualty I met Dr Arshad Bhat, a thin, lanky man in his late twenties, who is completing his masters in Surgery. The night before Sheikh Aziz was shot in August, Bhat slept on a tiny hospital bed in a doctors' room in Ward 16. The next morning his team was supposed to man the surgical emergency room – whose walls have seen most of the injured over the last 20 violent years. Bhat slept uneasily, and walked into the emergency room with five other surgeons at 9.30am. He and his colleagues were expecting an influx of wounded protesters, and within two hours, streams of them, hit by police fire, were pouring into the hospital. He summoned every team of surgeons in the hospital; some 30 doctors arrived and by the end of the day they had treated a few hundred people with grave bullet wounds.

"We might have saved more people," he told me, his voice full of regret, "if they had not tear-gassed the operation theatre": that afternoon, as relatives and friends of the injured massed outside the emergency room, angrily shouting slogans of their own, Indian paramilitaries in a nearby bunker fired tear-gas shells through the windows of the emergency room, shattering the glass and filling the operating room with gas. "I could see nothing," Bhat continued, "and lay in a corner. Injured patients were lying on the beds and smoke made us cry for an hour. We lost track of who was attending to whom and couldn't attend to any patient for the next two hours."

He would never forget, he told me, one 18-year-old boy with brown hair and a fair face, who arrived in critical condition: "Bullets had torn his abdomen. He had a 10 centimetre cut in a vein and couldn't talk." A team of doctors operated on the boy for three and a half hours, replacing 10 pints of blood. "But he wasn't coming out of anaesthesia," Bhat continued, slowly. And then the anaesthesiologist announced that the boy's heart had stopped beating. "The forceps fell from my hands," Bhat told me.

For Kashmiris of my generation, coming of age has meant endless conversations about the future of the state, punctuated by outbursts of violence. The protests this summer had brought hope, for the first time in many years, that something might change: within Kashmir, and among Kashmiris scattered around the globe, inboxes were flooded with updates and phones buzzing with news of the latest developments. The violent struggle for Kashmir – the open wound that gave rise to jihadist fury far from Kashmir's borders – had been pushed to the margins, and it seemed a solution to the problem of Kashmir might finally emerge.

Over the years I have spent innumerable afternoons sitting in coffee shops with friends in Srinigar, talking about Kashmir and India. These conversations, more often than not, are tinged with despair: "It will go on like this," we say to one another; "Maybe India will give a little bit of autonomy." But most of us were sure that India will never leave. Sometimes there would be talk of independence, of Kashmir's freedom. That day, a friend who is a newspaper sub-editor said, "there will be a single word on the front page: Aazadi" – freedom. "I will walk on the waters of Dal Lake," another friend said, while a third said he imagined millions of Kashmiris gathering outside of Srinigar, in the vast saffron fields of Pampore, where an Indian military camp in the fields calls itself "Mighty Fifty". "There will be an enormous stage and the Indian army commander will hand over keys to us. Then we will see him drive away and watch the last army vehicle leave."

The pictures of hundreds of thousands of unarmed Kashmiris marching peacefully seemed to augur a shift in Indian opinion, and for the first time, a number of Indian intellectuals, newspaper editors and opinion editors were forced by the protests to raise the possibility of an India without Kashmir. Some spoke with condescension, willing to discard the annoyance of Kashmir, to set aside this obstacle in India's march toward "conquering the world," as one writer put it. Others saw uncomfortable symmetries between Indian rule in Kashmir and the practices of the British Raj. Vir Sanghvi, the former editor of India's major English daily, the Hindustan Times, suggested in a column on August 16 that perhaps the time had come for a referendum in Kashmir: "Let the Kashmiris determine their own destiny. If they want to stay in India, they are welcome. But if they don't, then we have no moral right to force them to remain . . . It's time to think the unthinkable."

But if this was an opening toward independence, it would prove to be short-lived. The Indian government moved to curtail further outbreaks of dissent by arresting hundreds of protesters and imposing intense curfews across Kashmir to keep the streets empty. With parliamentary elections in India around the corner, no political party wanted to appear willing to concede ground in Kashmir – even before the bloody assault on Mumbai.

> *For Kashmiris of my generation, coming of age has meant endless conversations about the future of the state, punctuated by outbursts of violence*

One early October day when the separatists were planning a march to the centre of Srinigar, I woke up to the sound of birds chirping in the backyard of my house in the southern part of the city. The streets were totally silent, and there were groups of paramilitaries standing with guns and bamboo sticks near the bunker that sits in my neighbourhood.

In the afternoon I managed to get a curfew pass, a document issued by a senior administrative official of the Kashmir government, that allows members of certain professions – after a background check – the ability to travel under curfew if their work requires it. I rode with a journalist friend to Lal Chowk, the city centre, a long avenue of wood and brick buildings that houses hundreds of shops, scores of offices and a few schools and colleges, flanked in parts by tall, majestic Chinar or Iranian maple trees. Several lanes and bylanes connect Lal Chowk to various parts of the city, bringing throngs of visitors each day – it is a site of commerce, politics, and socialising. And almost every access point had been blocked by thick spirals of barbed wire and iron sheets: the city had become an enormous prison whose silent streets testified to the harsh efficiency of military control.

I spent many hours staring at the empty Lal Chowk, watching an occasional ambulance and several police and military vehicles pass by. No windows opened in the nearby houses; I saw only a few faces peeking out from behind curtains every now and then. The only person enjoying himself was an old newspaper vendor, wearing his curfew pass around his neck and waving two- or three-day-old Hindi-language Delhi newspapers at the soldiers gathered around him. "I was frustrated sitting at home," he said, "and then I remembered I had a bunch of old Hindi newspapers. The soldiers love them," he told me in Kashmiri, and then pedalled away on his bike.

When I returned home that evening, I was forced to produce my curfew pass and identity card at 10 different checkpoints along the two-mile route, an exercise in humiliation whose sting does not fade with repetition. India's growing clout as an economic power and its proud status as the world's largest democracy seemed to make it oblivious to the authoritarian methods deployed in Kashmir – which had, in any case, proved largely successful at curbing the protests.

Traditionally Kashmiri separatist leaders have opposed participation in Indian elections, and again they called for boycotts when parliamentary elections came around – a worn-out strategy that has brought little benefit to Kashmir. Indian authorities arrested several separatist leaders who had called for boycotts in advance of the vote, just in case; the mobilisation against state elections threatened to undermine India's insistence that Kashmir enjoys democratic rights.

The elections were held in seven phases to control outbreaks of protest and violence: each day voters went to the polls in a particular area while the rest of Kashmir was put under a strict curfew. Turnout was expected to be poor, but people came to vote in vast numbers, waiting in long lines at polling places. There was little violence and a marked absence of threats from militant groups against voters or candidates. It was a rebuff to the unimaginative politics of separatist leaders, who had failed to devise any long-term strategies or plans to carry the energy of the protests forward into resolving the impasse with India. "We have to make a clear demarcation between the elections for alleviating day-to-day problems and the larger struggle for resolution of Kashmir's political future," Sajad Lone, a prominent moderate separatist leader, told me.

But the hope that existed months before – of resolving the 60-year-old quandary of Kashmiri sovereignty – seemed to have evaporated. On December 7, as parts of north Kashmir went to the polls, I travelled north from Srinigar, which remained under curfew. In the village of Hanjiverra, an hour from Srinigar, I saw several groups of voters gathered outside polling places late into the afternoon. Riyaz Ahmed, a 32-year-old teacher, explained why he chose to vote. "This is not a referendum or a vote for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute," he said. "This is about issues of daily life. We need the roads to be fixed, we need electricity, we also need to have someone in a position of power to turn to if tomorrow the police or the military harass us."

On this point, however, there was little unanimity: north Kashmir's two major cities, Sopore and Baramulla, had decided against voting. "We don't want mere development," one young man told me outside a polling booth in Baramulla town, where no votes had been registered. "We want independence plus development."

That morning in Sopore I realised that even though the protests had wound down, the anger remained – and the police were only too eager to quell any signs of dissent. The sudden outbreak of violence remained an imminent threat.

Sopore is a vast bazaar of hundreds of similar shops selling groceries, clothes, stationary, carpets, cement and almost anything else, but they were all closed. Tense soldiers with bamboo sticks and rifles stood every hundred metres; a few polling places I visited were empty. I was driving in search of a another polling place with a few other reporters and photographers when we came upon around 50 teenagers gathered in an alley outside the local police headquarters, shouting and calling for an election boycott. A minute or two after we arrived, an armored car and a jeep, filled with soldiers and policemen, charged at the young crowd. A few tear gas shells were fired and the protesters were scattered, a few hit with sticks. At this point a group of photographers jumped out and began to take pictures – and a fellow journalist heard a police officer shout, "Beat the press and people will run away." The paramilitaries and police advanced on the photographers, and we all ran back towards our cars. Mukhtar Khan, a young Associated Press photojournalist, came limping after us after a beating: we rushed him to a local hospital, but after an hour he was transferred to the major hospital in Srinigar, having sustained severe internal injuries.

As the dusk began to fall, I drove back to Srinagar along the leafless poplars and apple trees, standing forlorn in the road. Hundreds of soldiers were huddled in small groups around fires they had made of twigs and leaves. Thousands of Kashmiris had voted that day; thousands had stayed away. In a few months a new local government would be formed, but I knew that little would change. The attacks on Mumbai had refocused attention on Kashmir – but they were a stark reminder that the wound, unhealed, will continue to inspire the attacks of militant Islamist groups claiming to fight for the freedom of Kashmir, spreading the violence far from Srinigar.

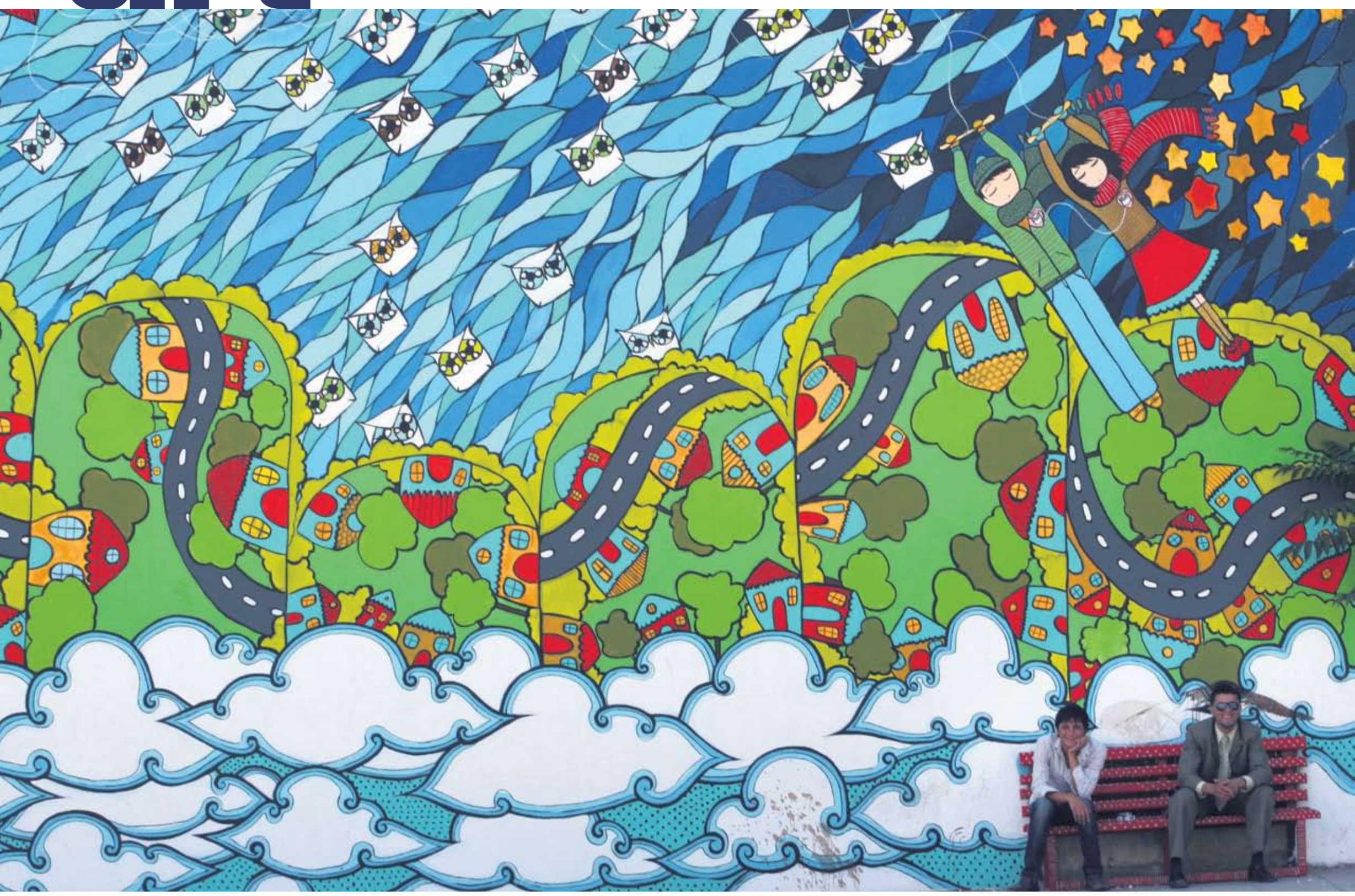
The process of negotiations between India and Pakistan is all but dead in the wake of Mumbai, but perhaps there is some hope to be drawn from the coming inauguration of Barack Obama, who has indicated he will focus on resolving the Kashmir conflict. Obama and his advisers believe peace in Kashmir will allow Pakistan to focus on policing its troubled north-west and co-operate more closely with the US in Afghanistan. India has repeated its stand against "outside interference" in Kashmir, but among Kashmiris Obama's remarks have been cause for some excitement. "After a very long time we are seeing a statesman who understands the overlap between the crises stretching from Kashmir to Afghanistan and is taking a holistic view. Our fingers are crossed," said Sajad Lone, whose father, another moderate politician, was killed by pro-Pakistan militants in 2002 for advocating dialogue with India. "Obama is the harbinger of hope for Kashmir."

Perhaps Lone's words sound naive – but having grown up with war in Kashmir and written about it for a decade, I can say with confidence that this is the first moment in the past 20 years that an American president has spoken with any seriousness about finding a solution for Kashmir. I know well the desperation of Kashmiris to have their voices heard, for I too have searched hard for listeners, from Delhi to London to New York; the constant suffering of Kashmir has rarely moved the rest of the world. Obama, it is true, is not swayed by the human costs or tales of pain and endurance, but by geopolitical calculations. Yet an intervention on those terms is no less worthwhile, for the dividends of a just peace in Kashmir will be many: greater political and economic stability in South Asia, an end to suffering for millions of Kashmiris, billions in defence expenditures saved by India and Pakistan – and the revival of relations across a border that has recently trafficked only in blood.

Basharat Peer's memoir of the Kashmir conflict, Curfewed Night, was published by Random House India in November, and will be released by Scribner in the US next year. He was recently an assistant editor at Foreign Affairs.

TheNational

review the art



Mural, mural on the wall: Malallah has created what is probably the largest and most visible — and certainly the most colourful — piece of public art in Amman. Kristine Khouri for The National.

Paint the town

Rima Malallah's colourful mural and paint-spattered store are helping transform Amman's white, limestone landscape and stodgy, insular art scene. Kristine Khouri reports from Jordan

The typical art gallery in the white, limestone city of Amman is a white, limestone cube that is visited on exhibition nights by middle-age art enthusiasts and collectors who peer thoughtfully at paintings carefully arranged in a neat row across a white wall. The sterile space is usually void of the presence of a creator.

Things are different at Love on a Bike, the artist Rima Malallah's gallery-cum-studio-cum-store. The Love, as it is commonly known, is sandwiched between a cafe and a flower shop off of Rainbow Street (officially Abu Baker al Siddeeq Street) in Jebel Amman, an older neighbourhood rapidly turning into a cultural hub of the city. The storefront is baby blue, the awning is striped red and white and paintings of all sizes lean against and cover every wall, each of which is painted a different bright shade, as is the ceiling. Music by the fey Scottish pop group Belle and Sebastian blasts from speakers in the loft upstairs. Bisbis, a grey Persian cat with big blue eyes, moseys around as he pleases. Malallah, who almost always has at least splash of paint on her clothes and arms, is always around: painting, talking to visitors, ringing up orders. Residents of Amman – from students in their late teens to older housewives – drift in and out throughout the day.

Inside, they browse the paintings and prints on the walls, plus an affordable assortment of what Malallah likes to call "art products": paintings of hers turned into prints, postcards, dog tag necklaces, bookmarks, journals and key chains. She also sells puppets, hand knitted owls, scarves, painted ties and furniture. Most of her work features certain trademark figures: a mysterious owl (the meaning of which is hotly debated among Malallah's fans), a boy and a girl, shooting stars – all simply rendered in heavy lines and bright, bold colours reminiscent of children's books and cartoons (the reoccurring boy and girl recall, in their facial features and fashion choices, characters from a twee Japanese manga).

Malallah grew up in Amman but went to the US for university after receiving a full scholarship to study art at Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky. During her university years, her artistic focus was split between ceramics and painting. While interning at Louisville Stoneware, one of the US's oldest stoneware companies, she gained experience in nearly every means of ceramic-making. After graduating in 2004, she worked on murals and faux finishings for a company whose commissions included a mural for the Kentucky State Fair grounds, the façade of a "pirate village" for tourists, and a faux wood and brick finishing for a hotel bar.

When she returned to Amman in 2005, Malallah refocused on ceramics at the Qwara ceramics workshop, which produces and markets handcrafted work under the aegis of the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development. But she found the work unfulfilling and frustrating, and she eventually decided to return to painting, even though her jesso and oil paints had been lost in the move from Louisville back to Amman. In America, Malallah had painted abstract textures, underwater scenes and nude figures on canvas. Due to the high cost and limited supply of art materials in Jordan, she had to switch to cheaper media: watercolour – used as a gouache, so the colours are heavy and illustration-like – on wood. After receiving a positive response to a series of scanned prints she emailed to friends, she decided to trademark her designs, open her own space and start selling her work. "My mom pushed me to do it," she says. "I was too scared. I had no idea what I would sell." Initially, there was trouble with the trademark office, who thought the store's name was obscene, but they eventually approved it.

Love on a Bike opened in July, 2007. The first few months were hard. "People didn't understand the gallery," Malallah explains. For all the liveliness of Amman's art scene, it remains relatively set in its ways. A cluttered, paint-spattered gallery – where you can visit, browse a haphazard-seeming collection of works and talk directly to their creator about commissioning a piece – just didn't fit the template. But over the last year the store has become increasingly popular by attracting customers beyond the usual gallery crowd. People have received Malallah's work as presents, then returned to the store to buy other presents, or something else for themselves. They have told their friends. Local magazines have taken note. (Still, when asked about her relationship to the predominant art scene in Amman, Malallah says: "We don't have a relationship." She doesn't show or sell her work in galleries, and most typical gallery aficionados don't stop by her store.)

Malallah has also increased her profile by creating what is probably the largest and most visible – and certainly the most colourful – piece of public art in Amman. Earlier this year, she was approached by Mary Nazzal-Batayneh, the woman in charge of the renovation of the Radisson SAS Hotel on Al Hussein bin Ali Street, a main thoroughfare. Did Malallah want to paint a mural on the exterior wall of the hotel? She accepted, unaware that the wall is almost a quarter of a kilometre long, much larger than any mural or façade she had worked on in Louisville. Its lowest point is one metre high – its tallest, eight. For nearly three months, the 1.5 metre tall Malallah closed her shop and spent nearly 12 hours a day on the mural.

A young woman painting a wall is not a common sight in Amman. Many people approached her: young men carrying cookies and soda; an older man offering fresh almonds ("He wanted to feed me a lot of almonds," Malallah remembers, smiling. "Lucky for me I was up on the scaffolding. He was 50 years old, maybe, and bald and fat and just not my type."); and members of the mukhabarat, citing a call by someone claiming Malallah's imagery was "devil-worshipping and Satanic" ("Was it the owls, or the houses, or the birds?" Malallah wonders jokingly). One man stalked her for a while, and another physically attacked her; several people driving by crashed their cars.

The mural "begins" with a boy and girl being carried away by kites over a landscape of trees and toyish, capsule-like houses. As a viewer walks or drives by, he or she joins them on a dreamlike journey through swirling rivers of stars, seas of clouds, roads that enter and exit tree houses. White-space is almost nonexistent. Big-eyed owls pop up everywhere.

This may sound fairly innocuous – fun, even – but it shocked Amman. Though the city maintains various pieces of public art, they are mostly colourless stone sculptures at roundabouts that blend in nicely with the city's monochrome aesthetic. Rumours and stories about the mural quickly spread; many people never believed that a young, female, Ammani artist could have created it; it seemed like the work of a rebellious outsider. "One guy argued with me and said a Japanese girl painted the wall," Malallah recalls. "And when they would maybe assume I was Arab, they would think that I was Iraqi." It was whispered that Mayor Maani found the work a "public nuisance", and was looking into painting over it on the grounds that the wall was owned by the municipality, not the hotel.

The mural also prompted dozens of posts and comments – most of them positive – on popular local art blogs like 360east and Sha3teely: "Our dead city needs more and more arts to become alive"; "I think every single wall in Amman like this one should be painted ... I wish they unleash the artist on Amman walls"; "I'm happy Jordan's appreciating some art display in the streets rather than just commercial ads"; "It's obvious who the artist is, and you can tell from the trademark owl drawing"; "I appreciate the effort put, but... too [many] bright colours... why are the owls so angry?"

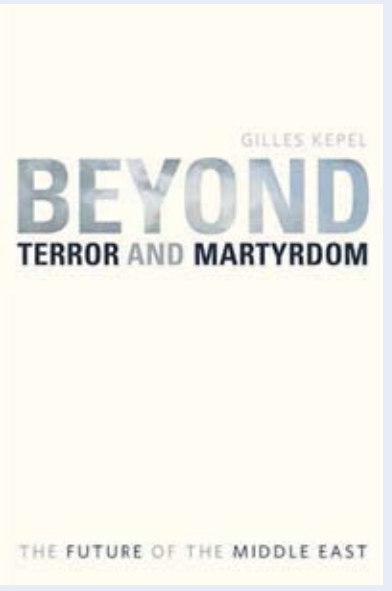
Malallah has already accepted commissions for new murals on walls, on roofs and in lift shafts around the city. As a result, similar commissions have been awarded to similarly public-minded artists. This is good: Amman needs more escapes from its sea of white walls and, more importantly, a broadening of its insular gallery scene. As it stands, most art consumers in Amman have little meaningful interaction with artists or art production. But when you push open the blue iron and glass door to Love on a Bike, Malallah rushes down the spiral staircase from the loft to greet you, show you what's new and answer your questions. If you stay awhile, you can watch the carpenter across the street deliver the custom wooden boxes she orders. You can like what you see (or not) and choose to support it with an affordable purchase (or not). Like her mural, the store suggests a world of possibilities, and invites you to step inside.

Kristine Khouri is an art researcher and writer based in Beirut.

> ***One guy argued with me and said a Japanese girl painted the wall. And when they would maybe assume I was Arab, they would think that I was Iraqi***

TheNational

Kepel was the first to describe al Qa'eda's network as a "franchise", illuminating how it expanded as like-minded "entrepreneurs" opened local branches. Lefteris Pitarakis / AP Photos



Beyond Terror & Martyrdom — The Future of the Middle East
Gilles Kepel
Harvard University Press
Dh104

Enemy mine

For years, Gilles Kepel has risen above the patter of news-hour terrorism experts, writes Max Rodenbeck. In his latest book, the French scholar observes the violent symbiosis between jihadists and their foes

The study of modern political Islam has become a crowded field since al Qa'eda and its jihadist cousins exploded onto the world scene. Every Western university, think tank, television network and intelligence agency seems to keep a stable-full of supposed experts, all raring to spout casualty statistics from last week's bombing as readily as to quote the holy-warring 14th century cleric Ibn Taymiya.

Gilles Kepel stands out from this crowd for several reasons. The French academic has been researching radical Islamism for a quarter century, since well before the creation of al Qa'eda and the launch of George W Bush's crusade against it. Kepel has written a dozen books on the subject, beginning with *The Prophet and the Pharaoh*, a seminal study of the Egyptian jihadists who were ideological precursors to al Qa'eda. His work has been consistently enlightening, revealing scholarly depth and a keen critical mind, as well as a commendably dispassionate sense of judgment.

It is Kepel, for instance, who first described al Qa'eda's network as a "franchise", illuminating how the group's loosely knotted web expanded as like-minded "entrepreneurs" opened local branches, using its brand name and trademark tactic of spectacular suicide bombings. This understanding helped dispel the myth that Osama bin Laden's organisation was some kind of SMERSH-like tentacular underground.

Such cool, thoughtful assessments have long made Kepel a useful antidote to both the ranting of right-wing Islamophobes and the disingenuous whining of those apologists who whitewash the bloody excesses of jihadism as mere expressions of the seemingly unhealable historical victimhood suffered by Muslims. Kepel has taken a sceptical distance from both, seeing violent Islamism neither as just a nasty ideology with fanatical adherents, nor as simply a logical response to accumulated injustice.

One of Kepel's signal insights has been to understand Islamist movements as fundamentally political creatures, in the sense that their success or failure ultimately hinges on their ability to create a nurturing environment by winning the tacit support, or at least the non-resistance, of a quorum of ordinary pious Muslims. This is why he has tended to view the phenomenon through a lens of image and persuasion. The key metric, for Kepel, seems to be success in the "battle for the minds and hearts of more than a billion peaceful Muslims."

His latest work, *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East* proceeds in the same intellectual vein. Like several of Kepel's previous books, it has been admirably translated from the French, by Pascale Ghazaleh. Yet perhaps because the writer has devoted so many years and words already to the subject, there are not many new ideas here: much of the book reads like a straightforward chronicle of major events since September 11, with occasional digressions covering just the questions that a much-scheduled media figure would be expected to cover in his appearances.

But even this sketchy update to Kepel's existing oeuvre still makes for some diverting fare. As a clever scholar's first draft of the history of what George W Bush described as a War on Terror, and Osama bin Laden explained as a great jihad to restore the lost caliphate, the book is enlivened with telling details and enlightening observations. One of these is Kepel's identification of a kind of symmetry between the two adversaries and the wars they declared. Each proposed an ambitious "transformative fiction", he says. "But the utopian ends that supposedly justified those means – universal democracy or a universal Islamist state – proved impossible to achieve, and in a few short years the opposing dreams of Bush and Bin Laden had devolved into an endless shared nightmare."

The Bush administration's attempt to "drain the swamps" of extremism by delivering democracy to the Middle East was an abject failure – as was the jihadists' plan to mobilise Muslims by stirring the West into a crusading frenzy. Neither inspired the millions they hoped to. In fact, both parties succeeded mostly at making more enemies, and at making life more difficult for themselves.

There were less obvious symmetries, too. Both sides resorted to the symbolism of earlier struggles, creating historical conflations that undermined their essential aims. Bush's tarring of his enemies as "evil", for instance, was a crude attempt to associate himself with Ronald Reagan, who had used the same term to blast the Soviets. Similarly, the jihadists sought to frame their struggle with the imagery of Islam's early years. Adopting the *noms de guerre* of the prophet Muhammad's companions, they titled their attacks ghazawaat, or "raids", a deliberate reference to forays by the nascent Muslim community at Medina. But the resonance sounded ridiculous given the ugliness of indiscriminate bombings against civilian targets.

The failures on the American side are well known: the invasion of Iraq and its reduction to misery, compounded by the double public-relations disaster of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib – whose images, Kepel writes, "sent a clear message that, behind the grand sentiments of the war on terror, the reality of the US invasion was foreign domination and Muslim subjection."

The result of all this, Kepel reckons, is that the US has emerged weakened and challenged; it is hardly a novel conclusion. Yet in many ways, the failures of America's adversaries have been even more resounding, and here Kepel's analysis is more original. By making the "sublime, phantasmagorical act" of suicide its calling card, al Qa'eda may even be said to have sealed its own doom. "Their failure lies in the gap between the digital universe, where a mind-numbing stream of jihad declarations and communiqués poured forth, and the daily reality of suicide attacks that mired Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan in misery." This was, in some ways, a repeat of the tactic's failure in the Palestinian struggle against Israel, where "martyrdom operations" simply gave Israel an excuse to retaliate with impunity and led Palestine, Kepel writes, "to a state of existential fragmentation."

But while Kepel's depiction of the adversaries as symmetrical opposites has a certain elegance, it is structurally flimsy. The two players were utterly different in terms of scale, method and intent. Al Qa'eda's vision was fully utopian, whereas it was never clear whether America's aims rose above such pragmatic objectives as deterring enemies and asserting control. The invasion of Iraq was a stupid, messy and costly blunder. It was, measuring by its results, very arguably an immoral act. Yet America's blunt forays into Muslim nations did not "balance" the total lapse in morality displayed by al Qa'eda.

Aside from pointing out the self-inflicted troubles that have resulted from the fetishisation of martyrdom, Kepel also elucidates the origins and spread of a fashion for suicide which, despite the fulminations of some Islamophobes, has few historical precedents among Muslims. Again, this is not new, but it bears repeating, and Kepel delivers the story with brevity and authority. The modern veneration for martyrdom, in his telling, started among Shia after Ayatollah Khomeini encouraged his subjects to project into modern terms their passion plays revolving around the death of the Prophet's grandson Hussein at Karbala. In the doctrine of Iran and its acolytes in Hizbollah, martyrdom-seeking came to be exalted within the context of a legitimate jihad, such as defending the Islamic Republic against Saddam Hussein during the brutal 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War.

The success of the suicide attack, as a public relations exercise as much as a military tactic, encouraged its adoption by Hamas and other Sunni groups in the 1990s. Emotional attachment to the cause of Palestine, reinforced at the time by the appearance of powerful, sympathetic media such as al Jazeera, prompted some Sunni jurisprudents to offer their endorsements. "Jihad combatants are fighting the enemies of God with a new weapon that destiny has placed in the hands of the disinherited so that they can resist the omnipotence of the powerful and arrogant," Kepel quotes the supposedly moderate television preacher Yusef al Qaradawi as saying. The sheikh based his opinion on the idea that the Palestinians faced an existential threat, and that since all adult Israelis served in the army, none could be considered innocent.

Rulings such as this opened the door to more radical interpretations. "Who can allow the branch to be killed and forbid the killing of its root and support?" demanded an al Qa'eda video, in justification of its indiscriminate attacks. "All those who authorised martyrdom operations in Palestine against the Jews must authorise them in America."

> ***By making the 'sublime, phantasmagorical act' of suicide its calling card, al Qa'eda may have sealed its own doom***

The importance of explaining this escalation is two-fold. For one thing it underlines the centrality of the Palestine issue to modern jihadism – a factor that some "experts" have been at pains to deny. More importantly, it reveals something of how the process of radicalisation has occurred, with added amplification at each stage provided by new media such as Islamist websites, and by networks such as al Jazeera, which, despite its often legitimate claims of objectivity, does tend to express an attachment to the narrative of Muslim victimhood that overrides other interpretations.

After shaking his head over the double failures of America and the jihadist radicals, Kepel goes on to assess the future of Islam in Europe. To some Americans the continent has represented a plump, effete culture unable to defend itself, primed to fall into the hands of Muslim hordes. To Bin Laden and his friends, Europe has appeared ripe for picking because its natives abandoned their Christian faith while Muslim immigrants – inspired by his example – were poised for a surge in devotion. Both are very wrong, Kepel believes. In his view, Europe is struggling, but largely succeeding in fusing a harmonious multicoloured society. It is this eventual triumph, he implies, that will one day "make the saga of martyrdom obsolete."

Kepel usefully explains the contrasting models adopted by European countries to accommodate their swelling Muslim minorities. His rather narrow aim, however, seems to be to prove that France has been the wisest in insisting on a close relation between citizenship and "Frenchness", as opposed to the law-based model of citizenship that promotes tolerance but fosters social exclusion, typical of countries such as Britain, Denmark and Holland. Amusingly and at length, he debunks the notion that the rioters of the Paris *banlieues* in 2006 represented some separatist Muslim tendency. Overwhelming evidence indicates that they were, in fact, underprivileged immigrants of all stripes, knocking at the gates of the French bourgeoisie to be let in rather than to escape.

Yet Kepel underplays the fact that the vast majority of French Muslims trace their origins to the former colonies of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, and so, in many cases, had already been steeped in "Frenchness" before arriving in France. By contrast, Muslim immigrants to other parts of Europe have often felt little cultural affinity for their new home.

Elsewhere, Kepel makes a somewhat lacklustre argument in favour of creating a sort of unified market and cultural sphere between Europe and the Gulf, centred on the Mediterranean, as a means of superseding tensions within a vast common womb. He holds up Turkey as model zone of economic integration and cultural exchange, and refers sweepingly to the culture-fusing empires of Alexander the Great and early Islam. This sounds nice, albeit rather vague, and leaves it unclear why Gulf nations should choose to mate with Europe rather than turn east, or elsewhere. But the notion does appear neatly designed to furnish French diplomats with grand visions.

It is annoying when Kepel strays into such frothy enthusiasms, but even more so when he makes outright mistakes. For instance, Hamas did not beat Fatah in Palestine's 2006 election because of its claim to have forced Israel into retreating from Gaza. The Islamists won because Fatah was corrupt, had failed to deliver and ran an almost comically inept campaign. Kepel also makes the strange contention that the Oslo peace process, which started in 1991 and was declared dead following the Camp David talks in 2000, collapsed because of a failure to integrate the Levant economically.

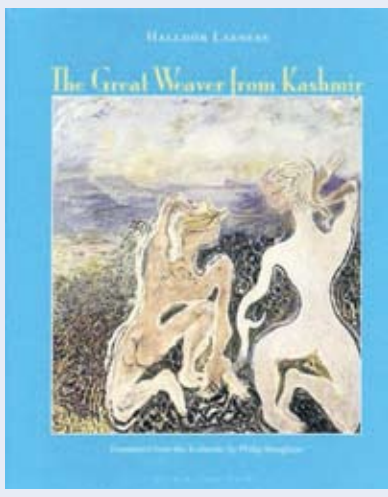
Its failure was mostly due to the same phenomenon that Kepel himself has so acutely observed in this book. There appears to be an unfortunate law of nature whereby extremists, who may be the most bitter of sworn enemies (in this case Hamas and the Israeli right wing), tend to build symbiotic relationships, sustaining animosities by violence if necessary, because this is what they both feed on. Israel's continued theft of Palestinian land and Hamas's continued killing of Israeli civilians combined to destroy the hopes of the peace-hungry majority in both camps. It was precisely this dynamic, on a different scale and with different parameters, and often more in symbolic terms than in reality, that was so destructively ignited in the struggle between America and its shadowy enemies.

Max Rodenbeck is the Middle East Correspondent for The Economist.

4 Number of books the average Icelander reads in a year. Each year, Iceland writes, publishes and sells more books per capita than any other country in the world

Becoming Halldór Laxness

Laxness's Icelanders are afflicted by strange and futile destinies, the experience of which constitutes one of his central thematic preoccupations. Bettmann / Corbis



The Great Weaver from Kashmir
Halldór Laxness
translated by Philip Roughton
Archipelago
Dh95

The first translation of an early Halldór Laxness novel displays the great Icelandic author's signature philosophical bent – and foreshadows his prodigious talent, Sam Munson writes

In his essay *The Scandinavian Destiny*, Jorge Luis Borges remarked that the Icelanders, several hundred years before the cultural upheavals of the 19th century, "discovered the novel... and this discovery is as secret and sterile, for the economy of the world, as their discovery of America." He refers here to the sagas, Iceland's national literature – epic poems that turn an implacably cold and undisturbed gaze on human brutality, nobility, pettiness, glory and misery. Borges saw this "discovery" as definitive of "the strange and futile destiny" of the Icelanders, and the Icelandic novelist Halldór Laxness – who subtitled his important midcareer novel *Independent People* "an Epic" – would have doubtless agreed. His Iceland and his Icelanders are afflicted by just such destinies, the inevitable experience of which constitutes one of his central thematic preoccupations.

Laxness's career spanned eight decades, during which he produced more than a dozen novels, along with numerous plays, short stories and works of literary journalism. Considered as whole, his life was itself a work very much shaped by the same wild and willed spirit guiding his books, which concern themselves primarily with the lyrical, disturbing interplay of several streams of thought: meditation on philosophical problems, the slippery nature of experience and the terrors and joys of Iceland's poor.

Born Haldor Gudjónsson in 1902, into a prosperous Rejkyavik family, he embarked at a precociously young age on a peripatetic existence like those led by so many European Modernists. He began the formidable task of becoming Halldór Laxness in his teens with a tramp through Europe and America, a country that held a lifelong fascination for him (and where he tried, well into his adulthood, to establish a foothold in the film industry). He fornicated, read widely, wrote copiously (he had already published two novels; the first, *Child of Nature*, appearing when he was 17) and took up a socialist politics rooted in quotidian reality without ever abandoning the attachment to Iceland's mythopoeic nature that first inspired him to write.

But by his early twenties Laxness had given up this sensually and intellectually voracious life and become a passionate novice in a Catholic monastery in Clervaux, Luxembourg. These two experiences – the grand survey of the world and the retreat into a life of pure contemplation – form the narrative crux of *The Great Weaver from Kashmir* (now appearing for the first time in English from Archipelago Press, in a vigorous translation by Philip Roughton), which was published shortly after Laxness's abandonment of his novitiate and brought him to international prominence as an author. Steinn Elliði Grimulfurson, the novel's protagonist, is a nearly superhuman figure. Boundlessly rich, blessed with Apollonian good looks and a ravenous intellect, Steinn travels across Europe in a manner very similar to the young Laxness's, indulging his senses and his mind to dangerous excess, until he comes under the influence of a Benedictine monk. Steinn loves and is loved by his cousin Diljá, but under the monk's tutelage he abandons her for the sake of higher goals, and finishes as an aspirant to the Carthusian monastic order, a group whose spiritual practices demand near-total silence and abstinence. Laxness leaves open the question of whether this will save or damn Steinn – but does show us a devasted Diljá wandering through Rome.

There seems little question that *The Great Weaver of Kashmir*, despite its biographical idiosyncrasies, belongs with other works of hectic spiritual heroics, like Herman Hesse's *Demian* or Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*. Indeed, whole chapters of the novel are devoted to breakneck monological passages of exegesis: *petit*-Nietzschean vitalism, rightist aestheticism, militant Catholic socialism, the serene theology of the Benedictine rule. Here is Steinn on his private theology:

"Sometimes I ponder the welfare of mankind and hate those who take an interest in anything else. Sometimes I ponder myself and the immeasurable inside myself, but despise mankind. Sometimes I thirst for nothing but the one true Almighty God and despise myself, but give not a single thought to mankind ... I mentioned a British friend and said that he was able to appreciate my gifts. But in the end I could no longer bear his presence ... now he is gone, this British bull, this colonial jackal, gone to Hell to preach to the souls in prison: the Indians in the rattrap of the British Empire ..."

These long didactic runs possess a strange brilliance, especially when one considers that their author was in his early twenties. Unfortunately, they grow chaotic and overly schematic when examined closely and at length. Their structural purpose is crude: belabouring Steinn's isolation from the rest of humanity, and announcing the spiritual changes besetting him as though each was a historical epoch. But despite all their clumsiness – a clumsiness that some writers, even phenomenally gifted ones, never manage to shed entirely – these early passages show the same probing temperament and intellectual restlessness that would ripen into Laxness's later masteries, the ease and lucidity with which he would delve into philosophy or social thought. Take, for example, this fluid passage, from *Paradise Reclaimed*, a novel separated from *The Great Weaver* by more than 30 years, describing the arrival in Iceland of the Danish regent:

"Many people had ridden to Þingvellir just to see with their own eyes what manner of man it was to whom the saga writers of old had given life in their books. Many of them claimed kinship with much greater princes than King Kristian Wilhelmsson; and though the farmers gave due respect to the high rank and royal title that Danes had conferred on this foreigner, it is unlikely King Kristian ever in his whole life found himself in a company of people who considered him so inferior to themselves in pedigree as did those stunted rickety peasant tramping around in their crumpled cowhide shoes."

> *The whole of Laxness's latter career constitutes an abandonment of the dead-earnest exegetical discourse that fills The Great Weaver*

The stylistic discord between the above passages reveals the most salient – because most powerful – internal movement in Laxness's work: the evolution of his treatment of religion, political theory, the metaphysics of morals and art. All these are, for Laxness, bound inextricably up with Iceland's "strange and futile destiny". No matter how wretched or base his Icelanders are, no matter how deluded or subjugated, all of them wrestle with ideas, whether crudely or sublimely. And all of them suffer for their higher ambitions, their sense of fate. How appropriate, then, that the whole of Laxness's latter career constitutes an abandonment of the dead-earnest exegetical discourse that fills *The Great Weaver*, in favour of a sly, vigorous and stern irony, one that perfectly captures the experience of mostly inevitable futility.

This irony animates *Iceland's Bell*, which recounts the misadventures of the escaped murder Jon Hregvidssen as he doggedly battles his way from Iceland to Holland to Germany to Denmark. It transforms the political concern for the smallholders of *Independent People* into a pessimistic, culturally learned, empathetic, and affecting examination of their character as Icelanders, their numb tenacity. And it grows magisterially, bizzarely fruitful in *Under the Glacier*, a novel Laxness wrote in his sixties that examines the influence of the human will on reality and of belief on perception. Laxness had become a devoté of Taoism, and the novel, set in a town in Iceland's extreme north, describes the struggles of a crypto-Taoist Lutheran Minister against a bizarre theosophical cult founded by his best friend (and cuckolder), a shipping magnate, all enacted before the astounded eyes of a naive (or stupid, to put it less charitably) low-level church functionary sent by his bishop to investigate these men and their near-desolate environs:

"No verifying! If people tell lies, that's as may be. If they've come up with some credo or other, so much the better! Don't forget that few people are likely to tell more than a small part of the truth: no-one tells much of the truth, let alone the whole truth. Spoken words are facts in themselves, whether true or false. When people talk they reveal themselves, whether they're lying or telling the truth... Remember, any lie you are told, even deliberately, is often a more significant fact than a truth told in all sincerity."

And this from a bishop! How far Laxness has come from the tortuous dissertations of his youthful work. *Under the Glacier* ends – perhaps unsurprisingly, given the above passage – in simultaneously disturbing and comical uncertainty, with its hapless narrator fleeing into a dark night from mysterious and nameless elemental forces, his future unknown. It is a strong a distillation of Laxness's limpid later style – which matched the clear gaze Borges admired so much in Iceland's sagas – a style thrown into the sharpest relief by its antecedents in the headlong, thesis-driven intellectual entanglements of *The Great Weaver from Kashmir*.

The fact that Laxness's first major novel bears a strong family resemblance to other European specimens of the philosophically agonised *bildungsroman* makes it difficult to place within Laxness's own oeuvre, which is almost solipsistic in its originality. This is not to say that it is without virtue: it displays the first striding forward of a prodigious talent in its unlovely and gawky infancy. "Prodigious" applies here both in the contemporary sense – vast and capacious – and the archaic: slightly inhuman or monstrous. His characters undergo cruelties and exaltations bordering on the fantastic.

Only a small fraction of Laxness's huge body of work has been translated from the Icelandic. But those books that have been translated suggest he has much to say to us – at least if our age's vision of itself is accurate. We post-moderns pride ourselves on our love of the stark, the bizarrely recognisable and the intelligently, philosophically discomfiting. The critical literature of the past 20 years is full of praise for books whose avowed purpose is the subversion of established sociopolitical order or the corrosion of constraining, received forms in art. This praise is often bestowed irrespective of any actual subversion; the aesthetics of subversion are, at this point, almost a convention unto themselves. But the impulse is still there, still lauded and still held to be a unique possession of our era – perhaps its definitive or even its constitutive quality. Followers of every discipline can be mustered to argue this thesis: sociological dialecticians, experts in Elizabethan drama, producers of opera, dissectors of sharks.

The claim that subversive concerns are the signal possession of postmodernity is open to question. The desire to dissolve dominant mores, to unmask the brutality and hypocrisy of human relations, can certainly be found among the bêtes-noires of numerous contemporary theorists of culture: I mean the European and American thinkers and artists of nineteenth century, the English poets, German philosophers, French painters, Swedish dramatists and East Coast *bricoleurs* who participated in a variety of sustained assaults on hegemonic falsehood. And this desire has even earlier antecedents. How else to explain the liberating power of escapes into the forest and the concealment of gender that help make Shakespearean comedy so lush? Why else would Plato insist that poets be forbidden from the ideal state, if not because they represent a threat to political order?

The idea that the central purpose of art is to disturb, in some serious way, our peace is as one with the idea of art as a sovereign and autonomous sphere of human activity. Read Borges on the Icelandic sagas. Read Halldór Laxness – whose concern with and ambivalent love for the past illuminates and complicates his understanding of the present. An understanding that encompasses grinding poverty and other social miseries, the political tribulations of modernity, the distortions of human character that these engender – and, alongside it all, the potential existence of beauty and liberty, however transitory: isn't this precisely the tense and two-hearted condition we aspire to today, or at least believe we do? Laxness's works – which one hopes will become more widely available in English and other languages – should serve as an uncompromising test of our sincerity on this front.

Sam Munson has written about books for The Times Literary Supplement, The New York Times Book Review, Commentary and numerous other publications.

review

90,000

Kafka's salary as an insurance lawyer, in today's US dollars

Franz with benefits

Kafka loved to complain, and his fiction is filled with human misery. Rachel Sugar reads a collection of writings from his day job in insurance law, which reveals a man surprisingly happy around the office

A truism: artists have day jobs. Less true is the corresponding mythology of miserable hours spent at bureaucratic tasks. There is a tortured romance to the image of the alcoholic file clerk who writes his brilliant novels on office scraps, his genius discovered only posthumously. He reassures us that our own mediocrity might not be what it seems – and it's not an entirely idle hope. The modernist poet Hart Crane split his time between copywriting and factory work, and AE Housman was a clerk in a patent office. Richard Wright spent his early career reading in off-minutes as a postman.

But actual examples of great verse scrawled on manila folders come few and far between, and are overpowered, in part, by another class of writers – those whose professional lives stray disappointingly far from the Cinderella model. William Carlos Williams ate plums from the icebox as a successful medical doctor, and Wallace Stevens was first a successful lawyer, then an equally successful businessman. With the publication of *Franz Kafka: The Office Writings*, the Czech writer popularly identified as much with his misery as with his fiction is outed as a similar professional success.

Kafka himself complained constantly that his day job at the Prague Workmen's Accident Insurance Institute oppressed his artistic calling; this volume's editors beg to differ. In the hands of Kafka scholars Stanley Corngold and Benno Wagner and the legal scholar Jack Greenberg, the 18 briefs collected here comprise more than a record of the author's years in the insurance business. By reading between his legal writings and his fiction, the editors argue that Kafka's dual identities are inextricable: the writer is informed by the lawyer, the lawyer by the writer. Franz Kafka is the Franz Kafka we know not in spite of his day job, but rather because of it.

As a young and dissatisfied insurance lawyer, Kafka was drawn to The Austrian Workmen's Insurance Institute in 1907 by a recruitment poster promising free vocational training; a year later, he began working there. "The whole world of insurance itself interests me greatly," he confessed to a fiancée. Interest? Could it be that the same man who immortalised himself in a semi-autobiographical portrait (*The Metamorphosis*) as an insect was not in fact a thoroughly joyless victim of modern life? At least not completely: Writing in the *New York Review of Books* earlier this year, Zadie Smith pointed out that Kafka "indulged in a relentless dramaturgy of the self." He was a "compulsive letter-writer who once asked a correspondent, 'Don't you get pleasure out of exaggerating painful things as much as possible?'" In a letter to a friend, he proclaimed: "God doesn't want me to write, but I – I must." A quick rendezvous with his fiancée "couldn't have been worse. The next thing will be impalement." Keeping in mind both Kafka's self-professed playful attitude toward his own pain and his gift for self-dramatisation allows a fuller picture of both the man and his works to emerge.

Kafka first two years at the Institute were a kind of residency, during which he trained in "every aspect of the Institute's agenda." In the accident department, he was confronted with the bodily costs of modernisation. His job there was to quantify the losses of the crippled, wounded and killed, calculating the harm done in terms of percentage of earning capacity lost. Kafka found his ultimate home at the Institute, however, in the actuarial department. His assignment there in 1909 lay the groundwork for what would become his two fields of responsibility: risk classification and accident prevention. Neither discipline is inherently sinister; both have ostensibly noble aims. And yet Kafka found in them the inspiration for some of the darkest threads of his fiction.

Over the course of his tenure at the Institute, its basic approach to risk classification remained much the same: employer insurance premiums were consistently based on the nature of a firm's work, its record of previous accidents and the safety standards of the firm's machinery. "The entire process of production can be broken down into stages, phases and activities, and finally, separate manipulations and motions," wrote one of Kafka's close collaborators, before going on to argue that "just as it is theoretically possible to establish such subdivisions, it is equally possible, in theory, to establish the accident risk of each separate motion." This conceptual advance should have improved the treatment – and compensation – of workers. But Kafka the writer saw a grimmer side of such schemes: subdivided into standardised parts, human bodies become hauntingly mechanised and bureaucratised. The idea of rigid and unforgiving subdivision permeates Kafka's stories, from the intricate, mechanised death machine of *In The Penal Colony* and the relentless legal bureaucracy that propels *The Trial* forward.

In one essay, Kafka uses a series of illustrations – the first to appear in the Institute's annual report – to advocate for the universal replacement of square shafts with cylindrical ones in traditional wood-planing machines. The square model allowed a large and dangerous gap between the shaft's blades and the table's surface – even the most careful worker trying to glide a piece of wood over the planing blade was in danger of losing a finger or two. The cylindrical shaft reduced the danger to mere laceration. As the editorial commentary notes, this imagery has an explicit resonance with Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*. For Kafka, the wood-planing device is a tool of "bodily inscription of power in modern society". The Penal Colony's machine goes just one step further, literally inscribing the text of the law onto the body of those who violate it.

Could it be that the same man who immortalised himself in a semi-autobiographical portrait as an insect was not in fact a thoroughly joyless victim of modern life?

We could go on picking low-hanging fruit like this indefinitely; each brief has clear echoes in Kafka's novels and stories. If we wanted to, we could make a long list of one-to-one correlations. The volume's editors, however, suggest a slightly more abstract – and much more fruitful – method of relating Kafka's office writings to his fiction. As their preface explicitly states, "the world of Kafka's writing, both literary and official, is a single institution in which the factor of bureaucracy is ever present." Passage between the two lobes is not a unidirectional "matter of transposition, of Kafka's 'writing up' his office thoughts" as fiction. Neither are Kafka's fictions simply escapes from "the harsh facts of his empirical life." Elements from the legal writings contort and resurface in his fiction; disassembled and decontextualised, they are less illustrations of real concepts than a dreamlike scramble of the author's overwhelming preoccupations. And in producing those fictions, Kafka the writer was honing an interpretation of modern bureaucracy that must have moulded the framework by which Kafka the lawyer understood his world.

Walter Benjamin described Kafka's works as "parables without morals, unfolding not as origami boats, to be smoothed back into flatness," but rather unfurling in the way "a bud turns into a blossom." This is in contrast to a typical parable, which can be stripped of its details to reveal an unambiguous lesson. Despite their superficial promise, Kafka's legal writings do not smooth his "parables" back to flatness. They may enhance the matrix of mysterious signs weaving through his fictions, but they cannot decode them. Rather, images (bodily inscriptions, empty law books) and themes (bureaucracy, mechanisation) bounce back and forth between the permeable walls of the two oeuvres, seemingly without origin.

Again and again, Kafka's stories seem overwrought with anxiety: what causes events to unfold as confusingly and senselessly as they do? Again and again, Kafka gives no answer. If his office writings provide any key, we might locate one in the nature of law itself. In an impassioned brief concerning "The Scope of Compulsory Insurance For The Building Trades," Kafka riffs on the ways in which the Institute's policies are inherently arbitrary. Workers' compensation is meant to be awarded in proportion to the earning potential lost in a given accident; physical harm done is explicitly quantified in dollars. It shouldn't be possible – but it is – that "the same worker will be insured against accidents when he is employed in one employer's place of work, but when performing the same work for another employer, he is not." Similarly, that "the same worker performing the same work who was insured against accidents in the workshop until July 1, 1908, will no longer be insured after that date" reveals that it is "the date" and not "the work" that determines the risk of accident. And again: commenting on a case bought on by the revision of a risk classification, the editors point out that the reclassification was spurred by a change "not of wool or mechanics, but of paper." To the worker, insurance policy begins to seem random; the law proceeds as an autonomous machine, a power transcending human logic; bureaucracy disjoins cause and effect.

So much of Kafka's fiction is propelled by this distinctly modern disconnect. From the first sentence of *The Trial* – "Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K, for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning" – Josef K spends the entirety of the novel trying to maneuver his way out of a seemingly unmotivated arrest. We have no guarantee of his innocence. All we know for sure is that, for him, effect has been dramatically divorced from understandable cause. Later, K opens an office storeroom to find two guards being flogged, allegedly for a specific offence. Once again, though, the relationship between the crime and the punishment disintegrates when K returns the next day to see the same scene playing out exactly the same way. *The Metamorphosis* begins almost identically: K woke up guilty, and Gregor Samsa woke up a gigantic insect. Neither has any explanation. Admittedly, waking up as an insect is very different from waking up uninsured on July 2, 1908; and yet, examined side-by-side, Kafka's workday writings and fictions both read as attempts to sort out the same sort of breakdown.

Rachel Sugar, a writer living in New York, is on the editorial staff of Nextbook.

Franz Kafka, from Andy Warhol's Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century. Andy Warhol Foundation / Corbis

Franz Kafka: The Office Writings
Ed. Stanley Corngold, Jack Greenberg and Benno Wagner
Translations by Eric Patton with Ruth Hein.
Princeton University Press
Dh146

the review

48

Percentage of worldwide military spending accounted for by the US

Empire building

A new history of American foreign policy suggests that intervention is in the country's blood, writes Gabriel Paquette

Bettmann / Corbis

"There is not a spot on this habitable globe", the US Secretary of State John Quincy Adams complained to Britain's ambassador to the United States in 1821,"that I could affirm you do not claim." The swift transformation of the United States from a mere cluster of recalcitrant, heterogeneous, inconsequential colonies thinly spread along the Atlantic coast into a geopolitical titan was far from an obvious outcome in the early nineteenth century. Yet the incontestable reality of American hyperpuissance today prods historians to depict the rise and expansion of its global influence as foreordained. Alternate trajectories, timely strokes of political fortune and highly contingent circumstances are easily swept aside or woven discretely into grand narratives of America's inexorable rise to global primacy.

George Herring's colossal history of US foreign relations has earned fully-deserved praise for its staggering erudition, lucid prose and brisk style. It offers far more than a litany of long-forgotten diplomats and treaties. Instead, Herring persuasively suggests, the US has been embedded fatefully in international politics since its inception. France and Spain, eager to strike a blow at their increasingly dominant rival Britain, lent massive support to a ragtag group of improbable rebels from 1778, support without which their insurgency would have been suppressed. Foreign affairs are not a sideshow of American history, Herring demonstrates, but one of its chief determinants.

Nevertheless, the publication of *From Colony to Superpower* is strangely anachronistic, coming at a moment when many political commentators are ushering in a "post-American world", eulogising the "unipolar moment", or speculating openly about the relative decline of the US as economically buoyant countries like India and China clamour to assume their proportional share of global leadership's burdens. Such conjectures seem incontrovertible as two wars sputter along, the US economy reels from a deepening financial crisis, and the National Intelligence Council pessimistically predicts a diminished international stature by 2025.

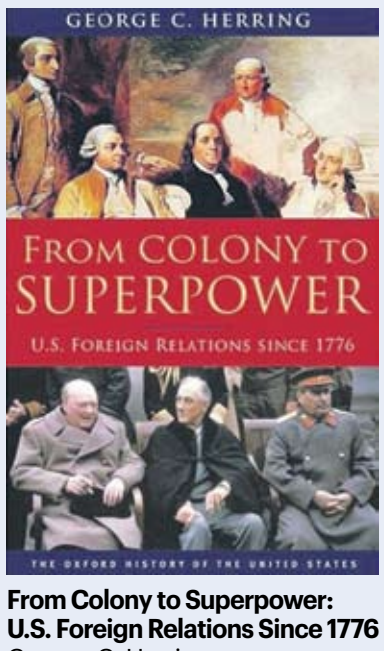
Is Herring, then, offering an off-key paean to the origins, awesome extent and persistent strength of the American empire, oblivious to the current gloomy realities? Or is *From Colony to Superpower*, with its detailed description of the durable foundations of American geopolitical power, a useful counterpoint to the alarmist tendency of the new prophets of US decline? Has the international order that the US has constructed been undermined irrevocably by reckless actions both at home and abroad – or is the fashionable talk of the precipitous decline of American power premature and uninformed by history?

Herring harbours no illusions concerning the arrogant self-fashioning of American power, from John Quincy Adams's allusion to the "benignant sympathy of our example" to Madeleine Albright's reference to the "indispensable nation". One of the most refreshing qualities of his book is its demonstration that racial prejudice, cultural chauvinism and unabashed opportunism have shaped US external relations since the republic's infancy. Herring disabuses his readers of long-entrenched historical myths about America's supposed pacific age of innocent isolationism before its turn to robust involvement in global affairs. Intervention, not isolation, has been the prevailing tendency in US foreign relations. Indeed, America's aspiration to intervene beyond its borders has been unconstrained by the actual limits of its authority and resources. The imperial vocation was largely divorced from its military and fiscal capacity. The first decades of the nineteenth-century saw the new nation, racked by internal division and a weak federal government, engage in a vigorous transoceanic campaign to suppress state-sponsored piracy by the "Barbary states" of North Africa. As Napoleon's armies pillaged Europe, Thomas Jefferson approvingly noted that the "New World [would] fatten on the follies of the Old", a reference perhaps to the huge swathe of territory acquired in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Moreover, Herring resists salvaging anything positive from Manifest Destiny — the idea, fashionable in the 1840s and 1850s, that God had willed the U.S.'s expansion across the North American landmass, justifying the extirpation of Amerindians and Mexicans as part of a broader cosmic design. Herring also starkly recounts the often-maleficent role in Latin America played by the US, from the Monroe Doctrine to FDR's "Good Neighbour" policy to Ronald Reagan's anti-communist crusade.

Beyond these useful correctives, Herring largely traces the contours of established narratives. This is surprising, since his earlier books have contributed powerfully to rethinking the history of the Vietnam War. So, the Spanish-American War is treated as a harbinger of hemispheric hegemony while settlement of the First World War is seen to have provided the US with an opening to assume a greater role in global affairs, a shift that culminates with its emergence from the carnage of the Second World War as the world's chief power broker. By 1947, the dean of American diplomats, Henry Stimson, could remark that "foreign affairs are now our most intimate domestic concern". By 1953, the defence budget would comprise 12 per cent of GNP and 60 per cent of total federal expenditure. The Cold War, along with conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, would make US foreign policy inextricable from domestic affairs. The massive outlay of men and treasure – the Marshall plan, skyrocketing levels of foreign aid to head off the communist threat, the burgeoning national security apparatus, the arms race, the maintenance of thousands of troops at hundreds of military installations worldwide – eliminated any barrier that might have existed previously between foreign and domestic affairs.

In his final chapter, Herring mentions several of the indicators typically associated with the waning of American influence: geopolitical parity due to the emergence of the EU and the rise of Brazil, Russia, India and China; ballooning US government debt held by foreign banks and sovereign wealth funds; the pervasive unfavourable perception of the US abroad. Interestingly, in the preceding chapters, Herring makes no reference to the possibility of overstretch, the fiscal burdens imposed by ubiquitous obligations and the strains these imposed on the US domestic economy and American society.

Coming at the end of a book about the steady, seemingly inexorable ascent of US power, these brief mentions of the possible impending eclipse of America's superpower status are jarring. It had seemed that all setbacks in Herring's chronicle were merely temporary; obstacles to US primacy were never insuperable; debts amassed in pursuit of often quixotic strategic designs were never called in by the creditors. The War of 1812, for example, which saw British troops ignominiously burn the newly-constructed capital of Washington to the ground, is portrayed by Herring as an overture to the coalescence of genuine national unity. War with Spain in 1898, taken together with the occupation of the Philippines and Cuba, healed the lingering wounds of the Civil War, providing both Southerners and Northerners with a common cause to rally around. The cumulative social and economic impact of the military-industrial complex is glossed over. The bottom line is that the Cold War was won and the summit of geopolitical power was reached. In *From Colony to Superpower*, the US seems to have moved from strength to strength. The origins of the present crisis or the seeds of possible decline in the coming decades are concealed from the reader's view. This is not to say that Herring ignores the sordid episodes of the Cold War, including US involvement in Guatemala, Vietnam, Chile and Angola. These macabre moments are recorded, often in detail. Yet as the narrative hurdles toward its conclusion – the achievement of untrammeled geopolitical superiority – these unsavory chapters are reduced to subplots, mere epiphenomena without long-term consequences.



From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776
George C. Herring
OUP

The publication of From Colony to Superpower is strangely anachronistic, coming at a moment when many political commentators are ushering in a 'post-American world'

Is Herring's book flawed for having failed to anticipate those who now foresee a dramatic downscaling down of America's global role? Is there a major shift in world power afoot, a *translatio imperii*, whose slow genesis his book fails to appreciate? While historians have at their disposal a considerable repertoire of metaphors and schemata to describe the rise and fall of global powers, identifying and explaining the causes of underlying imperial decline is notoriously difficult. Historians are routinely forced to resort to imprecise language and rely on remarkably primitive assumptions about the nature of historical change to elucidate staggeringly complex phenomena.

Since the early modern period, it has been accepted that decline is more natural than stability: Machiavelli observed that "since nature has not allowed worldly things to remain still, when they arrive at their final perfection, they have no further to climb and so they have to descend". Edward Gibbon put the matter more pithily in his 1776 *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: "all that is human must retrograde if it does not advance".

Almost all historians of decline consider overextension or overstretch – military, economic, territorial – to be either a precursor or cause of decline. But only a few have recognised that the term "decline" is shorthand for a number of intersecting yet distinct processes which should be disaggregated and analysed individually before any broad conclusion about decline can be reached. So, for example, Gibbon would note that the various phases of Rome's decline were not conterminous. The loss of liberty, the deterioration of education and learning, the corruption of military discipline, and the decay of agriculture may have overlapped, but they were not causally linked; they occurred unevenly, at different rates, in different centuries, and in different places.

Yet historians have not understood decline solely through the lens of antiquity. Their histories are shaped by the world they inhabit. From the seventeenth until the late twentieth century, the main framework for understanding decline was drawn from contemporary international relations, the idea of a "balance of power". The rise of one state was thought to presage the decline of others: for example, the global empires created by Spain and Portugal began to decline precisely when they proved unable to repulse the challenge posed by the ascendant maritime powers to the North, the Dutch Republic and Britain in the seventeenth century. So, in a world where a growing number of aspirant states vied for a fixed amount of global power, it was thought that the ascent of these newcomers would precipitate the decline of those states on top.

Will the US suffer such a fate, ceding its primacy as new, more vigorous challengers enter the fray? It seems unlikely. Rarely is the transition from decline to collapse sudden. Nor does it proceed in linear fashion. There are usually intermediate periods of revival and regeneration, during which reforms to reverse the downwards trajectory are pursued. Such efforts tend to turn the process of decline and fall into a rather protracted affair: the Spanish empire, thought to be in decline from the first decades of the seventeenth century, managed to hold on to its overseas dominions for another two centuries, acquiring more territory and extracting more precious natural resources along the way. Britain's loss of the American colonies in the final decades of the eighteenth century was merely its imperial meridian. An opulent empire in South Asia more than replaced what Britain had relinquished in North America. More than a century later, when this second British Empire appeared enfeebled, having fallen behind a rising Germany, the settlement of the First World War left Britain with more territory under its administration than at any moment in the past.

The point is that decline, whether of a self-proclaimed empire or a great power masquerading as an empire, does not proceed in linear fashion. The process is usually marked by epicycles of decline, revival and fall. Short of the unpredictable consequences of a global war, the existing international pecking order is unlikely to undergo anything but a modest adjustment or a strategic recalibration. Yet domestic calamity or sustained turmoil in an individual state could impact the international hierarchy. As the sixteenth-century political thinker Giovanni Botero astutely remarked, "it rarely happens that external forces ruin a state that has not first been corrupted by internal ones." It is far from obvious that the global primacy enjoyed by America will prove resilient given the magnitude of the domestic challenges it faces. Yet Herring's grand narrative makes clear that robust interventionism, not isolationism, is the gold thread running through American history, a sense of world-historical purpose unaffected by the fluctuations of GNP and the ambitions of rivals. Gibbon's "retrograde" movement may prove to be America's fate, but its complacent acquiescence to this new role is much less certain.

Gabriel Paquette teaches imperial history at Harvard University.

review
the last word

2008AD

Water

Abu Dhabi, 2008 | Photograph by Ryan Carter

"The light here is generally harsh all day, but there's an hour or two before the sun goes down when it's softer – even if it's still bright – which makes it easier to take pictures like this one. I was driving and saw this guy watering the grass, so I decided to pull over to catch the good light making the water sparkle.

The solution will not be televised

Tired of watching the media misunderstand Mumbai, Kanishk Tharoor tried to take his own views on air

Even from my distant perch in London, it was difficult to escape the paralysing effect of the attacks on Mumbai. As soon as word of the unfolding tragedy reached me, I found myself immersed in a blizzard of images and reports. I jumped between BBC's flustered "breaking news" and live internet streams of multiple Indian news networks. The same mute pictures cycled through all the channels. Frantic reporters gave minute-by-minute updates of what they didn't know. Uncertainty proliferated through the night. Yet amid all the jarring and insensible media coverage, I was transfixed, unable to turn away. I was reminded of a very different day seven years ago when I couldn't lift my gaze from the TV, even though I had only to look out the window of my family's Manhattan apartment to see the billowing smoke of the twin towers.

It was inevitable that what happened in Mumbai would be compared to the September 11 attacks, the mother of all 21st century terrorist spectacles. The perpetrators of this atrocity intended nothing less. Their run-and-gun rampage through the iconic heart of south Mumbai was calculated to draw the kind of media attention that bomb blasts – in their sudden boom and vanish – never can.

It helped, of course, that the bastions of India's affluent class were singled out. Likewise, the Western press would never have lingered so long over Mumbai were not so many foreigners targeted. But what will make Mumbai's "26/11" live long in the global imagination is the way it was watched. After several days of attrition, Indian special forces eventually managed to clear the gunmen from the smouldering hotels and high-rises, the opaque buildings that we knew hid so much horror. Every preceding moment, studied in excess and empty detail by the ubiquitous camera, was a testament to defeat, a reminder of how a handful of men could bring an entire nation to its knees before the blinking TV screen. And the world peered over India's shoulder; I received a flood of texts from normally apolitical friends in London, all awed by the tragedy.

My friends and many others struggled to digest the torrent of information coming from Mumbai. Just like the spectacular shock of September 11, the chaos in Mumbai seemed to demand that meaning be imposed upon the otherwise meaninglessness of brutality. Western editorials (and many Indian commentators) were quick to namecheck "India's 9/11". Accepting her nomination as secretary of state, Hillary Clinton invoked the carnage in the Indian city as an American challenge. Alongside New York, London and Madrid, Mumbai now stood as a pillar in the edifice of the "war on terror". What was visceral suddenly appeared abstract; the local became global. The world significance of Mumbai's tragedy seemed to reach well beyond the remit of the fumbling reporters who brought it to us live and direct.

It is a peculiar feature of the hyper-informed age that supposedly momentous events are accompanied by complete bewilderment. That confusion – itself "spectacular" – lends itself to distortion. I quickly grew dispirited by the way the attacks were being covered and interpreted around the world. In my view, what happened in Mumbai was not "India's September 11". We gain very little from such sweeping parallels, from freeing catastrophe from its proper context. I was impassioned enough to write an op-ed in a prominent British newspaper laying out the case against the September 11 comparisons. I thought it was necessary to explain that India is no stranger to terrorist outrages, having weathered 15 years of Islamist (often Pakistani-inspired) atrocities. For Indians to give in now to the temptation of the September 11 tag is to surrender to the particular power of this terrorist spectacle and, perhaps more insidiously, to the gloomy truth that the lives of the poor matter far less than those of the rich. A robust democratic society should not need to see the blood of its elite to be shaken.

If as a Muslim you think of yourself as part of one besieged global identity, then this relativistic moral murk is inevitable. It is similar to its supposed polar opposite, the moral clarity of the Western neoconservatives. The fog of the former and the blinding light of the latter do nothing to illuminate what happened in Mumbai

Of course, such words of criticism do not play well in Mumbai and elsewhere in India, where the pain and fear is real. Though I personally did not lose any family members or friends in the attacks, others close to my family in the upper crust of Mumbai society did. For them and many others across India, it continues to feel like a seismic moment, a break from the past.

But we must remember that the last thing India needs is its own September 11. There is no space in the complexity of its geopolitical position and history for the phoney, black-and-white existentialism of the "war on terror". It will make for counterproductive policy if India sees its confrontation with the terrorist threat as part of a universal, ideological struggle against radical Islam. Such an approach will only strengthen the shrill clamour of hawks and neoconservatives within and without India.

In the days after my op-ed ran, I made tentative forays into the British radio and TV in order to further warn against the simplifying lure of the right-wing "war on terror" explanation. When The Islam Channel asked me to appear on its live hour-long political discussion programme *Ummah Talk*, I accepted. I knew very little about the channel, but as a scruffy, young journalist still finding his feet, I could not refuse the opportunity of a larger audience. When I arrived at their perfectly respectable studio in central London and met the affable presenter and my co-panellist, I anticipated an engaging and productive conversation.

What ensued on *Ummah Talk* was nothing short of farcical. The host and my co-panelist attempted to wrestle me into a preposterous discussion of conspiracy theories. In their view, the attacks were just as likely to have been the work of the Indian intelligence services or Hindu militants as that of Pakistan-backed terrorists. My protestations about evidence (and the lack thereof) were ignored because all their pointless conjecture was, in fact, very pointed at a single argument: Islamist terrorism is an exaggerated fiction, no more serious than any other kind of political violence (similarly, the misdeeds of Pakistan and its notorious intelligence services are just as bad as anybody else's). It was unfair, they seemed to suggest, to cast the first stone – just before they started chucking stones in all other directions.

Without agreeing in any way with their logic, I did have sympathy for my interlocutors. Rightly or wrongly, many of the channel's audience of Muslims in the United Kingdom feel embattled within the West, hounded by a media prone to dangerous sensationalism (which is perhaps why they seek solace in the Islam Channel). The host and my co-panellist were also not wrong to bring up India's heavy-handedness in Kashmir as well as the recent history of violence against Indian Muslims, including the pogrom in Gujarat in 2002. As an Indian citizen, I readily agreed on air that my country has much to account for.

But at other moments in the programme I struggled to contain my irritation, my eyes rolling upwards in disbelief. In that fashion so reminiscent of old, hard-bitten leftists, my adversaries insisted on equating all evils, and on justifying one wrong with an unrelated another. It is dangerous to level all distinctions – to pretend, for example, that Pakistan's security establishment is no different from India's. If, as a Muslim, you think of yourself as part of one besieged global identity, then this relativistic moral murk is inevitable. It is similar to its supposed polar opposite, the moral clarity of the Western neoconservatives. The fog of the former and the blinding light of the latter do nothing to illuminate what happened in Mumbai.

The turbulence of terrorist spectacle and its subsequent media storm require more sophisticated navigation. In the midst of my ambush on *Ummah Talk*, I sparred more than I wanted to. Were I to return to the show, I would plea for a different understanding of the attacks, one that roots any judgement in context and detail, and, most importantly, in the willingness to embrace self-critique. We don't need moral clarity or moral relativism, but truly courageous moral modesty.

Kanishk Tharoor is an associate editor at Open Democracy and a frequent contributor to The Review.