PREFACE

The process of deciding upon a topic for doctoral work is – as many will bear witness – a torturous and a difficult process requiring a great deal of intellectual churning, mental skill, academic preparation and deftness. No theme is born by accident rather it is the culmination of a prolonged thought process and rigorous academic discussions. There are many influences in the process, as are many factors responsible for its decisive selection. At stake is not just possibly the longest single-minded attention to a problem by a researcher, but also the delineation of a future specialisation area.

In our instance too, the final selection of the topic was a culmination of a long process, which has it genesis in the M. Phil dissertation, where the attention was primarily on, ethnicity and secessionist struggles. However, during the study and thereafter a lacuna became apparent. It relates to the fact that in most studies of conflict, common people tend to be ignored. Though they get media attention and endure a great deal of sufferings, yet the commensurate attention to their sufferings and hardships do not get reflected in academic discourses. Among those who suffer in conflicts the plight of refugees is the most pitiable and riveting. They are often forgotten and condemned to stay in inaccessible, desolate and inhospitable places and are effectively silenced by being striped of their nationality. Also, the number of refugees is a substantial percent age of world human population. Yet, despite the enormity of the problem it has engaged insufficient attention of the academics.

Hence, we thought, agreed and decided that the solution to the refugee problem should constitute the primary focus of the work. As refugees are essentially by-products of violent conflicts, therefore the solution to the refugee problem has to be inextricably intertwined with the solution to violent conflict. Thus, the secondary
focus of the study emerged as the entire gamut of issues spanning from the genesis to solution of violent conflicts. As the dissertation was on ethnicity and its salience and use in Africa thus the last variable was selected i.e. ethnicity. Thus the work, it was planned would study the linkage between ethnicity, conflict and refugees and thereafter offer the possible solutions to the problem of refugees.

Coming to the selection of case studies, at the time of the finalisation of the topic both Rwanda and Burundi were current and live crises. Besides they had the unique distinction of being amongst those few African countries that were pre-colonial entities. They had similar yet crucially different demographic profiles that had the potential to give the study both a broader and a wider relevant result. Thus, the topic of this doctoral work was crystallised and structured accordingly.

However, at the time of initiating the study one had not comprehended the complexity of the task and its intricacies. As a consequence one kept getting lost and entangled in a web of issues and theories. This study for once appeared fated to languish in ignominy – like those of refugees – had it not been for the consistent encouragement and guidance from my supervisor, Dr. Ajay K Dubey. I can quite candidly concede that had it not been for his persistence and perseverance despite my regular bouts of despaired his going out of the way to give time – even at the cost of his personal leisure – this work may not have reached its fruition.

Then there are a host of my teachers who have been instrumental in one’s intellectual evolution and structuring of one’s academic rigour. They include the faculty members of the Centre for Political Studies and the Centre for West Asian and African Studies at JNU. Amongst them Prof. Anirudha Gupta had the greatest and most profound influence in terms of changing ones perception from that of a Master’s student giving simple answers to that of a research scholar asking the right questions.
Amongst the influences one is exposed to in JNU is the large number of students both senior and compatriots, interaction with whom provide an opportunity to evolve intellectually and develop the inquisitive mind ready to challenge all presuppositions. There are far too many of them who have directly or indirectly enabled one in completion of this work. Had it not been for their help, this work's completion would have been difficult if not impossible. I am grateful too each and every one of them, particularly Sohaib who went through the draft many times to point out the disruptions, inconsistencies and other errors that invariably creep in. This apart I must mention the sagacity and maturity of my colleague Anis. Had it not been for his timely advise, support, and direction I may not have been able to finish this work.

This work was a long and arduous journey, where I was amply supported by immediate family members, which include my father and my late mother whose death recently has left one scurrying for protection and whose desire to see this work completed was one the most potent motivations. Then there are my siblings and their spouses who put up with a lot of neglect and absence. Lastly, I am certain that had it not been for prodding by my better half who endured a lot of stress and apprehensions or the persistence that my new born son exhibits – whether when trying to walk or wailing at night for attention – I would not have been able to complete this study. However, in the final analysis everything is eventually due to the Grace of Almighty, and I thank Him for providing me strength and endurance to see through this work.