

**POLITICS OF ETHNICITY
AND SEPARATISM
IN SOUTH ASIA**

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POLITICS OF ETHNICITY AND SEPARATISM IN SOUTH ASIA*

1. INTRODUCTION

Contrary to the expectations and predictions of the theorists of “modernisation” and nation building and hopes of the elite in the post-colonial era, the process of national integration and the task of nation building has proved to be very complex and intractable in the Third World. The processes and policies of economic development, urbanisation, social mobilisation and politicization which were expected to break down and erode what were then called parochial loyalties and fissiparous tendencies have not produced the expected results. These loyalties have proved more tenacious than visualised. Similarly, the formal end of colonialism — a factor considered to be responsible for disrupting the traditional fabric of pre-colonial society which forced an artificial unity among various political entities and ethnic groups has not enabled the post - colonial regimes to usher in an era of voluntary unity and what Indian Commission on Reorganisation of States calls “emotional integration”. In fact, according to some observers the traditional classical colonialism in some Third World societies has been replaced by what they call “internal colonialism” meaning that one ethnic group or region has replaced the colonial rulers.

One potent factor which has proved to be a serious obstacle to the realisation of the expectations of scholars and the hopes of policy makers is the rise of ethno-nationalism or alternatively known as “politicisation of ethnicity.” Since early sixties, politicization of ethnicity passing through various stages and culminating occasionally into secession has become a serious political phenomenon. About half the countries of the world currently are experiencing some sort of “ethnic dissonance”¹ encompassing various levels of intensity of politicised ethnicity. There are more than six dozens of ethnic groups in the world which have demanded or are demanding a separate province, state or region within the same country or greater autonomy for their existing province or a separate and independent state. Two

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thirds of these ethnic groups are currently secessionists or autonomists, or are split over the nature of their demand, some demanding autonomy within an existing state and some striving for secession. Out of currently active secessionists, or autonomists or secessionist cum autonomist groups, about half are outright secessionists, one fourth are autonomists and the remaining are split over the nature of their demand.

What is significant, though expected, is that the most of the autonomy seeking and secessionist movements were or are located in Asia and Africa (77%), the remaining in Europe and North America.* About sixty six per cent of these are located in Asia. Latin America at present seems to be free from such movements except for some rudimentary stirring among the Red Indians which has not become serious due to their dispersal over several countries of that continent.

These movements (autonomy seeking as well as secessionists) are concentrated in about 43 countries of the world. South Asia seems to have a large share of these movements — about one fifth of the world total. The four countries with high level of ethno-nationalism (three or more than three groups demanding autonomy or secession) include India, Pakistan, Burma and Great Britain. Burma probably is the worst affected country. Given the small size of its population and territory compared to other three countries, it has nine ethnic groups seeking autonomy or secession.

Since the second world war, ten secessionist movements have been completely suppressed (examples : Katanga in then Congo, Biafra in Nigeria, Sumatra in Indonesia). Two secessionist movements have ended peacefully after a prolonged struggle and use of violence have lost their initial intensity — Quebec in Canada more or less settled through referendum and South Tyrol through negotiations between Italy and Austria. One autonomy seeking movement in Switzerland has ended with referendum in Canton of Berne and creation of a separate Canton of Jura as demanded by French speaking population of Berne. Only two secessionist movements have succeeded — Bangladesh and Turkish Cypriot — both with the armed intervention of a country sympathetic to their demands.

II. ETHNIC DISSONANCE IN SOUTH ASIA

As noted above South Asia is one of the few regions which is experiencing high level of ethnic dissonance. Both intensity and frequency of ethnic conflict seemed to have increased since the three countries of the region, India, Pakistan and — Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) got their independence. One of the countries in the region Pakistan — was broken up mainly by the forces of ethno-nationalism aided by external intervention. Another country of the region — India — has the highest

** For ethnic movements in Europe and North America see Esman, 1977.*

number of ethnic movements. Two countries in the region — India and Sri Lanka — have ethnic movements with highest level of intensity of conflict — Tamil movement in Sri Lanka and Sikh movement in India. Their intensity is matched only by a less than half dozen such movements in the rest of the world. The youngest country in the region, Bangladesh, though having relatively favourable cultural conditions in the region for national integration is also afflicted by ethnic dissonance created by the struggle of the Chakma tribe to gain autonomy or independence.*

Before offering an interpretation of the prevalence of these movements in these countries, a short introduction to them is presented below.

A. Bangladesh

Emerging as a result of secession from Pakistan, Bangladesh has developed an ethnic problem of its own. Chakma tribe living in Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT) along with other tribal groups had been demanding occsietady autonomy and occasionally independence. This constitutes a serious national integration problem to a country otherwise taxed with economic difficulties and political instability.

Occupying one sixth of the land of Bangladesh while constituting only one percent of the population^{2*} 1 tribals of CHT had for long remained isolated from Bengali mainstream culture and ensconced in their tribal social structure. This lack of integration present during the colonial period more or less persisted during the Pakistan period and after the emergence of Bangladesh. Most of them being Buddhists and racially different from Bangladesh the tribals are a racial and religious minority among largely Muslim Bangladeshis. The Chakmas, one of the several tribes and the most known among them, have recently become a serious domestic and international problem for Bangladesh as they have moved from relative political apathy of earlier period to violent resistance to Bangladeshi- government demanding from autonomy to outright secession.³ Their other demands include expelling Muslim immigrants from their area and payment of compensation to the families uprooted by Kaptai Dam.⁴ Since 1973 the Chakmas have established a military wing of their main political party ironically called Shanti Bahini (the peace force). In their conflict with Bangladeshi military, some Chakmas have moved into neighbouring Indian State of Tripura as refugees which, within the context of

** There is not much authoritative and scientific literature on tribes in CHT available in Islamabad libraries. Therefore this article mainly relies on Saeed (1987 -88) who though does not always give a detached view and dispassionate analysis probably presents an exhaustive account of Chakma ethnic struggle.*

2 For an exhaustive though still tentative list of all the movements and the political parties and their front organisations in the region see appendix- I.*

otherwise strained relations between Indian and Bangladeshi governments makes the problem from merely Bangladeshi to an international one Bangladesh government claims that Indian government was aiding the Chakma insurgents and inciting their exodus.⁵ The Indian government asserts that the Bangladesh government, through military action against them, was driving the Chakmas into Indian territory and providing sanctuaries to secessionist groups in North East India.⁶ Thus the pattern of ethnic movements allegedly or actually involving the neighbours present in other South Asian countries is also found in Bangladesh.

Having somewhat cast their lot with Pakistan, and remaining rather indifferent to Bengali struggle for separation (Chakma Raja Tridevrai became Minister in Bhutto government), the Chakmas did not win the sympathies of the highly nationalistic regime of Awami League. The need to reclaim the vast lands of CHT to accommodate the demands of the land hungry and destitute peasants of Bangladesh led the Government to end the established practice of exclusive control of the tribes to CHT lands. Consequently the peasants started moving into CHT with encouragement from the government. This stimulated ethnonationalism among Chakmas, who renamed an old political party as the United Peoples Party of Chittagong, which in its 16 point manifesto demanded "autonomy with (its) own legislature."⁷

B. *India: Four Types of Integration Problems*

India, the largest country in the region, has experienced acute ethnonationalism starting from its independence. It inherited three type of separatism which, to a varying degree, continue to bedevil it after forty years of independence. It has also economic conflict having ethnic overtones between local population and immigrants from other Indian states or neighbouring countries.

1. Problem of States Integration

First type of separatist problem emerged with the integration of princely states. Consistent with the resolutions of Indian Congress, its leaders maintained that they did not differentiate between the "British India" and the princely states and that princely states would have to become part of India after independence. This was in conflict with the aspirations of the rulers of some of the states which wanted to become independent particularly those ruled by Muslim rulers such as Hyderabad or wanted to join Pakistan like Junagarh. The Indian rulers "solved" these problems but the continuing problem is Kashmir. Combination of forces of Muslim revivalism which is becoming a potent force to reckon with, and Muslim Kashmiri ethno-nationalism, a fragmentation of National Congress the main organisation which has so far successfully countered these forces, and renewed interest of Pakistan to keep the problem alive has left the problem unsolved and in a sort of suspended animation.

2. Problems of Dravidistan and Khalistan

Second type of problem India inherited was the claim of the two significant in other components of its population to be ethnically and religiously distinct from the majority of the Indian population and, therefore, deserving of special status within India — The Sikhs in the North West and part of Dravidian population in the South. The Justice Party formed in 1917 by Ramaswamy Naicker and later renamed and reorganised as Dravida Kazhagam (DK) with anti-Brahman and anti-north stance wanted a separate state of Dravidistan — a demand which received support from Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League Chief. The DK further split into two the parties, the more militant group forming Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.⁸ The Movement has succeeded in renaming the state of Madras as Tamilnadu successfully resisted the union government's attempt to declare Hindi as the only national language in 1965. Working within the framework of parliamentary electoral politics, DMK seems to have abandoned the secessionist demand for a separate country, especially since anti-secessionist constitutional amendment of 1962, and now increasingly concentrates on more specific socioeconomic issues and augmentation of state autonomy. With further split of DMK giving birth to AIADMK allied with the Congress (I), the threat of secession from South has been more or less contained and Dravidian ethno-nationalism does not appear to be currently a potent force.

The second potentially separatist problem India inherited is that of the Sikh. Since the establishment of Sikh religion by Guru Nanak, the Sikhs have experienced a severe problem of identity. In their struggle against the Muslim Mughal rule, they moved more and more near to Hinduism to a point where they came to be regarded only an extension of Hinduism — a Hindu sect —, within the all embracing fold of Hinduism and its sword. But this started changing with establishment of Sikh rule in Punjab, incorporation of Punjab in British India, threat to Sikh religious orthodoxy from secular forces, emergence of revivalist movements among Hindus and Muslims, and consequent struggle of the Sikhs to capture their religious places from a sect the orthodox Sikhs regarded less than the Sikhs.

In the second half of 19th and early 20th century the Sikhs sought to rediscover and assert their identity and in the process screen their religious doctrine from what they regarded purely Hindu practices.⁹ This launched them on a course resisted by Hindu orthodoxy. However, before a secure and exclusive Sikh identity could emerge, Indian political scene started changing. Political reforms introduced by the British, emergence of Indian National Congress under the Charismatic Mahatama Gandhi with demand for independence and its mass contact and development of Muslim separatism gradually pushed the Sikhs toward the Hindu dominated Congress and away from their traditional foes who were demanding a separate country which would include their homeland, Punjab, and their major religious shrines. With some ambivalence, finally the Sikh cast their lot with India resisting the emergence of Pakistan till the end.

By joining India, the Sikhs who had become politically divided, some joining Congress and others their exclusive Sikh party, the Akali Dal, had hoped that they would receive a special treatment from their co-patriot and co-religionist Hindus. But they found that the Indian rulers who, with commitment to secularism, Indian unity and a strong Indian, regarded the ethnic and religious identities a potential threat and therefore were not sympathetic to their demands. Spurred by the fear of erosion of symbols of Sikh identity and religious orthodoxy posed by modernisation, secularism and competitive politics and recognition of principle of reorganisation of states on linguistic basis, the Akalis demanded the formation of a separate Punjabi Suba and after long struggle were able to achieve it in 1966 by further partition of Punjab. As the Sikhs enjoyed only a bare majority in the new province and were internally politically divided between Congress and Akali Dal, they could not secure political control of the province they had dreamed of. Therefore, their feelings of relative deprivation instead of subsiding further grew. The attack on their holiest temple by the Indian forces under order from the central government and large scale massacre of Sikhs after assassination of Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, added to their grievances and bitterness against the central government leading a significant number of Sikhs to wage a violent struggle for creation of an independent Sikh state — Khalistan.¹⁰

The Khalistan problem has become somewhat international and transnational as the Indian government accuses Pakistan for training and assisting Sikh extremists — an accusation denied by Pakistan, and as the protagonists of Khalistan receive financial and moral support from its Sikh supporters settled abroad. Placed in comparative perspective, the Sikh problem seems to be the most intractable and different from all the ethnic problems which the Indian rulers have encountered since independence. At least that is how it appears in 1988.

3. Problems of Reorganisation of States

A third Set of problems slightly different in nature than the problems discussed earlier are the one related to the reorganisation of states on linguistic basis which emerged in early fifties. The Indian Congress in its Nagpur resolution resolved to recognise the principle of creating linguistically homogenous states. The principle was reiterated in Calcutta session in **1937**.¹¹ The Congress manifesto of 1945 incorporated the principle. It, however, was repudiated by Dhar Commission

appointed for making recommendations on the subject for incorporation in the Constitution. In view of the discontent created by the Dhar Commission recommendation in non-Hindu belt, the Congress appointed a committee which besides others included Nehru and Patel. The committee without accepting the linguistic principle for reorganising the states accepted the legitimacy of the claim of Andhra.¹²

Creation of Andhra, however, opened a flood gate of demands which reinforced by preparation Congress promises spurred linguistic regionalism — a process which seemed to have more or less exhausted itself by mid sixties — the last state to be organised on linguistic principle being Punjab in 1966.¹³

4. Ethnic Movements of Tribal People

A fourth type of problem India confronts is concerning the tribal people mainly in the north east but some also in other areas who have not been assimilated into mainstream Indian culture nor integrated into the Indian polity due to various reasons including British policies towards them, their relative physical inaccessibility, their socio-linguistic and religious distinctiveness and, most of all, their tribal structure of social organisation which made them more or less self-contained and self sufficient. Some of them were converted to Christianity during the colonial period. When after independence they found themselves under non-Christian rulers who wanted to integrate them into Indian polity and society, they resisted such incursions on their traditional system and finally took up arms to fight the central rulers and their military apparatus.

The first major tribal group, the Nagas, converted to Christianity spread over a period of hundred years during the British rule, declared independence at the time of partition of India. After failing in this attempt they started a movement for independence in the early 1950s. Intermittent negotiations with Nehru and Mrs. Gandhi finally succeeded in creating a state of Nagaland within the Indian Union in 1963. But this was not acceptable to the militant wing of Nagas who wanted to create a sovereign Christian socialist state comprising of Naga hills in India and Saigang division of Burma. After prolonged negotiations an agreement was signed by Naga leader Z.A. Phizo and representatives of Indian union to end the insurgency, but again a part of the militants did not accept the agreement and continued their struggle for larger Nagaland.¹⁴

A second ethnic problem India is having with tribals of North East is that of Mizos. Like Nagas, Mizos are converts to Christianity, racially Mongolian, with their own tribal language and strong sense of identity. Out of the three options offered to Mizos at the time of independence of India, that of joining Burma, becoming independent, or staying with India, Mizos opted for the third with the proviso that union with India would be reviewed within ten years. Just before the independence, the Mizos demanded that they be granted right of territorial unity and self-determination. This was granted in the form of creation of an autonomous Mizo district within Assam and three seats in provincial assembly.

Embittered by Indian Governments indifference to famine in Mizo district, some militants among the Mizo split off from the United Mizo Freedom Organisation and formed Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1959, which under the leadership of

Laldenga demanded an independent sovereign state of greater Mizoram. In 1966, MNF declared independence for its areas. The Indian government banned the Front and took military action against it. After protracted negotiations with moderate party of Mizos, Mizo Union, Indian government gave status of union territory to it in 1972. But it did not end the insurgency.

With the establishment of People's Conference led by Brig. T. Sailo in 1975, MNF found itself under pressure to negotiate with Indian Government. Several accords at different times were reached but all failed. With success of Congress (I) in state election of 1984, Laldenga found under great pressure to compromise and entered into another accord with the Indian government in 1986, according to which MNF formed a coalition government with Congress (I) and Mizoram's status of Union territory was changed to statehood. But this was not end of the ethnic struggle of Mizo's who now demand a greater Mizoram which should include Mizo-inhabited areas in neighbouring states.¹⁵

A third group of tribal people demanding greater autonomy or autonomous state are the tribal people in the state of Tripura. Reduced from about one half of the population of state in 1941 to about one fourth in 1981 due to inflow of refugees and other Indian population they formed a political party — Tripura Upjati Juba Samiti (TUJS) to fight for their rights. TUJS soon split over the use of The means to be adopted and the more militant ones have formed Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) which took up arms "to gain a homeland of their own"¹⁶ imposed taxes in the areas they control, killed some of the people regarded enemies mainly the non-tribal settlers and Chakma refugees. The Union Government and state government signed an accord to deal with the TNV strongly, outlawed it and is using armed forces to suppress it which leaves the problem unsolved and festering.¹⁷

A fourth tribal people who at one time demanded a separate country of Koihanistan live in Singhbhum district of Bihar where they reside in about 1400 villages. Pressurised by harsh measures by the state government they have de-escalated their demand for a separate country and membership in commonwealth to create an autonomous union territory.¹⁸

A fifth group of tribals called Meitis in Manipur, the original people belonging to Tibeto-Mangloid racial group, want to sever all their links with the Hindu culture¹⁹ and are waging a violent struggle to recreate their pre-Hindu Kingdom of Kangleipak. Violently suppressed by state apparatus, the movement has so far failed to achieve its objective.

A sixth tribal movement seeking a separate state, to be called Uttarakhand, is in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The tribals have formed a political party and several sanas (militant groups) to achieve this objective. The Union government has responded to the demand by allocating more funds for development but this has not ended the movement. The negotiations with Union government about the demand have not proved fruitful either.

A seventh tribal movement cutting across the four states of Bihar, west Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh had been demanding a separate state of Jarkhand even before independence. The demand first emerged at the time of Santhal rebellion against the British in 1939. The movement became active in 1950 with the formation of Jharkhand party by Japal Singh. It lost its vitality when Singh joined Congress in 1963. It was revived in early seventies and called the Jharkndi

Mukiti Morcha (JMM). The movement experienced an internal disunity when its leaders formed an election alliance with Congress (I) in the 1980 Lok Sabha elections. But with disillusionment with the Congress (I) the movement gained a new momentum particularly under the influence of All Jharkhand Student Union which ran a parallel administration in some of the areas. The renewed vitality of the movement forced the Union and the state governments to adopt more conciliatory posture towards it. But the movement leadership seems not to accept less than a separate state and threatens to adopt more severe measures if their demand is not met.

The eighth and more recent ethnic challenge India faces is from its Gorkha population in Darjeeling who demand a separate state of Gorkhaland. Having a long history of demand for recognition of their language and political identity, the Gorkhaland movement headed by a combination of several parties coalesced into Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) and led by an ex-militar officer and literary figure Subash Ghising (occasionally spelled Gheising as so) was spurred by ejection of Gorkha population from Meghalaya state and signing of Mizo Accord of 1986.²⁰ Though occasionally its leaders have made an extreme demand for a separate homeland outside the Indian Union²¹ the KNLF has limited itself generally to a demand of a separate state which should not be merely a union territory.

Though disagreeing about the responsibility for the emergence of the movement, the Union government and West Bengal state government have worked jointly to persuade GNLF to eschew violence and seek negotiated settlement.²² This though

has somewhat reduced the level of violence, but has not won the cooperation of the KNLF which boycotted the 1987 state elections and was able to persuade most of the Gorkhas living in four constituencies of West Bengal to abstain from participating in the elections. The negotiations between Ghising and the Centre and the state government continue though remain inconclusive. Meanwhile, according to one judgement Ghising is losing his popularity and control over the component parties of the KNLF and several groups are getting dissatisfied with his leadership.²³

Ethnicity in Assam

A fifth type of ethnic problem, somewhat similar and somewhat different from other four type of problems which India has encountered is the migration of people of Bengali origin into Assam where local population feels threatened by their presence as they place claim on land' jobs and some of them even vote in local elections. Fearing loss of identity and material opportunities, the Assamese, spearheaded by All Assam Students Union, have been agitating to evict the "outsiders" from the province. Protracted negotiation between Union government and Assamese at first did not soothe the feelings of Assamese and a considerable number of them boycotted the 1984 elections which brought Congress (I) into power in the province.

An organisation of Assamese, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), claims that Assam was never part of India, does not recognise Indian Constitution and wants to liberate the Assamese from "Indian imperialism." The Front, a small but militant organisation has links with Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and allegedly gets training in China.

C. Pakistan

Pakistan, which emerged as a separate country as a result of the division of India on cultural grounds found itself seized with the problem of ethnicity and separatism soon after its birth. First developed the problems of merger of princely states, particularly that of Kalat. At the same time the relationship between the Central elite and East Bengal counter-elite started getting strained till the latter with widespread support of the politically aware and active masses and intervention of the Indian army were able to establish a separate country.

With separation of East Pakistan, however, there was no decline in ethno-nationalism in Pakistan. Some of the counter-elite in three smaller provinces (in term of population) demanded a new set oiiionship with the central elite. Though the 1973 Constitution with liberal provisions for provincial autonomy somewhat assuaged their feelings and met most of their demands, dismissal of Mengal government in Baluchistan followed by resignation of JUI-NAP government in NWFP and military action against certain Baluch tribes raised tension between the central government and the Baluch and Pakhtoon ethnonationalists. Overthrow of Bhutto government military though initially lowered the intensity of ethnonationalism in the abovementioned two provinces following the withdrawal of military from Baluchistan and e release of Pakhtoon ethnonationalists, it raised disaffection in Sind, particularly after the hanging of Bhutto in 1979. Continued military rule which has meant k of participation of at least two provinces — Sind and Baluchistan — underrepresented in military and bureaucracy, in national policy making process, and military action against Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) in 1983, the main brunt of which was borne by rural Sindhis has raised the level of ethnonationalism in Pakistan to new heights.

Currently (1988), the intensity of ethnonationalism in the three small provinces remains high, though to varying degrees. It is very high in Sind and relatively low in NWFP where autonomist-separatist tendencies which emerged at the early stage of the formation of the country have somewhat subsided.

The intensity of ethnonationalism in Pakistan can be gauged from the high number of the political parties and their student fronts organised on ethnic basis, and making ethnic demands (see appendix I). This intensity is also reflected in more than a decade old demand for Sindhu Desh by Jea Sind Movement which by its own declaration cannot be regarded but secessionist.* The emergence of Sind, Baluchistan, Pukhtoon Front (SBPF) and meteoric rise of Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) also show ethnic polarisation. The SBPF demands a new constitution with confederal structure incorporating the right of secession for the provinces. The Front though currently small in size has considerable appeal particularly among the Sindhi youth.** The MQM which demands that refugees settled in Sind be recognised as a separate nationality (without demanding the partition of Sind) and their economic rights and cultural heritage be effectively protected²⁴ has gained considerable popularity and support of the refugees as indicated by its performance in Karachi municipal elections and large attendance in its meetings and participation in its processions.

* *The recent formation of Sind National Council (SNC) and declaration of Mr.G.M. Syed have somewhat made the situation uncertain as Mr. Syed seems to have declared that he has given up the demand for Sindhu Desh and would struggle from now on for the emancipation of Sind and other minority provinces.*

** *According to an unpublished survey of Gallup Poll of Pakistan (June 1986) only 38% of Sindhi speaking interviewees supported federal structure of Pakistan. This percentage was the lowest among all the*

linguistic groups interviewed. Among Urdu, Punjabi and Hindko speaking interviewees about three fourth supported the federal structure compared to about half Pushto and Baluchi speaking. It is significant that among all the 12% interviewees who supported confederal structure, percentage of younger people was higher.

D. Sri Lanka: Tamil Versus Sinhalese

A fourth country in South Asia (Sri Lanka) at one time considered to be an island of tranquility and peace and model of democracy is undergoing the most serious ethnic turmoil in the region since the emergence of Bangladesh. Two ethnonationalisms which sought and somewhat reached an accommodation during the struggle for independence²⁵ gradually fed on each other till they assumed an intensity that a significant part of the minority group Tamils particularly after the ethnic riots of 1983 in which the Tamils were the main victims, took up arms to achieve a separate country.

This process of intense alienation need to be briefly traced. The Northern and particularly Colombo based Tamils under the influence of British colonialism and proselytising activities of Christians were able to acquire western education, secured disproportionately greater share in Ceylon Civil and, Judicial service²⁶ and got much larger share in Legislative Council. The situation started changing after the introduction of adult suffrage in 1931 which immediately put Sinhalese with numerical majority into a politically advantageous position, giving them almost 4/5 of the seats in the new legislature. This set the stage for the future tensions and the tragedy.²⁷

The fears of the Tamil minority were however, sedated by a compromise making secularism as basic polity of the state, giving equal status to Sinhala and Tamil languages in future when English were to be replaced, stipulation in the new constitution against religious discrimination, and provision of weightage in representation favourable to the Tamil minority.

New Laws on citizenship made right after independence in 1948 and the promulgation of 1948 Constitution disenfranchised a significant number of Tamils which started undermining the earlier compromise. In the process, Tamil Congress, which was committed to accommodation with the Sinhalese split up giving birth to the Federal Party which declared itself to work for "the attainment of freedom for the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka by the establishment of an autonomous Tamil state on a linguistic basis within the framework of a Federal Union of Sri Lanka."²⁸

Meanwhile, during the mid-fifties, developed the Sinhalese ethnonationalism seeking the exclusive use of Sinhala as medium of instruction and as official language and the pre-eminence of Buddhism in state and society culminating into the success of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) led by Bandranayake. In 1958 Bandaranayake sought a degree of accommodation with the Tamil elite by granting that Tamil would be recognised as language of national minority and subordinate lawmaking will be granted to the regional councils to be created. The pact, however, was repudiated the same year.²⁹ This upset the apple-cart of ethnic balance aggravating sense of deprivation of the Tamil leading to major ethnic riots of 1959, setting stage for later conflicts.

After 1965 elections, the Federal Party formed a coalition with UNP with the of extracting some concessions for the Tamils, failing which it withdrew from the coalition. Another effort at accommodation of the two ethnic groups failed and politics of Ceylon became more and more polarised on ethnic lines. Coming into power of United Front Coalition in which SLFP was the major partner further worsened the situation as it, with its overwhelming majority, changed the constitution to the disadvantage of the Tamils. The Front also made certain changes in the admission policy to the universities, particularly medical and engineering faculties, which considerably reduced the percentage of Tamil students to these faculties.³³ This added to the frustrations of the educated youth who now started thinking of securing a separate country. This alienation and failure of negotiations and compromises with the major Sinhalese parties moved the various Tamil parties and labour organisations to form Tamil United Front in 1974. By 1975, the Front renamed itself Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). With formation of TULF Tamils were now set on the course to separatism, though apparently through nonviolence of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which emerged at this time, had no such compunctions and engaged in militant actions to achieve a separate and independent Tamil Eelam. Before UNP led by Jayawardene which had come to power in the election of 1977 could make an attempt to reverse the process, Sinhalese provoked by LTTE militant actions and demand to divide Sri Lanka into two states and possibly instigated by SLFP precipitated the riots of 1977, which further alienated the two ethnic communities.

Within this framework of increasing polarisation and inflamed emotions, UNP, raising the gravity of the situation, made another attempt at reconciliation and accommodation through introduction of another constitution in 1978-79, which ultimately failed as the new constitution, in spite of some of its liberal provisions accommodating some of the demands of the Tamils did not win the support of the majority of the Tamils. Most Tamil politicians had become more militant and distrustful of the Sinhalese politicians.

With fourth-fifth majority in the legislature, the UNP changed the constitution from Westminster type to Guallist type which gave considerable power to the President who was elected under the new constitution in 1982 to the presidency for a period of six years. The president did not hold the general elections which were to follow and instead held a referendum which enabled the UNP to maintain its overwhelming majority for another six year without going through the exercise of elections. With the new constitution, a docile parliament and an all powerful

president, Sri Lanka, in fact, became virtually a constitutional dictatorship with *no* opposition from even Sinhalese parties which had been decimated in earlier elections. Within such system obviously there was no room for politics of accommodation of ethnic demands and articulation of Tamil grievances. It had now become essentially politics of desperation and violence.³¹ The situation became worse with the ethnic riots of 1983, the third one in the short history of the divided nation in which Tamils were again the main victims.

Having consolidated his power and facing a grave situation in the country, Jayawardene called an "All Parties Conference" in 1984. But finding it incapable of resolving the major contentious issues between the two polarised ethnic communities, it was not reconvened. With Tamil groups waging violent struggle with foreign sanctuaries and support, and Sinhalese ethnonationalism at the peak of its intensity, the failure of the conference proved to be the last attempt by Sri Lankan

politicians to solve their ethnic problem on their own. After that they were left with no option but seek the help of their own. After that they were left with no option but seek the help of their big neighbour in 1987 to help them out of the crises. Whether Indian forces and the provision of accord under which they entered Sri Lanka can create a framework within which the two ethnic communities can heal their chronic wounds and accommodate their apparently irreconcilable demands remains uncertain. The solution of the problem requires a participatory political framework, an internal socioeconomic and moral transformation which no one but only Sri Lankan themselves can bring about.

Having reviewed the ethnic movement in the four countries to rank them in accordance with the degree of ethnonationalism to enable us to determine what factors explain the variations in the four countries is a difficult methodological task. Therefore, any classification or ranking has to be tentative. One can use five possible criteria for ranking:

1. Frequency with which ethnic movements have been able to breakup a country;
2. number of political or administrative subdivisions of a country out of all such divisions which have a significant level of ethnonationalism;
3. the number of ethnic groups out of total ethnic groups in a country which are infused with high level of ethnorationalism;
4. the intensity of ethnic conflict in terms of frequency of use of violence;
5. the number of accords arrived at between the governments and ethnonationalists.

To secure data on all the five indicators for the four countries requires extensive research in which at this stage the present author cannot engage in view of shortage of time. Therefore, the present ranking is impressionistic.

It appears that on the basis of the above-mentioned five criteria, Pakistan will rank as number one. It has been broken up by Bengali ethnonationalism; out of its four provinces three have ethno-nationalist movements; out of the total number of its ethnic groups, the number of those making ethnic claims also seems to be high. The intensity of conflict involving military and the ethnonationalists as indicated by military action in East Pakistan, three times such action occurring in Baluchistan, and one time in Sind in 1983, justify such a ranking. Besides, Central government of Pakistan has rarely entered into negotiations or arrived at accords. One Unit was imposed on the provinces through coercive and questionable means. Only one significant accord negotiated between Bhutto and the ethnonationalists from Baluchistan and NWFP proved to be very short lived.

Second position probably would go to Sri Lanka. Although the country has been lucky not to be yet broken up by Tamil ethnonationalism, it was on the verge of it and its future unity remains uncertain even after recent efforts at pacification of LTTE by foreign forces. In any case, the fact that it was obliged to seek foreign help to settle its internal ethnic problem shows the seriousness of its situation. Being a unitary state one cannot use the criteria of provincialism for its ranking. However, Tamils are concentrated in the North and North-east indicating a significant territorial portion of the country affected by separatism and at best demanding autonomy. Frequency and intensity of conflict between military and Tamil ethno-nationalists seems to be high, particularly during the 80s.

Third position will probably go to India, though it is difficult to be very precise for a country of the size of India, with great socio-cultural diversity and complexity, large number of states and ethnic groups. But the fact that a country with so much ethnic and regional diversity has not been broken up and none of the ethnic movement has succeeded in setting up a separate state inspite of the fact that some of them such as Nagas has engaged in a long struggle for it, and Indian military has engaged in suppressing ethnonationalists less frequently compared to other militaries in the region, indicates that threat of ethnonationalism is not comparatively as serious in India as it appears to be. Indeed Sikh enthnonationalism is gaining greater intensity since Operation Blue Star and attack on lives and property of Sikhs following assassination of Mrs. Gandhi. But Sikh separatism must be evaluated in broader perpetuate. Sikhs not as a whole are an economically deprived group. Neither have they been seriously discriminated groups in terms of jobs and economic opportunities Punjab is a prosperous state. Moreover, considerable number of Sikh demands including creation of a Punjabi Suba have been conceded and Union government has been inclined to engage in political dialogue with various Sikh leaders the most recent resulting into an accord with Akali Dal in July, 1985. As a result while militant Sikhs are engaged in a violent struggle against their opponent to achieve their dream of Khalistan, majority of the community seems to be reconciled to remaining part of India though understudy on terms more favourable to enable them to preserve their cultural heritage and their privileged position. The most recent indicator of their inclination to stay with India is a large turn out in September, 1985 elections which was as high as 66.5 %.³² These figures assume added significance as the elections were held after the Operation Blue Star and attacks on Sikhs following Mrs Gandhi's death, both events being extremely traumatic.

With only one ethnic group struggling for autonomy or secession and North South differentiation not taking a serious ethnic dimension, Bangladesh ranks fourth on scale of intensity of ethnonationalism.

III. TOWARDS A THEORY OF DYNAMICS OF ETHNONATIONALISM

Before developing a theory of dynamics of ethnonationalism it is necessary to define the basic terms. Ethnicity is a feeling of identification of an individual with a group which has a real or mythical common ancestry, and usually a common label derived from the name of the presumed common ancestor. Such group usually have a distinct language and in some respect a way of living or social mores.* Ethnicity gets politicised when an ethnic group makes certain political demands exclusively related to itself, mobilises itself to participate in the political process and presses for the acceptance of its demands through peaceful or violent means. The two concepts being conceptually equivalent, politicised ethnicity and ethnonationalism are used interchangeably.

An attempt at separation from an internationally recognised political community, based on ethnicity or on other grounds, is a secession. It could be a short burst of activities or result of a protracted struggle. Secession based on ethnicity is an extreme form of etnonationalism. It usually takes the form of a protracted struggle which requires it to assume the character of a movement developing an organisational structure, an ideology justifying its demands in terms of a general doctrine or norms of fairness or justice both to win and sustain the loyalty of its members over a long period of time and establish its legitimacy.

* *Ethnicity having both objective and subjective aspects is generally accepted. See Esman 1977: Ronen, 1979, Rothachild, 1981.*

A. **Six Stages of Ethnonationalism**

Ethnonationalism is a dynamic process and frequently goes through six stages which are as follows:

1. ethnic awareness;
2. ethnic evaluation;
3. demands for equality, fairness, justice in various spheres of life against perceived or real discrimination and grievances;
4. demand for a separate province, regions, state or greater powers to a state that already exists to enable the ethnic group to rectify such grievances;
5. "bluff secession" when a threat of secession is used to extract concessions or fulfillment of demands made at third and fourth stage without a serious intention and determination to secede;
6. actual secession when the ethnic group ceases to recognize the legitimacy of the larger political community and engages in a struggle for a separate state or for its merger in a neighbouring political community in which its ethnic community is in dominant position.

The above stages are separated for the purpose of analysis. An ethnic group may pass through these stages simultaneously or possibly, for some stages or earlier stages may remain invisible to other ethnic groups or rulers of the political community or spread over a long period till under a given set of circumstances they assume high political visibility while passing through the third and fourth or final stages. *A basic hypothesis of this study is that no ethnic group remains fixed in one stage permanently. It moves up and down in these stages due to its internal dynamics or in response to the actions of the state or other ethnic groups. An equality seeking group can become autonomy seeking group can start demanding secession. Similarly a secessionist group can become autonomy seeking or equality seeking group.*

Ethnicity usually tends to get politicised at the third stage. Whether it actually becomes politicised or not, depends upon what happens at the earlier two stages of ethnic awareness and ethnic evaluation. If an ethnic group becomes aware of itself in relatively less hostile and competitive environments, its awareness may not assume a character to push it towards the second stage. Similarly if the ethnic groups and its elites evaluate that it was not being discriminated or oppressed or prevailing political environments were not conducive for adopting a political strategy in preference to other strategies for rectifying the discrimination, it may not move on to the third stage thus remaining inconspicuous. Many ethnic groups in human history never got politicised because of the prevailing beliefs and environments 'even when they were extremely exploited and oppressed. The case of low castes in India particularly the untouchables is an obvious example.

Once an ethnic group evaluates that it is being discriminated or oppressed and it decides to rectify the situation through political means, then it enters the third stage where it may demand equality of treatment, removal of discrimination, exploitation and oppression. Such demand may be focussed on economic, social, political and cultural equality separately or in combination depending upon what aspects are perceived to be most discriminatory. At this stage, it may decide to wage a struggle to achieve its demands peacefully or violently, develop low or high intensity of politicisation, given the political framework, rules of political game and possible anticipated or actual response of the elite of the larger political community. If an ethnic group fails in its attempt to achieve equality and its members are concentrated in large enough numbers in one state or region, it may demand a separate state with relatively high level of autonomy and thus enter into the fourth stage.

If the demand for separate state or region or greater autonomy for the existing stage where the ethnic group is numerically larger is not granted then the group may adopt the “bluff” secession strategy. If it fails in this and prospects of getting independence through violent struggle seems reasonable, it may move to the stage of actual secession. While deciding to move into this stage, it may take into account the extent of its concentration in a given region, geographical location of such a region, that is, whether it is on the border of the larger political community, possible availability of sanctuaries, if needed, transnational linkages with other members of ethnic group living in other countries, possible attitude of neighbouring countries and super-powers, the military strength of the larger political community and quality of terrain in which the struggle for secession will be waged.*

Data from most of the ethnic movements confirm that they follow the stages proposed in this theoretical framework. With a few exceptions, most of the movements studied here moved through the six stages. This may be illustrated by the dynamics of the ethnonational movement of what was then called East Pakistan. Not finding good chances of receiving equitable equal treatment within unitary

* *As presented here, the theory primarily deals with relationship of an ethnic group to state and ignores how interstate and transnational linkages to the ethnic group affects its demands and its strategies for achieving them. For impact of these factors on the rise of ethnonationalism and outcome of an ethnic group's struggle see Inayatullah, 1976, and an unpublished paper by the author entitled "The Dynamics Rise of Ethnonationalism in the World."*

power structure of Pakistan, the East Pakistani ethnonationalists demanded provincial autonomy. After realising that whatever provincial autonomy was granted to them under 1956 constitution was nullified by Martial Law of 1958 and constitution of 1962, they demanded restructuring of mutual relations on the basis of Six Points formula in order to loosen the existing structure of power. When West Pakistani rulers did not accept this formula they engaged in civil disobedience which for most of them was a form of “bluff” secession. When the military regime of Yahya Khan responded to it by repression, they inexorably opted for secession. The Tamil, Chakma, and to some extent Khalistan movements also illustrate the utility of the stages proposed above.

B. State Structure, its Policies and Ethnonationalism

Policy Options: Assimilative and Integrative. It is a basic assumption of the theory being propounded here that development of ethnonationalism occurs in reaction to the policy of the state. The two major policy options usually used by the rulers are: 1. assimilative and 2. integrative. The assimilative policy is essentially premised on the belief that ethnonationalism cannot coexist with nationalism and national unity and is therefore directed towards obliteration of the identity or identities of the subordinate ethnic group or groups. To achieve this objective? policies are developed such as promotion and encouragement of one “national” language, one set of religious beliefs, one vision and view of “national history”, and one pattern of culture through educational policy, use of mass media, and state, patronage of “national” art and culture to create and, in fact, impose “national unity”. Where dominant ethnic group controlling the state structure is disproportionately strong and other subordinate groups are weak such policy at least in short term may succeed. But in the long run it proves counterproductive and may stimulate ‘ rather than suppress ethnonationalism. This policy has a greater chance of success within a unitary framework or when the spatial distribution of power is only formally federal — a system sometimes called “peripheralised federalism”.

The integrative policy is essentially a partial accommodation of various ethnic groups with use of varying degrees of coercion. The central elite from the dominant ethnic group or groups insists that the subordinate ethnic groups accept the major symbols or premises of the political community while retaining a certain degree of cultural and political autonomy and control over their resources. Their language, religion and culture and permitted a degree of freedom to flourish so long as they do not threaten the preeminence of the language, culture and religion of the dominant ethnic groups. Under certain circumstances such a policy may work especially when the intensity of ethnonationalism is not high and there exists a real federal system in which the elite of the components of federation have the power to protect cultural traits specific to their area, region or province.

The two types of policies are a product of the nature of state structure, the distribution of power between the central ruling elite and the elite at the intermediate (regional) level and the local level, the orientation and the perception of the central elite of national unity, the appropriate methods of achieving it and finally the extent to which they consider ethnic manifestations and ethnic demands a legitimate phenomena which can coexist national unity. From different structures of the state, that is, who controls it, its spatial distribution of power, and perception of the ruling elite about the appropriate methods of achieving national unity emerge then two basic policies towards various ethnic groups.

As noted earlier, the choice of a policy — assimilative or integrative — does not occur at random. The peculiar historical development of the society in question, the nature of regimes, the political orientation of the elite holding power in these regimes, the political orientation of the elite holding power in these regimes, their perception of nature of internal threat to the unity of the society emerging from ethnic diversity and other factors determine the choice of a policy. For instance, in general, military-bureaucratic regimes or civilian authoritarian regimes creating and functioning in a centralised and unitary structure tend to adopt assimilative policies while non-military non-bureaucratic and democratic regimes come into power through consent of the people tend to decentralise power usually adopt integrative policies. The former use certain degree of coercion to achieve their goals, and depending upon other factors, may in the process exacerbate ethnonationalism. The

civilian democratic regimes functioning in a decentralised federal structure usually choose an integrative policy abjuring submission of the regional and ethnic elites through coercion and seek to integrate them into main polity through compromise, negotiation, and bargaining without employing threat or actual use of coercion.

While there is a greater chance of diluting the intensity of ethnonationalism under democratic regimes and preventing it from reaching the secessionist stage, the outcome is not always certain. If a society consists of too numerous ethnic groups making divergent, mutually incompatible demands and claims and democratic process is not sufficiently institutionalised, the central rulers may find democratic methods too adequate to deal with ethnonationalism. Under such conditions competitive electoral politics rather than becoming a means of accommodation and dilution of ethnic demands may further spur them leading to disintegration of society in question.

C. State Response to Ethnonationalism

The two policy options discussed above are relatively enduring orientations of the elite dominating the state structure. These orientations determine or influence the response of those dominating the state structure to concrete demands or actions of the ethnic groups. These responses in turn determine the choices and action of the ethnonationalists, compelling them to move up and down the scale of intensity of ethnonationalism. For analytical purposes, such responses may be divided into four:

1. Indifference
2. Accommodation
3. Substitution-manipulation and
4. Coercion and repression.*

For the sake of brevity these responses are discussed briefly. First response of indifference is usually based on lack of understanding of intensity of ethnonationalism, political myopia or sheer ignorance. Second response accommodates the demands of the politicised ethnic group and thus makes it an equal partner in the system. However, accommodative response is no panacea for solution of the problem of regional autonomy and creation of new province / state. Accommodation of some demands of one ethnic group may stimulate similar demands from other ethnic groups as has happened in India after granting the demand of Andhras for a separate state, which stimulated demands of other ethnic-linguistic groups for reorganizing states on linguistic basis.

Substitutive — manipulative response is an effort to persuade the ethnic groups to deescalate its certain demands and receive in exchange something else. Sometimes when this policy response is provided with mat-intentions it assumes a manipulative character aimed at tricking the ethnic groups to give up their critical demands in exchange for something insignificant. The nature of repressive coercive policy response is obvious. The central elite simply uses coercion and repression to control the expression of ethnic demands with the expectation that it would eliminate what it believes as “a miscreant minority” making such demands and thus solve the ethnic problems.

In general, the impact of responses of central elites to ethnic demands, besides other factors, will be determined by their rationality, that is, their appropriateness

* *For more exhaustive list of policies toward ethnic groups see Rothchild, 1986.*

to the situation and sequence in which they are provided. Providing accommodative response at initial stages may work. For instance, removal of discrimination at third stage of ethnonationalism may solve the problems and the ethnic group may get depoliticised or de-ethnicised. But, if manipulative or coercive response is provided at initial stage, the ethnic group may be pushed to fourth stage and demand separate state or greater autonomy for it. If accommodative response is provided at this stage, that is, granting a separate region, it may freeze the politicisation of ethnicity at this stage not letting it move to fifth and sixth stage. Thus whether the ethnic groups move from first to last stage of ethnonationalism, as noted earlier, is not always an entirely deliberate choice made by the elite of the ethnic groups by itself but in response to the nature of policies of the central elite towards national integration and nation building and response of the central elite to specific demands of the ethnic group. With appropriate policy responses and strategies the central elite could turn secessionists into autonomy seekers, autonomy seekers into equality seekers and vice-versa.

The secessionists, autonomy seekers and equality seekers are not born to be that way but become such due to the situation in which they find themselves and the choices they are forced to make within the context of demands of their ethnic group and the policy responses of the larger political system.

IV. INTERPRETATION OF RISE OF ETHNONATIONALISM IN SOUTH ASIA:

Identification of Causes

A theory has not only to define and classify a phenomenon to be studied but offer explanation of it in terms of its causation. Political phenomenon like secessionist movements is brought about by causes that are common to all movements, the universal causes, and those that are specific to a particular movement. It can be assumed that causes that are universal are basic while specific causes are only "triggering" mechanisms. The search for causation should include both material and ideological factors without assigning greater primacy to either.

The universal causes by their definition operate at global level in the form of universal tendencies such as need to create larger units of political organisations to achieve full benefits from new technologies and consequent higher level of efficiency through rational allocation of resources and universal need of human beings to create and preserve small groups to achieve social security and emotional gratification by interacting with members of such small groups. These two needs apparently are in conflict producing clash between large and small groups, between nation state and the ethnic groups. Such universal causes may include also the historical development of last several centuries which have brought into existence the ideological forces such as self-determination, and material changes in the form of

industrial revolution, spread of technology of mass communication, and institutional matrix of capitalist mode of production and the nation state.*

A. **Causes of Rise of Ethnonationalism in South Asia**

Dealing only with politics of ethnicity and separatism in South Asia, this study will not explain this phenomena in universal terms but search for intermediate level of causes that are applicable to Third World, Societies to which the states in the South Asia belong. This may include the nature of pre-colonial society, the nature of colonial state and its impact on such societies, institutional matrix of post-colonial state and how it deals with the phenomena of ethnonationalism. Hopefully, the theoretical framework propounded above would help us to relate these factors to the rise of ethnonationalism in these societies.

In an attempt to identify causes of ethnonationalism in South Asia one has to engage in comparative analysis of the four countries correlating the rank of a country on the intensity of ethnonationalism with conditions hypothesised to be favourable or unfavourable to such intensity. It may be recalled that on the basis of four indicators of intensity of ethnonationalism the four countries have been ranked from high to low as follows: 1. Pakistan, 2. Sri Lanka, 3. India, 4. Bangladesh.

1. **The Precolonial Society and Ethnonationalism**

Historical legacy and structure of the precolonial societies and states continue to exert their influence on the contemporary ethnic groups, directly or indirectly, on their demands and struggles. The claims of precolonial Tamil separatists of existence of Tamil rule at least in Northern Sri Lanka extending over long period of time provides them the legitimacy for a claim over that part and creation of separate Tamil Eelam. On the contrary, the Sinhalese claim to an uninterrupted occupation of the land for as long as twenty five centuries undergirds their determination to resist its partition demanded by what they regard a group of immigrants with at best a claim to having a tributary Tamil state³³ Controversial interpretation of history gives an additional legitimation to current demands. Such claims are not limited only to the two communities of Sri Lanka but are widespread among many ethnonationalists in South Asia including the Sikhs in India, Baluch and Pakhtoons in Pakistan, and Chakmas in Bangladesh.

* *For understanding the rise of ethnonationalism in terms of universal ideological forces see Ronen, 1979.*

Precolonial tribal or feudal structure of some of these societies has also been one source of conflict between contemporary state of south Asia and some of the ethnic groups who feel that their traditional autonomy and privileges, and exclusive claim to material resources, which even the colonial power did not disturb, were being taken away from them either by the state or the immigrants from other areas and states and belonging to other ethnic groups. This provokes them to resist these incursions and raise the banner of autonomy or independence. Persistence of some elements of traditional social structure, particularly the power structure, also creates favourable situation for ethnonationalism. The traditional elite, tribal or feudal, when threatened by the loss of privileges and status due to incorporation in larger state

resists these incursions and in appropriate circumstances becomes champion of ethnonationalism in the name of right to self-determination regardless of what type of treatment they met out to their own people. Number of movements in North East of India and Baluch movement in Pakistan considerably owe their emergence to this factor.

2. Impact of Colonialism on Emergence of Ethnonationalism

Arrival of European colonial powers in South Asia unleashed some fundamental changes in the countries of the region which later provided fertile ground for the rise of ethnonationalism.* Some of these changes are discussed below.

First, the colonial powers attempted to centralise the precolonial states and societies under their rule randomly putting them into a political and administrative strait jacket regardless of their ethnic and religious complexions and identities. This for instance, happened with Tamil and Sinhales in Sri Lanka and Hindus and Muslims in India in first case stimulating Tamil separatism and in the second case Muslim separatism. Furthermore, where the colonial powers could not conquer the remote and inaccessible tribes and apprehended trouble from them if they were brought under their direct control they found it to their advantage to leave them undisturbed granting them a sort of indirect rule. This left their traditional social and power structure intact leaving them more or less in primitive state of living. When the post-colonial states attempted to bring these tribes into the mainstream of national culture by expanding the scope of state activities, they resisted such efforts, particularly where these tribes feared actual or imagined discrimination. This then became another factor contributing to the rise of what may be called tribal ethnonationalism which, as shown in earlier section of this paper, is rampant in India and Pakistan and is evident in Chakma's insurgency in Bangladesh. In addition, under colonialism with development, of rapid means of transport competition for jobs, introduction of political reforms leading to electoral politics stimulated divergent

* *For a different view of the impact of colonialism on Third World societies concerning ethnonationalism see Conner, 1972, pp. 328-330.*

and frequently hostile ethnic identities and interests further reinforcing the pre-exclusive existing divisions and hostilities. Introduction of adult suffrage in Sri Lanka in 1931 laid the grounds for conflict between the two communities and seeds of Tamil separatism.

Anti-colonial movements attempted to reverse this process and sought to build national unity to fight colonialism. But they succeeded in his only party, creating a temporary fragile unity among the divergent ethnic groups. Moreover, the nationalists movements were essentially urban based and did not have access to the remote and inaccessible tribal areas. As a result participation of tribal ethnic groups in anti-colonial national struggle was almost negligible and these groups isolated by their tribal social and power structure did not develop the overhearing national consciousness which could later integrate them into the national polity. For instance, the anti-colonial struggle in Ceylon which was rather mild and moderate did not weld the two ethnic communities of Sri Lanka into one nation, bringing about a certain degree of unity only among the Anglicised Sinhalese and Tamil elite. Even in India

where national movement greater mass orientation, it failed to bridge the widening chasm between Hindus and Muslims. Pakistan movement even with invocation of religious symbols and appeals, particularly at its later stage, also could not weld the divergent ethnic groups into one strong nation. Whatever success these movement were able to achieve, it proved temporary and when anti-colonial nationalist fervour declined, the divergent ethnic groups staked out various types of claims discussed above.

Second, in order to win the loyalty of the ruled and ensure control and stability, colonial powers gave preferential treatment to certain ethnic groups willing to offer loyalty and support to them over the ethnic groups which showed continuous resistance and were therefore not considered suitable material for recruitment in colonial military bureaucratic structures. This caused uneven development among these groups as well as mutual animosity which in post-colonial era served as basis for demands for rectifying this uneven and unequal development or demanding separate region or country. This policy, for instance, placed Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims and Pakhtoons in Pakistan in a pre-eminent position in colonial military apparatus and Tamil in Sri Lanka to have greater share in bureaucracy. Rectification of these imbalances became demands of some of the ethnonationalist movements in East Pakistan and Sind province of Pakistan.

Third, the colonial powers pursued a policy of uneven economic development partly due to their preferential treatment for certain ethnic groups and religions and partly due to the strategy of capitalist-colonial development they employed. Consequently, post-colonial States inherited generally highly unevenly developed areas which stimulated the striving among the inhabitant less developed areas to make different type of demands discussed earlier.

Fourth, by its very nature, colonialism required that regulative institutions such as bureaucracy and military were first modernised, that is, specialised and centralised as well as imparted western secular cultural values to serve as its efficient and loyal instruments. The political institutions based on accountability of the rulers or popular sovereignty developed slowly and frequently in opposition to the military and bureaucratic structures and colonial power and under pressure from the nationalist movements which have adopted the European principle of nationalism, self-determination and democracy. Consequently, accompanied by uneven economic and cultural development, the political development of post colonial state was also uneven. Bureaucracy and military became overdeveloped and powerful³⁴ and political institutions under-developed and weak. Unaccustomed to be directed except by their own colleagues and colonial rulers and having developed a poor image of the politicians and in some cases adversary relations with them, bureaucracy and military tended to take over political power whenever they found the weak political institutions in crisis or by temptation of assuming political power. Such intervention in politics was made in the name of restoring law and order, stability and national integration, development and progress.

With the above described changes in the period of colonialism in the states and societies of the region, the stage was set for the rise of ethnonationalism which was exacerbated by the policies adopted by the post colonial regimes most of them having disproportionate representation from certain ethnic groups, committed to capitalist strategy of development, and frequently opposed to or feebly- committed to democratisation of society and right of self-determination of such ethnic groups.

3. Post-colonial State and Ethnonationalism

Under the post-colonial state, the less developed and discriminated groups frequently found themselves in what has been called a new variety of colonialism — “the internal colonialism”. Such colonialism was considered to be a political and economic framework in which certain ethnic groups dominant in military and bureaucracy or political institutions used their advantageous position to serve their narrow parochial or institutional interests. Given their interests and institutional conditioning, they usually tended to treat ethnic stirring as law and order problems and frequently viewed ethnonationalism amounting treachery or disloyalty to existing state and thus opted for coercive-repressive responses to it. Some of the deprived ethnic groups and regions within this framework of internal colonialism came to be moved and stirred by the same consciousness and concepts of nationalism, self-determination and popular sovereignty which moved the national movements in colonial era.

This explanation or interpretation of rise of ethnonationalism is relatively more valid for Pakistan than other countries of South Asia where at the early stage of the life of the country, the bureaucracy and military, recruited from a narrow ethnic base, became powerful enough to capture political power and where at least three Martial Laws had been imposed. This deprived the ethnic groups, under represented in military and bureaucracy³⁵ from participation in the state affairs and decisions concerning allocation of development resources. Lack of political participation and resulting uneven development, inability and inflexibility of the military bureaucratic rulers to engage in dialogue with the East Pakistani regionalists created such a high level of alienation and disaffection that finally the province engaged in a civil disobedience movement first and then in a civil war imposed on it by the then military regime.³⁶ The West Pakistan based bureaucratic rulers during the first decade of the life of the country were not only apprehensive of the numerical majority of Bengali being converted into political power but to frustrate this they imposed a scheme of “One Unit” on the other provinces through draconian methods.³⁷ This was consistent with their view of “national unity” which regarded identification with one’s province or ethnic groups as subversive and teacherous. These attitudes and orientations reflected in assimilative policies toward provinces and ethnic groups persisted even after the separation of East Pakistan. The present military rulers of Pakistan who have inherited this legacy have intensified their commitment to an old doctrine inherited from earlier period of history of Pakistan that adherence to state religion, Islam, is incompatible with “ethnicity, provincialism and regionalism” as they disrupt the unity of Muslim nations and universal community and brotherhood of Muslims. This has intellectually incapacitated them to correctly assess the potent force of ethnonationalism and to effectively handle the problems it is creating in at least two provinces of Pakistan.

India inherited the same military bureaucratic structure as Pakistan which continues to be a powerful force in the Indian politics. However, earlier development of Congress into a mass party under the influence of Gandhi, availability of an experienced cadre of political leaders under the leadership of Nehru, institutionalisation of competitive politics manifest in holding of regular elections and smooth transfer of power from the ruling party to other national and regional party or parties enabled the Indian politicians to control the military bureaucratic structure till the doctrine of its accountability to political institutions became well established. Furthermore, development of tolerance for the regional

parties in the party generally dominant in the Centre and willingness of this party to form coalition

* *There is vast literature which supports the above hypothesis. Only two pieces with which the present author is more familiar are cited here. Literature produced in West Pakistan before and after the emergence of Bangladesh is lopsided and usually attributes East Pakistan's secession to Bengali disloyalty and Indian treachery.*

with these parties has the capacity of the system to absorb ethnic demands and thus save the country from disintegration.

Indian politicians, like their counterparts in other South Asian countries, were indeed apprehensive of ethnic forces and their potentiality for disrupting the unity of the country. But unlike their counterparts they were willing to face the situation and deal with it through political means. For instance, both Nehru and Patel, as members of a committee to make recommendation on Reorganisation of states on linguistic basis, opposed the principle to which Congress, before independence, was committed. But once they realised the intensity of feelings of the states and regionalist groups on the issue they showed necessary flexibility and let the Reorganisation take place. This indeed both absorbed and sedated ethnonationalism as well as stimulated it. But Indian political system continued to face ethnonationalism in accordance with the institutionalised democratic practices. Indeed, ethnonationalist movements are occasionally subjected to coercion but their leadership is also occasionally invited to negotiate and bargain with the center, enter into accords (which are occasionally also broken by both parties) but in quite a few cases these accords also succeed leading to solution of an ethnic problem as for instance is the case of Mizos and Nagas secessions and Assamese ethnic conflict.

Unlike both India and Pakistan Sri Lanka did not inherit a strong military and bureaucratic structure. Like India it had developed a party structure, with certain degree of mass following and political awareness. But the party system was organised on ethnic lines — a feature that got more pronounced in post independent era. Furthermore, its military bureaucratic structure got more and more monopolised by one ethnic group — Sinhalese — and infused with ethnic spirit. Thus, though in Sri Lanka military bureaucratic structures did not themselves develop policies toward Tamil ethnonationalism, they carried such policies developed by Sinhalese dominated political system with enthusiasm and occasionally with ethnic partisanship which aggravated the Tamil ethnonationalism. In addition, in 80s the political system became a constitutional autocracy in which ethnically polarised labour unions acted as an instrument of violence on behalf of the state.³⁸

Unlike India and like Pakistan, Sri Lanka developed a policy framework which became increasingly assimilative and intolerant of ethnic diversity. This was a departure from precolonial spirit and understanding between the first generation Sinhalese and Tamil politicians. The thrust of the assimilative orientation and ethnic intolerance grew in proportion to the intensity of Tamil ethnonationalism, particularly as it set for itself the goal of creating a separate Tamil state.

A third factor which differentiates the four countries in dealing with the problem of ethnonationalism is the spatial distribution of power. As stated earlier nature of distribution of such power significantly affects the development of ethnonationalism, besides the other factors already discussed. India and Pakistan

were formally federal states, the two other states were both formally and in practice unitary states. However, in spite of many internal pressures India continued to manifest tendencies towards "Pluralism, regionalism and decentralization" as an authoritative study suggests.³⁹ On the other hand, though Pakistan had a formal federal structure from 1947 to 1958 and then during Bhutto period it actually did not function like a federal system. Under the three Martial Laws it was a highly centralized system with no place for accommodation of provincial and regional demands.

Institutionalisation of federal system in India suited the conditions of a large multiethnic society, helped it absorb and accommodate ethnic demands and possibly turned some secessionist parties such as DMK and AIADMK, successor to secessionist Justice Party and DK, into essentially regionalist parties giving up demand for secession. On the other hand, absence of a true federal structure and presence of highly centralized regimes in Pakistan aggravated ethnonationalism contributing to the separation of East Pakistan as well as current high level of ethnonationalism.

Sri Lanka's Sinhales majority's determination to keep the state unitary, not even allowing the establishment of regional councils, with the apprehension that this could serve as a spring board for partitioning the country proved to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The less the Tamil got a share in power at regional level greater became their demand for a separate country. Conversion of Sri Lanka into a truly federal state may have spared it the agony which it is going through now.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study suffers from two limitations. First, it has limited itself to the development of ethnonationalism within the context of a single state and interaction between the ruling elite and the elite of the ethnic groups. The effect of interstate relations, transnational ethnic linkages, alliances and coordination of activities between various ethnonationalists, competition and cooperation within the elite of an ethnic group and their effect on development of ethnonationalism has not been studied, though proposed theory presented in the paper has built in these dimensions in its longer version.⁴⁰ The second limitation of the study is that it employs the political sociology approach neglecting that of political economy. Obviously, ethnonationalism does not merely represent an interaction between those groups that capture state power and those who are politically deprived and weak. It is also a struggle for distribution and allocation of economic resources. Ethnic conflict is not necessarily a substitute for class conflict but also a form of class conflict.

In spite of these limitations, which a larger version of this theory and more in-depth analysis of data, particularly the economic, can overcome, there are certain conclusions which the present study has brought out about dynamics of ethnonationalism. A brief recapitulation of these may be useful.

The study suggests, supported by considerable evidence, that ethnonationalism is not a static and fixed phenomenon. It changes and develops in relation to the nature of state policies and actions and due to its inner dynamics, moving up and down on the scale of intensity escalating and de-escalating its demands. Policy implication of this conclusion are that no ethnic group or elite

representing it should be treated as inveterate and permanent “traitor”. Ethnic “traitors” could be turned into loyal citizens with adoption of rational and appropriate policies.

The study has also identified a number of policies — assimilative and integrative — which can affect the development of ethnonationalism differently depending upon the situation to which they are applied. Assimilative policy is likely to promote ethnonationalism in a multi-ethnic and pluralistic societies and in general coercive and repressive measures which are likely to strengthen rather than weaken it or bring it within the fold of larger polity. The nationalistic appeals, frequent invocation of the fears of external “enemy”, an excessive use of symbolic and ideological appeals lose their potency and effect if used excessively. In conceptual terminology of the study they provide substitutive-manipulative response to ethnonationalism failing to contain it. The integrative policy with accommodative response to ethnonationalism and with willingness to negotiate and bargain with the ethnonationalists in an atmosphere of trust is likely to succeed in reducing the intensity of ethnonationalism, particularly at a stage when it has not assumed high intensity.

The policy adopted by the elite and responses provided to the demands of the ethnic groups depends on state of political development of a society, the nature of political regime in power, and spatial distribution of power. The societies in which political sector is underdeveloped in comparison to military bureaucratic sector, where authoritarian rather than democratic regimes prevail, and where spatial power is distributed in such a way that much of such power is centralized assimilative policy is usually adopted. The societies with strong political sector with democratic regime and diffusion of spatial power through the society tend to opt for integrative policies and accommodative response to ethnonationalism. As noted earlier, this does not ensure that such societies become totally free from ethnonationalism, but this type of policy and responses enhances their capacity to deal with ethnonationalism and keep its intensity in manageable limits where it cannot break them up.

The emergence of a strong political sector, prevalence of a democratic regime in a society and evenly distributed spatial power is product of historical development of a society in which the nature of its political heritage, both precolonial and colonial, play a significant role. This heritage, as analysed in the previous section, affects the rise of ethnonationalism directly also.

This study is not carried out in positivistic spirit and posture of value neutrality. In an era of nationalism and predominance of nation state in international relations, the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs of state, inviolability of its sovereignty are well established, though occasionally also violated. On the other hand the right of self-determination of people enshrined in the Charter of United Nations and the covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, and covenant of civil and political rights adopted in 1966 and operative since 1976 stating that “all people have right to self-determination” is interpreted by the members of the United Nations to mean the right to freedom from classical colonialism which cannot be applied to what has been called “international colonialism”. This meaning of right of self-determination needs to be reinterpreted and extended to cover internal colonialism. Failure to do this will perpetuate this new variety of colonialism and let the weak ethnic groups suffering at the hands of strong and dominant ethnic groups continue to suffer. This can only fuel

the forces of ethnonationalism and thus endanger the stability of South Asia and peace of the world.

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LIST OF ETHNIC MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH ASIA DEMANDING AUTONOMY/ INDEPENDENCE

Sources: Saeed, 1988, De Silva, 1982, Institute of Regional Studies, 1987 & 1988, Linter, 1986).

Name of Countries, Ethnic Groups and their Organisations

Bangladesh

Chakma—Chitagon Hills Tract.

1. *Chakma Yuvak Sangha, formed in 1928.* Led by Ghyan Shyam Dewan, it was renamed by him as United

People's Party of Chittagong (Parbatiya Chattagam Janasamhati Samiti) in 1972.

2. Shanti Bahini (militant group).

Hindu and Christian tribes in Chittagon Hill Tract also aided the

Chakma tribes in their struggle.

Major demands of these Buddhist tribes include regional autonomy and ousting of settlers from the Hill Tracts who are reducing Chakma tribes into minority in their homeland.

India

Sikhs — Punjab.

1. Akali Dal (Tara Singh Group).
2. United Akali Dal (Badal Group).
3. All India Sikhs Students Federation.
4. Dal Khalisa.
5. Akhand Kiranti Jatha
6. Babar Khalisa.

7. Khalistan Cammando Force.
8. Shiromani Gurdawara Parabandhak Committee.
9. Youth Akali Dal National.
10. Akali Dal (Langowal Group).

The centre held negotiations with moderate Sikhs seeking autonomy but as the militants were kept out of them, peace could not be restored.

All organisations except the three Akali Dal factions are demanding a separate and independent Sikh state and supporting the militant Sikhs openly or secretly.

11. Khalistan Liberation Front.
12. Word Sikh Federation.

Gorkhas — Gorkhaland

Darjeeling) West Bengal State

1. All India Gorkha League formed in 1943.
2. Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) formed in 1986.
3. Gorkha Volunteer Cell.

4. Nepali Bhasa Samti.
5. Pranta Parishad (Previously known as Partiya Morcha).

Agreement to form a regional Council has been

reached between GNLF and the central Government.

Demanding a separate state within Indian Union to be carved out from the West Bengal State comprising of areas inhabited by Napali speaking Gorkhas.

Assamese — Assam

1. All Assam Student's Union.
2. United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) formed in 1979.

Both organisations of Assamese struggle for preservation of their socio-cultural heritage

and ousting of Bengali immigrants. ULFA, a secessionist group, does not recognise Indian

constitution and treaty of Yandboo.

Tribals in Tripura

1. Tribpura National Volunteer.
2. Tripura Upjati Juba Samiti.

Autonomy for the state, resisting the inflow of new settlers and ousting the old ones who have reduced them to a minority in their homeland. Demanding to restrict

- the sale of land to non-tribals.
- to make the Karbarak official language of Tripura.
- To give Tripura state greater autonomy similar to Nagaland and Mizoram.
- Reservation of 50% of Assembly seats for tribals.
- Rehabilitation of TNV rebels.

Mizos — Mizoram

1. Mizoram. National Front was formed in 1960.
2. The Peoples Conference.
3. The Mizo Union formed in 1946.
4. United Mizo Freedom Organisation.
5. Mizo National Army.

The issue has been settled through an agreement in May, 1986 and now MNF is in power in the state which has been given special status.

Though the issue has been settled between the MNF and the Centre yet the MNF leader and the Chief Minister of the state is demanding greater Mizoram comprising areas from Assam, Tripura and Manipur states.

Nagas __ Nagaland (Manipur)

1. National Socialist Council of Nagland (NSCN) was set up in 1980.
2. Naga National Council (NNC) was formed in 1946.

3. Naga National Democratic Party.

MSCN aims at carving out a "sovereign, Christian state. Central government and the NAGA parties reached an

agreement in 1975 and then in 1985.

The organisation sought secession from India.

Kolhanistan __ Northern Bihar.

The Kolhan Raksha Sangh (KKS).

After arrest of KRS leader, KRS changed its demand to

Union territory status and inclusion of Kolhan officer in the administration.

Earlier they demanded the status of a separate state for Kolhanistan.

Uttarakhand (Uttar Pradesh).

Uttarkhan Kranti Dal (UKD) in 1979.

Movement came national focus in 1952.

At least five prominent militant organisations are

active with different names for setting up a separate hill state.

Manipur __ Kangleipak.

1. people's Liberation Army (PLA) of Manipur.
2. People's Revolutionary Party of

Kangleipak (PREPAK).

Kangleipak is the ancient name of pre-Hindu Manipur These are Meiti extremists of

Tibeto-Mango-liod descent.

It is the movement struggling for an independent sovereign state.

Udayachal __ Assam.

1. Plains Tribals Council of Assam

A regional party agitating for a separate tribal state of Udayachal to be carved out of Assam.

Jharkhand __ West Bengal

1. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) gaining strength since 1960.
2. Jharkhand Coordinating Committee (JCC).
3. All Jharkhand Students Union.

4. Jharkhand Party was formed in 1950.

The grievances include neglect of development and revenues from its minerals not benefiting them etc.

Demand and independent sovereign state for 21 tribals and a separate Jharkhand state comprising of districts of West Bengal, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

PAKISTAN

Baluch — Baluchistan.

1. Anjuman-Ittehad-e-Baluchistan formed in 1920 later the party was named as Kalat State Nationalist Party in 1931.
2. Ustman Gall (People's Party)..
3. All Pakistan Baluch League.
4. Baluch Students Federation. In 1956 six parties in Sind, NWFP and Ustman

Fall of Baluchistan merged to create National Awami Party (NAP).

An agreement was reached between PPP government and NAP in 1973 under which the NAP established governments in Baluchistan and NWFP in coalition with Jul. NAP government was later dismissed by the Center. The NWFP

government resigned in protest.

The state of Kalat sought to become independent at the time of independence and later in mid fifties but both attempts were foiled through coercive action. Dismissal of Baluchistan government by the Center created tribal unrest and insurgency which military tried to control till the then central government was

overthrown by a military coup in 1977.

Sindhis — Sind.

1. Jeya Sind Mahaz.
2. Sind Han Committee.
3. Servants of Sind Society.
4. Pakistan National Party.
5. Sindhiani Tehrik.
6. Watan Dost Party.
7. Sind Sagar Party.
8. Sind National Congress.
9. Sindhi Shagird Tehrik (Students Organisation).
10. Jeay Sind Students Federation.

11. Democratic Students Organisation.
12. Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Sind.
13. Sind Baluch Pakhtoon Front.

Jeya Sind Mahaz of G.M. Syed and its sub-groups have for long demanded independent Sindhu Desh. Now it seems to be willing to settle for autonomy for the provinces to achieve unity in Sindhi nationalist parties.

Demanding restriction on influx of people from other provinces in Sind, proper water share under Sind-Punjab agreement of 1945, stopping of constructing of any dam, barrage or canal on river Indus, and opposing construction new cantonment in Sind. Recognition of Sindhi as the only official language of the province, handing over of the revenues earned from natural resources of the province is also demanded.

Oh mohajirs __ Sind

Mohajir Quomi Movement (MQM) established in 1977

Punjab-Pakhtoon __ Sind.

Punjabi Pakhtoon Alliance was formed in 1969.

Demanding acceptance of Mohajirs as fifth nationality of the country. Proper share in employment, allocation of quota etc., is also demanded.

Saraiki __ Punjab

1. Saraiki Majlis-e-Amal was formed in 1975.
2. Saraiki Sooba Mahaz.

Demanding a separate Saraiki province comprising of vast areas of Punjab and NWFP.

NWFP __ Pakhtoon.

1. Khudal Khidamatghar also known as Red Shirts.
2. National Awami Party.
3. Pakhtoon Students Federation.
4. Sindhi-Baluch-Pakhtoon Front.

Demanding renaming of the NWFP as well as greater autonomy within federation or confederation of Pakistan.

SRI LANKA.

Tami — Northern Sri Lanka.

1. Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), a major political party of Tamils formed in 1949.
2. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).
3. Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF).
4. Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS) formed in 1975.
5. Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO)
6. Tamil Eelam Liberation Army (TELA).

7. People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) formed in 1979.
8. Tamil Eelam Liberation Front (TELF) formed in 1973.
9. Tamil Tigers formed in 1972.

A settlement between the Indian government and Sri Lanka was reached in June, 1987 which enabled India to deploy Indian forces in Sri Lanka for restoration of peace in affected areas the

provincial councils were held on June 2, 1988. Indian Forces withdrawn in April 90, no settlement reached yet.

TULF earlier demanding only started demanding a separate sovereign state since 1975. Other Tamil political parties and their militant groups made similar demands. Except LTTE other groups seem to have accepted Indo-Sri Lankan accord.

Anti Tamil Groups

1. Sri Lanka Muslim Congress.
2. Janatha Vimukhti Peramuna (JVP) is a Sinhalese militant group.

SLMC has been formed to confront Tamils domination in the area where Muslims are in Majority.

JVP was formed to combat the militancy of Tamils against Sinhalese. JVP opposes the accord reached between India and Sri Lanka.